

Megiddo Message

March/April, 2006



*I*srael shall blossom and bud,
And fill the face of the world with fruit.

—Isaiah 27:6



I WON'T GO THERE

Have you ever said, "I won't go there. I belong to God, and I am going God's way"?

A God-centered life begins by building convictions, drawing lines around them, and then living within those lines; in other words, boundaries. Until you establish boundaries based on the Word of God, you will struggle. You may do well for a time, but more than likely you will soon waffle right back into the old pattern of life.

Why is it necessary to establish boundaries? Because God knows our tendency toward the easy, popular way. That was why He gave the nation of Israel fixed laws with severe penalties. That is why He said to them, *"You shall,"* and *"You shall not"* (Ex. 20). That is also why God told His people to keep separate from those people who worshiped idols (Lev. 20:23, 26). Socializing with them would lead to intermarriage, and intermarriage would bring the pagan gods and their abominable practices right into the Israelite living rooms. *"Do not intermarry with them, and don't let your daughters and sons marry their sons and daughters. They will lead your young people away from me to worship other gods.... For you are a holy people, who belong to the Lord your God"* (Deut. 7:3-4, 6 NLT). They were to be "holy," i.e., set apart, devoted to God.

Did the rules change when Jesus came? Listen to this warning by the Apostle Paul: *"Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can goodness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? ... Come out from them, and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty"* (2 Cor. 6:14, 16-18 NLT).

"Come out...separate yourselves." "Separate" means literally to "mark off a boundary," to "limit, exclude, divide."

Obedience to this command may be for me "the great divide." So be it. I have a duty to God above all else. My boundaries are those set by God's Lawbook, the Bible: *"If you believe in goodness and if you value the approval of God, fix your minds on the things which are holy and right and pure and beautiful and good"* (Phil. 4:8 Phillips).

This is why I am not ashamed to say that there are places

I will not go. There are books I will not read. There are films I will not view, or even review. There is music I will not listen to. There are people I will not company with. At the risk of sounding bigoted, or being classified as naive, or even being labeled intolerant, I have a duty to guard my convictions. And guarding my convictions means I have boundaries that I must keep within. Why? Because I have a goal in my life, and that goal is to live in Christ's coming Kingdom. That goal is, as the apostle Paul said, that *"I may perhaps attain as [Christ] did, the resurrection from the dead"* (Phil. 3:11 Phillips).

There are things I will not do because I belong to God. I am not my own, and I am not free to make my own decisions. I have sold out my life to God. I do not "own" my own life, so I am not free to make my own choices.

Do you say, "Well, I just let my conscience be my guide"? Once you have set the boundary, your conscience can speak when you overstep. But conscience alone cannot tell you what is right or wrong. Conscience cannot draw a boundary until you train it.

Are you wanting to be victor over some persistent sin or weakness in your life? Set the boundary, and then say firmly to yourself, "I won't go there." Ask God to help you, and keep your decision firm. Here are a few guidelines to firm up your resolve:

Judge everything by God's Word, which says *"You shall be holy, for I am holy"* (Lev. 20:26; 1 Pet. 1:16 NRSV).

Avoid any TV program, any movie, any video, any game, any conversation, any place where Christ is out of place.

Avoid socializing with any friend with whom your hope of Christ is out of place.

Keep out of your mind anything that keeps Christ out of your life. Say, I will not let my mind be an open manhole catching all the dirt on the street.

Be prepared to answer someone's challenge, "Who do you think you are! Bigot!" with a quiet, "I belong to God."

Don't be ashamed to say, "I won't go there," or "I don't look at that," or "I won't tolerate that in my life—because I belong to God."

It doesn't get any better than that! ♦

Don't take Wicked Bypass; don't so much as set foot on that road. Stay clear of it; give it a wide berth. Make a detour and be on your way." —Proverbs 4:14-15 The Message Bible



Born To Be The King

Behold, you will...bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

Imagine the thrill in the heart of the astonished Jewish maiden when she heard those words directly from the angel Gabriel: *"You will bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great"*! She was to be the mother of the Son of the Highest? The promised Messiah to be her baby?! Then think of the impact of those other words, *"The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David ... of His kingdom there will be no end."* How was all this to be? Yet, those were the very words of that shining angel. Mary could only ponder these things in her heart.

Mary, like all faithful Jews, knew the Scriptures that foretold a Redeemer, a Deliverer, a King. With a thrill the promises of old must have flashed through her mind. What Mary may not have realized, however, was that many centuries would intervene before her Son's kingdom would come.

The entire plan of God focuses on the Messiah, the King who would come and redeem His people. This promise of a coming King and Savior is repeated again and again from Genesis to Revelation. The Jews looked and longed for this Messiah. When Jesus was born, some recognized Him as the fulfillment of this promise. But when He didn't immediately claim the throne, they were disappointed and gave up hope. Even His own disciples, just before He ascended to heaven, were still asking, *"Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (Acts 1:6). In other words, Lord, isn't this the time? And once again Jesus explained that that was *not* the time, that many events had to come between.

Why were the promises so hard to comprehend? Why did so many misunderstand them and abandon hope? One reason is that very often those promises were bundled together. Many times the same prophecy spoke of His lineage and birth as well as His future, eternal kingdom. In Genesis, the very first book of the Bible, the Patriarch Jacob, as he blessed his son Judah, was inspired to speak prophetically about this King.

"The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will obey" (Gen. 49:10 NLT).

Jesus was born from the family of Judah, but the second part of the promise, that He would be *"the one to whom [the scepter] belongs," "the one whom all nations will obey,"* is still unfulfilled. He has not yet taken His throne.

A few hundred years later, another man inspired by God foretold His birth and His kingly mission. *"A Star [a shining one] shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter [one having authority] shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult"* (Numbers 24:17). Again, this prophecy spans centuries to reach a complete fulfillment. The child was born. But the major part is still unfulfilled: He has yet to take *"the scepter,"* the symbol of authority, and *"destroy all the sons of tumult."*

God's prophet Isaiah also combined the promise of the birth of the child with His kingly destiny. *"For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders....His ever expanding, peaceful government will never end. He will rule forever with fairness and justice..."* (Isa. 9:6-7 NLT). Here again is a prophecy only partly fulfilled. The child was born, but He has not yet taken the reins of government. For once He takes that government, it will *"never end."*

Behold, you will...bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.
—Luke 1:31-33

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FRONT COVER: BLOOMING TREE NEAR DIMITSANA, ARKADIA, GREECE. PHOTO BY TODD BOLEN, COURTESY OF "BIBLEPLACES.COM"

MEGIDDO MEANS...

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

WE BELIEVE...

- ♦ in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- ♦ in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ♦ in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to

heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.

- ♦ in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ♦ in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ♦ in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

- ♦ in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide Kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

THE HERALD AND THE KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord...lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

God's prophet Micah foretold the child's birth and also that He would be a "future ruler." "But you (Bethlehem) Ephrathah,...from you will come for me a future ruler of Israel whose origins go back to the distant past, to the days of old" (Micah 5:2 NJB). Again, only part of the prophecy has been fulfilled. The child was born, from the ancient Davidic line, but He is not yet a "ruler."

The prophet Jeremiah also foretold that a righteous ruler, even a King, would come from the family of David. "Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth" (Jer. 23:5; see also 33:14-15). Even today this prophecy is only partly fulfilled. The child was born, but He is not yet a king administering justice.

What must we conclude? Will God leave all these prophecies only partly fulfilled? Never! The fact that Jesus has been born is proof positive that the remainder of the prophecies will also be fulfilled. Jesus Christ will be King! This earth will yet have one worldwide government of peace and justice. In the words of God's prophet Zechariah, "The Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day there will be one Lord—his name alone will be worshiped" (Zech. 14:9 NLT).

When Jesus started preaching that He was the Messiah, the fulfillment of the words of Israel's prophets, Jewish people grew hopeful. Here was the Redeemer! Here was their King! Here was the one who would oust the hated Roman overlords, take the reins of government, and do away with injustice, poverty and oppression.

But then, as they watched, the tide turned against Him. The Jewish rulers, who had been watching with jealous eye as the crowds followed Him, started to plot and scheme. Before long Jesus was in their hands, condemned, and crucified. If He was the promised Messiah as He claimed, what now? What about the Kingdom He had been preaching? The words of two of His disciples after the crucifixion expressed the disappointment many felt. "We were hoping," they said, "that it was He who was going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21). Their hopes died with the crucified One.

What was the problem? The problem was not with the prophecies but with their understanding of those prophecies. They could not comprehend the timeline of those prophecies. They failed to understand that Jesus had to be born, be tested and tried (Heb. 2:9-10), had to "suffer many things, and be rejected,... and be killed, and be raised the third day" (Luke 9:22), be taken to heaven, and then in the far future return to set up His kingdom. Jesus had said it, but they did not comprehend the time.

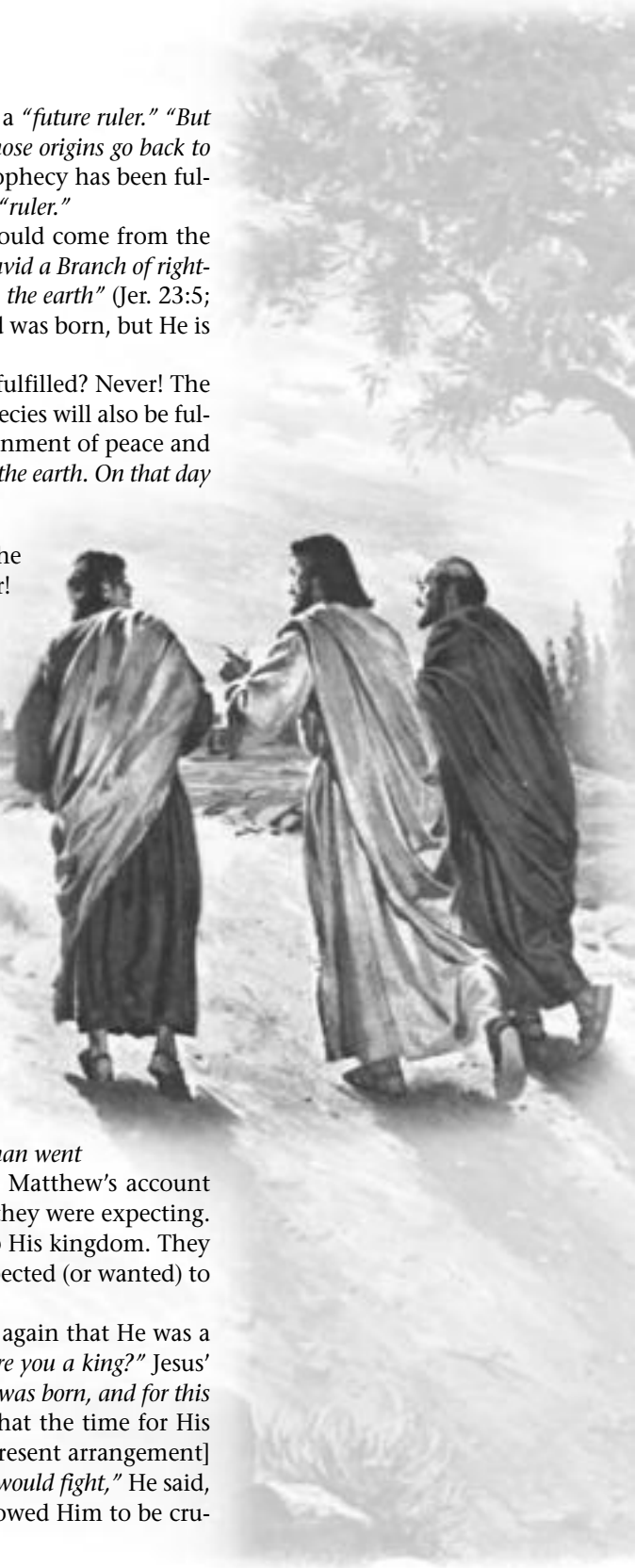
In His parable of the Pounds Jesus tried again to explain. "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return" (Luke 19:12). Matthew's account adds "after a long time..." (Matt. 25:19). But they could not see beyond what they were expecting. They missed the picture of all that was to intervene before Jesus could set up His kingdom. They even missed Jesus' careful explanation because they heard only what they expected (or wanted) to hear: that eventually He would redeem them from their oppressors!

Yet the promise was firm. When Jesus was standing before Pilate, He said again that He was a King, also explaining that His Kingdom was yet future. Pilate asked him, "Are you a king?" Jesus' answer was solidly affirmative. "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). He even explained to Pilate that the time for His kingdom was future. But "My kingdom is not of this world" [this *cosmos*, this present arrangement] (v. 36). If He were to have taken His kingly role at that time, "then My servants would fight," He said, "so that I should not be delivered to the Jews"—His servants would not have allowed Him to be crucified. The time of His coronation was yet future.

WHEN WILL JESUS TAKE THE THRONE?

If the people in Jesus' day had understood the Old Testament book of Daniel, they could have known why Jesus was not taking the steps at that time to make Himself king. The book of Daniel contains prophecies that give amazing details of the events that would intervene before Jesus would set up His kingdom. These prophecies span centuries, reaching from the time of Daniel (about 600 BC) to our day and beyond. They also help us by setting Jesus' kingdom into a timeline we can comprehend because we can recognize the prophecies fulfilled. And just as these events came to pass as foretold, so we can know with certainty that the rest will as surely be fulfilled.

Two prophetic visions recorded in the book of Daniel, chapters 2 and 7, tell of the rise and fall



FIVE WORLD-DOMINATING KINGDOMS PROPHESED

In two prophetic visions, God revealed the coming of five world-dominating kingdoms when only the first was in existence

"There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days...The dream is certain, and its inter-

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM OF THE GREAT IMAGE IN DANIEL 2

1st VISION: "The image's head was of fine gold" (2:32) KINGDOM OF BABYLONIA (626 BC–539 BC)

INTERPRETATION: Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar: "You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory;...you are this head of gold." (2:37–38b)

2nd VISION: "Its chest and arms of silver..." (2:32) KINGDOM OF MEDO-PERSIA (539 BC–331 BC)

INTERPRETATION: "After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours" (2:39)

3rd VISION: "Its belly and thighs of bronze..." (2:32) KINGDOM OF GREECE (331 BC–168 BC)

INTERPRETATION: "Then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth." (2:39)

4th VISION: "Its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay..." (2:33) KINGDOM OF ROME (168 BC–476 AD and forward)

INTERPRETATION: "The fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in

Feet of mixed iron and clay (various states following breakup of Empire): "Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided... they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay." (2:41, 43)

KINGDOM OF JESUS CHRIST

5th

KINGDOM OF GOD AND OF JESUS CHRIST

VISION: "A stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces....And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." (2:34–35)

INTERPRETATION: "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (2:44)

COMMENT: The "stone," representing the Kingdom of Christ, cut from the mountain without human hands (it is God-ordained) will displace all human governments, and

DANIEL'S TWO VISIONS

THE FOUR BEASTS IN DANIEL 7

INTERPRETATION: "The **FOUR BEASTS** are **FOUR KINGS** [KINGDOMS] who shall arise out of the earth." (7:17-18)

VISION: "The first (**BABYLON**) was like a **LION** (very strong), and had **eagle's WINGS** (great speed). I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to **stand on two feet like a**

BABYLON

VISION: "And suddenly another beast, a second, like a **BEAR**. It was **raised up** on one side, and had **three ribs** in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'" (7:5)

COMMENT: The second beast (**MEDO-PERSIA**) was like a **BEAR** raised up on one side (Persia was stronger than Media), and having **3 ribs** in its mouth (Persia conquered 3 nations: **Lydia, Babylon and Egypt**)

MEDO-PERSIA

VISION: "After this I looked, and there was another, like a **LEOPARD**, which had on its back **four wings** of a bird. The beast also had **four heads**, and dominion was given to it." (7:6)

COMMENT: The third beast was a **LEOPARD** (**GREECE**) with **four heads** (the four generals who took over the kingdom after Alexander's death) and **four wings** (symbol of Alexander's great

GREECE

VISION: "After this, a **FOURTH BEAST** (**ROME**), **dreadful and terrible**, exceedingly **strong**. It had huge **iron teeth**; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was **different** from all the beasts that were before it, and it had **ten horns**.

"I was considering the horns,...a little one, coming up among them,...in this **horn**, were eyes like the **eyes of a man**, and a **mouth speaking pompous words**." (7:7-8)

INTERPRETATION: "The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, **even forever**

THE RAM AND MALE GOAT IN DANIEL 8

VISION: "Then I lifted my eyes and saw,...a **ram** which had **two horns**, and the two horns were high; but **one was higher than the other**, and the higher one came up last.

"I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that **no animal could withstand him**;...and **became great**.

"...suddenly a **male goat** came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, **without touching the ground**; and the goat had a **notable horn between his eyes**.

"Then he came to the **ram** that had two horns,...and ran at him with furious power.

"And I saw him confronting the ram;...and **broke his two horns**...but he **cast him down** to the ground and **trampled him**;...

Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the **large horn was broken**, and in place of it **four notable ones came up** toward the four winds of heaven." (8:3-8)

MEDO-PERSIA

GREECE

INTERPRETATION: "The **ram** which you saw, having the **two horns**—they are the **kings of Media and Persia**.

"And the **male goat** is the kingdom of **Greece**. The **large horn** that is between its eyes is the **first king**.

"As for the **broken horn** and the four that stood up in its place, **four kingdoms shall arise** out of that nation, but **not with its power**" (not among his posterity, see Daniel 11:4; 8:20-22)

COMMENT: The fourth beast (Rome) was an empire stronger than any before it, overpowering Greece and assuming primacy during the second century BC. When it began to weaken from within during the third century AD, a "little horn," Papal Rome, united the divided empire under a combined religious-political authority. The Roman Church remained the dominant power for the next thousand years.

INTERPRETATION: "Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. **His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom**, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him." (7:27)

Unlike all kingdoms preceding it, the **FIFTH KINGDOM** will bring:

The END of WAR

He "causes wars to end throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and snaps the spear in two" (Ps. 46:9 NLT).

The END of PAIN, SORROW and DEATH

"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).

The END of VIOLENCE

"Violence will disappear from your land" (Isa. 60:17 NLT)

The END of FEAR and INSECURITY

"Righteousness will bring peace. Quietness and confidence will fill the land forever" (Isa. 32:17 NLT).

KINGDOM OF GOD AND OF JESUS CHRIST

"And it shall stand forever"!!

of four world-dominating kingdoms, to be followed by a fifth, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. A third vision in Daniel 8 gives us additional details of those kingdoms. **The territories of these four kingdoms deal with those parts of the world where the people lived who, through their faith in God and their knowledge of the Bible, could benefit most from the prophecies.**

FIVE KINGDOMS TO COME

In two Divinely given prophetic visions, recorded in the Old Testament book of Daniel, chapters 2 and 7, God gave Daniel insight far into the future. The prophecy states that God was making known *“what will be in the latter days”* (Dan. 2:28).

Using symbolic pictures the prophecies span the centuries from the then dominant kingdom of Babylon all the way to the setting up of Christ’s worldwide Kingdom *“in the latter days.”* The prophecies tell of four world-dominating Kingdoms that would succeed one another, to be followed by a fifth—the kingdom of Jesus Christ—that would *“stand forever”* (Dan. 2:44). These visions contain remarkable, unmistakable details, showing beyond any possibility of doubt that the knowledge came from God, who alone knows the future.

THE VISION OF THE GREAT IMAGE—DANIEL 2

The second chapter of Daniel tells about the dream of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. The king had a dream that left him very troubled, so troubled that *“his sleep left him”* (Dan. 2:1). When the king woke up, he called in his magicians and wise men and demanded to know the meaning of his dream. Of course the magicians were helpless even to guess because the king could not tell them the content of the dream.

In his desperation, the king threatened to have all the wise men put to death.

At this crisis point, Daniel, a Hebrew captive who was living at the king’s court, stepped forward and asked the king for time to seek the answer from his God. That night God answered Daniel’s prayer and gave Daniel the dream and its interpretation. Then giving all credit to God, Daniel delivered the prophecy that is recorded in Daniel 2. *“There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets,”* he began, *“and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days”* (Dan. 2:28).

Daniel was not guessing. He was delivering God’s revealing of the future. God gave the information to Daniel, and Daniel relayed it to the king, also writing it down so that we have it today.

“You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image!” Daniel explained, and he continued to describe the *“great image, whose splendor was excellent, and its form awesome”* (Dan. 2:31). The image had a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

What happened to the image? *“You watched,”* Daniel said to the king, while a supernatural stone *“cut out without hands,...struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth”* (Dan. 2:32–35).

Daniel was not speculating. He knew because God had revealed it.

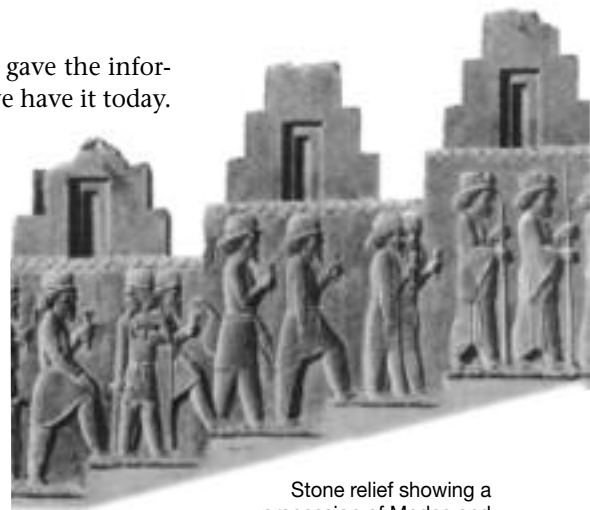
What Did It Mean?

In the verses that follow Daniel explains with all confidence the meaning of the dream as God revealed it to him. The explanation is precise and amazing in its parallel with recorded history. God was revealing to Nebuchadnezzar—and us—a succession of four major, world-dominating kingdoms, to be followed by a fifth power that would sweep away every remaining vestige of the former powers and fill the earth.

FOUR BEASTS—DANIEL 7

In Daniel 7, the same prophecies are symbolized by the four beasts of another vision. The Prophet Daniel sees these four beasts rising *“out of the sea,”* which is followed by the setting up of the kingdom of Jesus Himself. Are we guessing that these beasts represent four great empires? God gave Daniel this very interpretation of the dream: *“Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings [kingdoms] which arise out of the earth”* (Daniel 7:17).

What can we learn about each beast? The description of the beasts is amazingly parallel to the kingdoms they represent. Daniel said, *“I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea [the “sea” represents nations—see Rev. 17:15]. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other”* (Dan. 7:2–3).



Stone relief showing a procession of Medes and two Persians marching up the stairway to the throne room of the palace in Persepolis.

1st: HEAD OF GOLD—BABYLON



Daniel identified Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom with these words: *"You are this head of gold"* (Dan. 2:38). Under Nebuchadnezzar and his successors, the Babylonian Empire extended its authority through the Middle East and the Mediterranean basin with speed and power from the time the prophecy was made (about 605 BC) until its downfall in 539 BC.



Ishtar Gate of Babylon
(reconstructed)

The Processional Way into Babylon passed through the Ishtar Gate. The surface of the gate was decorated with moulded images of bulls, lions, and dragons (right).



Moulded images of bulls (left), lions (center), and dragons (right) made of enameled bricks adorned Babylon's walls and gates. Each brick was fabricated with a number showing its exact position in the finished structure.

2nd: CHEST OF SILVER—MEDO-PERSIA



Then Daniel tells the proud king about a successor kingdom: *"After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours"* (Dan. 2:39a). This kingdom was symbolized in the image by the breast and arms of silver, a representation of the Medo-Persian kingdom.

While Babylon's power was declining, the kingdoms to the south, east and north were being united under Cyrus II. In 539 BC, Cyrus marched against Babylon. The Bible gives us the "inside" story, from the Babylonian side. The Babylonians, confident of their strong walls, their large store of provisions against military siege, and their proven military might, were enjoying a night of revelry and partying, when suddenly a mysterious hand wrote words of Divine judgment on the wall. *"God has numbered your kingdom and finished it,"* said the writing. *"Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."* That very night the Medo-Persian army marched into the city through the river bed and took it without a fight (Dan. 5:26–31).

The fact that the kingdom of Medo-Persia followed the kingdom of Babylon can easily be verified by secular history. The



(left) Persian archer holding bow.



Persian archers from enameled brick walls of King Darius' palace at Susa. Images are almost life-size.

2nd: LOPSIDED BEAR—MEDO-PERSIA



The next world kingdom, in Daniel's God-given dream, Medo-Persia, has a singular description. The prophecy pictures the nation vividly: *"Suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'"* (Dan. 7:5).

How did the kingdom of Medo-Persia come about? And what were the three ribs in the mouth of this "bear"? Only God could have foretold how it would be.

During the power struggle of the sixth century BC (involving Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, and Media), the Persians were insignificant vassals of the Median Empire. The prophecy in Daniel speaks of the Persian rise to power as "sudden" (Dan. 7:5), and it was. "Suddenly" rising from obscurity,

Cyrus II united the Persians and, as though led by some mighty power, began to conquer one nation after another before those nations could rally to each other's aid. First, by defeating the Median king Astyages, Cyrus added the vast Median Empire (rib "1") to Persia, hence Medo-Persia. Next, moving quickly, he took the kingdom of Lydia (Turkey today), which was an ally of the Median king (rib "2"). Then in 539 BC, Cyrus went on to take Babylon (rib "3"). Cyrus prepared to take Egypt, but died before Egypt was added to the Empire (Cyrus' son took Egypt).

Why was this Medo-Persian empire described as a bear *"raised up on one side"*? Because the kingdom was the result of a unit-

famous Cyrus Cylinder, uncovered by archeologists and kept in the British Museum, records a policy of the Persians, describing how Cyrus the Persian took over captive peoples and let them return to their homelands. The Medo-Persian kingdom survived from 539 BC until about 331 BC, when another conqueror appeared on the stage of history.

3rd: THIGHS OF BRONZE—GREECE



Then, said Daniel, “after you shall arise... another, a third kingdom of bronze” (Dan. 2:39b), represented by the thighs of brass or bronze. This “bronze” power was Greece, begun by Alexander the conqueror.

The Greeks ruled from 331 BC until about 168 BC, when they were defeated by the rising “iron” monarchy of Rome.



(above) Stone relief of a battle scene of Alexander the Great from a sarcophagus.



(above) Marble head of Alexander the Great



(right) Image of the god-king. After Alexander's death, Greek coins appeared with Alexander wearing the ram's horn and a diadem of a god.

4th: LEGS IRON & FEET MIXED IRON & CLAY—ROME



Speaking of the Roman Empire, Daniel said, “And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others” (Daniel 2:40).

The Roman Empire grew under the Caesars to be a strong, ruthless dominion. It remained strong from its rise to dominance in the second century BC to the third century AD.

After the legs of iron came “the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron” (Dan. 2:41). What did Daniel say about this part? “The kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay.”

Rome, having decayed from within, was overcome by invading barbarian



Stone statue of Emperor Tiberius

ing of Persia and Media, Persia being the stronger and greater. This same detail is noted in another vision of Daniel's (chapter 8), where the Medo-Persia empire is represented by two horns on a ram, one higher than the other, and the “higher one came up last” (Dan. 8:3). The second (Persia) was stronger than the first (Media).

3rd: FOUR HEADED & WINGED LEOPARD—GREECE



Then came the conqueror Alexander the Great, represented in Daniel's vision by a winged leopard. “After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it” (Dan. 7:6).

Why a leopard with wings? Wings suggest speed, and Alexander worked swiftly. Beginning from almost nothing, Alexander united contentious Greece and went on to conquer Persia in twelve lightning years. Before his 33rd birthday he was the holder of an empire extending from Greece to the Indus River.

There is another detail in Daniel's prophetic picture, also true to reality: This leopard had four heads. Why? When Alexander died, his four generals each took a portion of the empire. Cassander took Macedonia and Greece; Lysimachus took Thrace and much of Asia Minor; Ptolemy took Egypt, Cyrenaica and Palestine; and Syria and the east lands went to Seleucus. This detail was also included in another prophecy in Daniel, which compared Alexander to a “broken horn,” and four horns would stand up in its place, even stating that the four horns represented the four kingdoms to come from the one, “but not with its power (not among his posterity)” (see Daniel 11:4, 8:20–22).

4th: FIERCE & POWERFUL BEAST—ROME



The fourth beast in Daniel's vision is pictured as a beast incredibly fierce: “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had

huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet” (Dan. 7:7). While Greece was still very strong, another power was developing in the west, and in due time came to dominate the Hellenistic kingdoms. The Roman Empire that succeeded Greece was the largest and strongest of the four, and stood the longest.

At this point in the prophecy God introduces a completely new element: a “little horn.” When the Roman Empire

tribes from the north, falling officially in 476 AD.

The divided remnants of the Roman Empire remain today in the various independent states of Europe. True to the prophecy, *"They will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay"* (Dan. 2:43). There has been no successful effort to unite the broken fragments across Europe.

Many would-be conquerors have tried to be that fifth world-dominating power. Napoleon tried, and failed. Mussolini tried, and failed. Stalin, Hitler, and every other would-be conqueror have failed.



Bas-relief of Marcus Aurelius' conquest



A Roman bireme (a galley with two banks of oars). Rome's sea power in the Mediterranean had a strong impact on her longevity.



Statue of a Roman Centurion, a surviving symbol of Rome's majesty.

began to decline in the centuries after Christ, another power was quietly growing to world dominance. That power was the Roman Church. The Churches that had been founded by the Apostles of Jesus very soon started to change their teachings to appeal to the people, just as the Bible predicted (see 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:1-4). In spite of early persecution, this new apostate Church grew rapidly, having *"eyes like the eyes of a man"* (Dan. 7:8); but its authority was human, not Divine, and as it grew stronger and larger, it *"cast truth down to the ground"* (Dan. 8:12).

This little horn power would *"speak pompous words against the Most High"* and *"change times and laws"* (Dan. 7:25). From Constantine (314 AD) forward, the Roman Emperors began to use the Church to unite the empire. Out of the power of the Roman Church grew a vast political-religious system that squelched all opposition and dominated western civilization for the next millennium. For a time it was called *"the Holy Roman Empire,"* united under the head of the Church, politically united under the emperor.

Then, like all the powers before it, it declined. The Reformation forced vast changes in the Roman Church, but it was not overthrown or superceded. As in Daniel's vision, no fifth beast was seen coming from the sea to overthrow it. This absence of a fifth power is significant. In time the Roman system, both political and religious, became less and less dominant, just according to the *"partly iron and partly clay"* prophecy in Daniel 2. But it has not disappeared. The Roman Church is still a voice in the world and its leader is still respected. This situation is destined to continue until the arrival of Jesus Christ.



Symbol of Papal

5th: SUPERNATURAL STONE—CHRIST & SAINTS

What next? Will there ever be a fifth world-dominating kingdom? Daniel's answer from the God of heaven is a resounding "Yes!" Listen to his words: *"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever"* (Daniel 2:44).

How is this fifth kingdom represented in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar? By a rock cut out of the mountain *"without hands"* (vs. 34-35). This next kingdom will not depend on any human agents to bring it into being. God Himself is behind it, for this will be the kingdom of Jesus Christ. And just as Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, it will result in the removal of the last vestige of human misgovernment, and will grow, and grow, and grow until it fills the whole earth (see Ps. 72:7-8; Isa. 52:10; Zech. 14:9; Psalm 2).

How sure is this prophecy? Notice that it has two seals on it: *"certain"* and *"sure."* Daniel 2:45 reads: *"...the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."* ♦

KINGDOM OF GOD AND OF JESUS CHRIST

"And it shall stand forever"!!

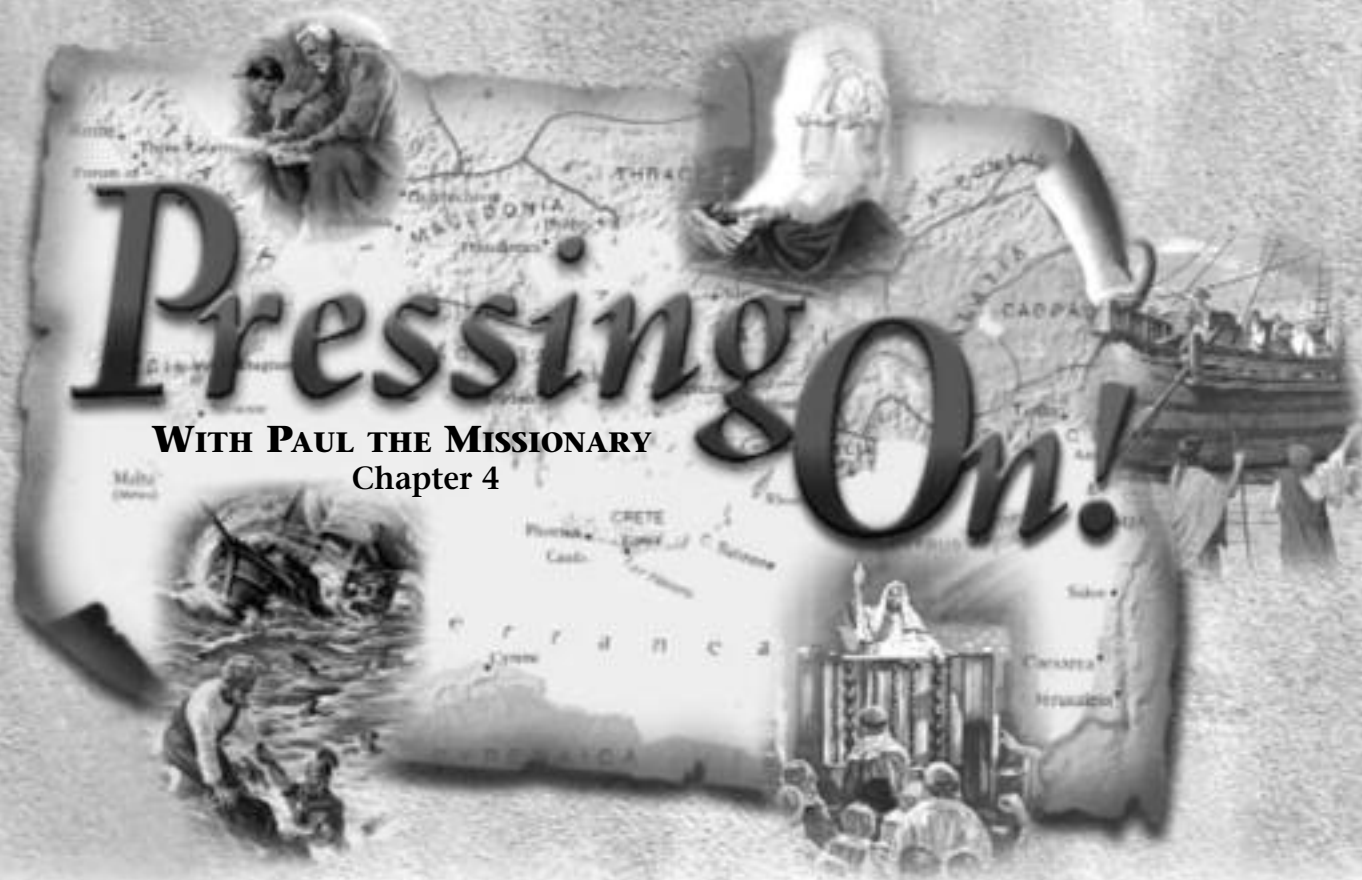
5th: ANCIENT OF DAYS—CHRIST & SAINTS

The narrative in Daniel 7 reveals the presence of remnants of this Roman system still surviving when Jesus Christ returns as King. Daniel said, *"I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days [Christ] came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom"* (Daniel 7:21-22).

Jesus Christ is coming! The promise of the angel to Mary before Jesus' birth will yet be fulfilled. *"He will be great,...and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David...and of His kingdom there will be no end"* (Luke 1:31-33). He will come as King of kings, and Lord of lords. He will come to set up a worldwide dominion of peace and righteousness (Isa. 32:17-18), and reign eternally.

Now is the time to get ready to live in that Kingdom, because it IS coming. The God of heaven has decreed it.

Whether anyone chooses to believe or disbelieve does not change God Almighty's plans. Our Lord is coming just as He promised when He went away (Acts 1:10-11). He may not come this year. On the other hand—He may! He is coming! ♦



Vision Of The Future

SYNOPSIS

The Biblical record of Paul's life ends with his stay in Rome, under house arrest. It is through Clement of Rome, who died A. D. 101, that we are able to follow Paul's journey until the end. According to Clement, Paul was acquitted of the charges against him, which were vague at best. He returned to the mission field where he was active for a short time before being arrested again and returning to Rome. Here, c. AD 67 or 68, Paul was martyred by order of Emperor Nero. This account may or may not be true, but there is nothing improbable in it.

In this scene, the **Great Apostle**, thinner and grayer, sits chained in a gloomy dungeon awaiting the Imperial verdict. There is a high barred window at rear center stage. At left front, rising to the level of the corridor outside is a short flight of stone steps which lead to a heavy door with a grated window. The only furnishings are a straw bunk covered by a blanket, a stool, and a crude table.

In the dim light Paul is trying to read. The key grates in the lock and the door swings inward, as the Jailer's voice is heard.

Jailer: A visitor for you, Sir. (Paul rises, Rufus, a young Greek, enters, carrying a small basket.)

Paul: (looks up—definitely pleased) Oh, good morning, Rufus, or is it afternoon? I can hardly tell day from night in this cell.

Rufus: It is afternoon, Brother Paul, a very hot afternoon. I have brought you some food which we hope will tempt your appetite.

Paul: (lifting cloth) All this—for me?

Rufus: Yes, you know how Mother is.

Paul: Indeed—your mother, whom I honor as my own. She did so much for me back in Berea and continued to provide when I first came to Rome as a prisoner, shipwrecked and penniless. (pauses in retrospect) It was your people who helped me find a house for hire. And your dear mother paid my first month's rent herself. Throughout my first imprisonment she sent me food and comforts and now this generosity. How can I ever thank your family enough, Rufus? How can I repay you?

Rufus: The thanks are on our side, Brother Paul, for we could never repay you for your loving, steadfast leadership. If you only knew how good your face looked that day when we met you at Milo's tavern—

Paul: (beaming at the thought) Probably as good as yours looked to me. (spots letter—immensely pleased) I see you have a letter for me.

Rufus: Yes, from Timothy. (hands letter to Paul) Go right ahead and read it; don't mind me.

Paul: (after reading silently) It is mostly church business, Rufus. The Church in Ephesus is having its troubles, with heresy, backsliding, and ordinary human nature. Timothy has his hands full, poor lad.

Rufus: How is Timothy's health?

Paul: Much better. His visit to me last winter was too much for him, I fear. He says the Church is praying daily for my release, but so far as I can see, it does not appear to be in God's will. We were both fortunate to escape the great persecution in which so many of our brothers and sisters died. But the end must come some time. I have filed an appeal, but the Emperor has no love for me since I converted one of his favorites. *(impassive)* He took it personally, so I hear.

Rufus: *(jumps back when rat scurries by)* Ooooh! He was big! *(with disdain)* How can you live with such creatures?

Paul: *(shrugs shoulder)* Not exactly my choice of companions—but one gets used to them.

Rufus: I couldn't stand this awful place! I'd go mad.

Paul: Oh, it could be worse. And Rufus, when all is said and done, what can I do about it? My jailer is kind, but he has his orders. The food is bad, but this is true in prisons the world over—at least I've found it so. I'm not complaining—*(voice changes as his mind turns to his heart's concern)* There is still so much to do, and so few to do it. There are subversive forces to be fought in the Churches. There are letters to be written. I wish I were two, so I could do more. Luke has been a great blessing; I am grateful that he is permitted to see me every day.

Rufus: Is there anything I can do for you, Brother Paul?

Paul: *(rising and speaking very earnestly)* Yes, Rufus, there is. I know I shall not be with you long. As I face the end I have no fear for myself, for I have searched my heart and feel that my personal work is done. Now someone else must carry on. That someone is you, Rufus—you and all the brothers and sisters who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

The greatest comfort you can give me is your promise that you will be true to the faith, an example to the flock, and a voice for Christ. All the way to the end, however that end may come. You must do everything in your power to keep yourself pure, and the Church pure, so that we may all live together, world without end, *(Paul's face glows in anticipation)* in the future Kingdom of Christ on earth. Will you promise me, Rufus? *(clasps his hand)*

Rufus: *(solemnly)* Yes, Brother Paul, I will. For you, for God, for my own salvation, and for the glory of the Church of Christ, I promise you. I will be true.

(the door opens—Jailer takes a couple of steps inside)

Jailer: *(rather apologetically)* Time to go, Sir.

Rufus: Farewell, Brother, I will see you again. *(He presses Paul's hand between his encouragingly and exits)*

(The door closes. Paul paces a turn or two, then sits on his bunk, reclining as weariness overcomes him. A shining Angel enters. Paul rises in awe, then falls to his knees. The Angel raises him up.)

Angel: Fear not, Brother Paul. I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God. I have come to strengthen you, for you are greatly beloved. Be of good courage, faithful servant of Almighty God. Do not fear what men can do to the mortal body, for your name is written in the Book of Life and no man can blot it out. *(lovingly)* Only a little longer to endure, and you shall rest securely until the last Day.

Paul: *(eagerly)* Tell me—tell me, O Gabriel! What will happen to my beloved Churches when I am gone?

Angel: *(tenderly)* As you know—they will be severely tested. *(emphatically)* But the Church of God is stronger than the power of Imperial Rome or any earthly power. In the end the power of God shall triumph and turn all other authorities to dust. But as you know, things must first decay and decline. The prophecies are moving rapidly toward their fulfillment. The power of darkness will grow stronger and stronger—the mystery of iniquity is already working and will continue until the last living witness is destroyed and true religion is dead, just as the Prophet Daniel foretold. The darkness will prevail for a time, times, and a half a time—1,260 years.

Paul: *(rapt with anxiety)* And then—?

Angel: Then true religion will once again stand upright, never again to fall! This will be in the last hour of the day, the last chapter in this part of God's great plan of salvation.

Paul: *(eager for a glimpse into the future)* How will this come about?

Angel: An excellent teacher, a faithful and wise servant of God will be raised up to perform this mighty work, and the religion of Jesus Christ will be taught once again.

Paul: How will he be instructed? Will he have the Holy Spirit to guide and support him, as I have had?

Angel: No, he will labor by faith alone. No vision, no miracle, no sight or voice of angels, but he will have something very precious. He will have the complete, written Word of God to guide him. That Word will include the Scriptures you had, plus the accounts of Jesus' ministry and teaching. It will also include many of your Epistles to the Churches, and a few from other Apostles. *(enthusiastically)* Then at the very last, Jesus will send...well, I must not reveal it now. You will find out in time—

Paul: *(with deep longing)* Ohhhh! Oh, that I could go on and see...but *(as if waking from a dream)* it is enough. I can wait.

(Paul again falls to his knees as the Angel leaves, and remains kneeling in prayer)

Next: "I Have Finished My Course."

FAITH *in Action*



Acts 20:6–12 (NKJV)

6 But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

8 There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together.

9 And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.

10 But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him."

11 Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.

12 And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

by RUTH E. SISSON

ON WITH THE THIRD JOURNEY

On to Troas

Leaving Philippi, the missionary party departed for Troas, seven brothers going by land, and Paul and Luke traveling by sea. At last Paul could respond to the "open door" at Troas that he was not able to answer fully before (2 Cor. 2:12).

1. How long did the missionaries stay at Troas? (20:6) _____
2. What was the Church's custom for gathering together? (20:7) _____

It seems that the believers in Troas were accustomed to gathering weekly on the first day of the week, where they shared a spiritual feast as well as a dinner together.

A Long Sermon at Troas

 Read Acts 20:7–12

Paul was not acquainted with the modern school of thought that a sermon should be limited to about 20 minutes. And the elders at Troas apparently did not give Paul an exact time to finish, with instructions that he should not run late by more than a minute or two. The Troas Ecclesia saw Paul's visit as a one-time opportunity, and were eager to learn as much as they could while he was with them.

Paul took the floor, and the hours flew by. Soon it was midnight, and Paul was still speaking. With so much to say, he simply ignored the clock.

Was Paul inconsiderate? Did he forget that many of these people were slaves, and had to be up at the crack of dawn? Some of them may have already worked all that day in the fields and were bone tired. But we hear of no complaints about the length of the meeting. No doubt some grew tired and unwillingly restless, and children fell asleep. But still Paul preached on.

Oh, that we could have had a recording of Paul's message that night!



3. Where were the believers gathered? on what floor? (20:9) _____
4. What happened as Eutychus sat in the window? (20:9) _____
5. When Paul went down to see Eutychus, what was his response (20:10) _____
6. How do we know that Eutychus was normal after the miracle? (20:12) _____
7. What in the Bible text shows that Eutychus had really died? (20:12) _____

The room where they were assembled was the third floor of a building. The air was close. Candles and lamps provided light and added to the heat, as well as using up some of the oxygen. Perhaps the only air available to the room came through an open window in which a young man named Eutychus was sitting.

Eutychus was young, likely between the ages of 12 and 14. He may have been a slave, and had worked hard all day. His head would droop, he would shake himself awake, catch a little more of Paul's message, then drift off again, then shake himself again. We all know what it feels like. Finally, sleep took over, and—thud! Eutychus had fallen out the window.

Everyone rushed down the stairs, including Brother Paul. In a matter of minutes the room was empty.

And there lay Eutychus, lifeless on the ground.



Insight

Was Eutychus Dead?

Some believe that because Paul said, *"Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him"* (20:10), Paul did not have to raise him from the dead. What they fail to recognize is the very clear statement of the text, that Eutychus was *"taken up dead"* (20:9), and the word translated *"dead"* is *nekros*, meaning, "one who has breathed his last, lifeless, deceased."

The context does not allow for anything other than the fact that Eutychus was literally dead. When Paul said, *"his life is in him,"* he meant that God had restored his life. Luke confirms by reporting that afterward *"They brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted"* (20:12).

Perhaps Paul wanted to play down the fact of his death because he did not want the usual mourning rituals to begin that would have been in line with the customs of the time. It was more important to restore the young man to life and to go on with the message and the strengthening of the brethren.

Remember that this was Paul's last night in Troas. In the morning the missionaries would be journeying on to

(left) Eutychus falls from third story window in Troas during Paul's preaching.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF "BIBLEPLACES.COM"



(above) Remains of **Troas** today.

Troas, located 20 miles southwest of Troy, was built in 310 BC, and passed through the hands of several conquerors. In 33 BC it came under Roman rule, and was an important Aegean seaport for Asia Minor.



(above) **Assos** coastline looking eastward from the Acropolis. Assos is built on a volcanic cone 700 feet high, making it a naturally well-fortified site.

(left) **Troas** view south along route to **Assos**. Today's view of this beautiful open country is similar to what the Apostle Paul would have seen in his day.



A closer look

On the first day of the week

Instead of continuing the Jewish Sabbath observance, it seems that the early Church adopted the pattern of gathering to worship on the first day of the week, perhaps as a remembrance of Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week. Believers were no longer dutybound to keep the Sabbath law of the Jews, because that law had ended at the death of Christ (Col. 2:14). Still, they adhered to the principle of setting aside one day in seven, a practice that had been in place even before the law from Sinai (Ex. 16:22–23). God knew that His people needed time to be spiritually refreshed, and planned time set aside was vital to maintaining spiritual life. They were not to neglect assembling together (Heb. 10:24–25) but to stir and encourage each other.

Having a meal together once a week was another bond of fellowship common among the believers. It was also a special blessing for those who were slaves, many of whom might not have another good meal during the entire

8. What did Paul do to turn everyone's thoughts away from the disturbance of Eutychus' fall? (20:11) _____

9. What did Paul do the rest of the night? (20:11) _____

The word Luke used to describe Paul's talk following the second meal is a serious word, suggesting a solemn discourse (homileo). It was the word Luke used to describe the conversation between the two disciples on the road to Emmaus as they walked and were sad (Luke 24:14–15).

The brethren knew that these were their last hours with Brother Paul, that they would not see him again until they would meet in the Kingdom. They also knew that Paul was going out to suffer persecution, affliction, and pain. Their last hours of conversation with Paul were indeed serious. At the same time, we know that Paul brightened his message with hope. He was ready for whatever lay ahead. His eye was fixed on the goal of life eternal. He was pressing on and pointing them in the same direction.

10. Leaving Troas, where did Paul's company go next? (20:13–15) _____

11. How did Paul himself travel? (20:13) _____

It looks like Paul chose to travel alone rather than with the others for the short distance from Troas to the ship (about 20 miles by foot, 30 miles by sailing). He needed time for spiritual renewal. The whole journey had been strenuous, ever since he left Ephesus for Macedonia and Greece. He needed time to recharge his spiritual batteries, to think over what had happened and prepare for what was yet to come, and be sure that he was walking right.

Paul also needed time to prepare for the upcoming meeting with the Ephesian elders. In a short time he would be spending his last hours with these people with whom he shared strong bonds in Christ, these people with whom he was one in hope and purpose and heart. Paul was keenly aware that this was a one-time opportunity, and he wanted to give them the utmost in encouragement and hope. How could he make every word and impression heart piercing? What could he say that would fire them up to go the whole way for the prize of life eternal in Christ Jesus? What would help them most to continue strong and steadfast to the end? What would fortify them against the wolves that were already entering among them? Paul wanted to be at his very best for this final meeting with these dear brothers and sisters with whom his own heart was knit together in love.

Sailing to Miletus

The 20-mile walk passed quickly, and Paul rejoined the other missionaries on board the ship that would take them to Miletus, where they would meet the Ephesian elders.

A sailing vessel traveling along the coastline from town to town was very different from one headed across the open seas. The season was early summer, and the weather would likely have been pleasant and balmy.

Can't we picture the seven brothers with Paul and Luke, all sitting on the deck in a circle, enjoying the pleasant breeze and sunshine as they shared heart to heart their thoughts about Christ and their calling, their own personal struggles and victories, and the experiences they had had with the brothers and sisters in the various places they had been? And can't we picture Paul sharing his deeper insights and special visions, along with bright glimpses into the future?

PHOTOS COURTESY OF "BIBLEPLACES.COM"

(above) Ancient wall and gate at **Assos**

(right) **Assos** view to west from acropolis
Assos is located in a region of Mysia (northwest Asia Minor) resting on the Gulf of Adramyttium.

On the last leg of his third missionary journey, Paul walked from **Troas** to **Assos**, where he again joined his companions, who had gone ahead of him by sea. This decision to walk the 20-mile trek may have given him more time with the believers at Troas—he knew he would not be seeing them again. Or he may have simply wanted time alone to think and pray and recharge his spiritual batteries for the rest of the journey.

These were precious hours of fellowship. Here was time for prayer, time to rehearse the Scriptures, time to reflect, regroup, and renew. It was time to get a fresh perspective between the ministry of Jesus, their own ministry as His disciples, and the coming Kingdom of Christ! If only their conversation could have been recorded for us!

Paul was on a mission to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost, if possible. Pentecost was just 50 days after the Passover, and he and Luke had left Philippi for Troas in April, immediately after Passover (20:6). Paul still had hope of reaching Jerusalem by early June. For this reason he did not feel he could stay long at Ephesus. Still, he wanted to see them.

A Pastor's Farewell

When the ship docked at Miletus, we can picture the elders of Ephesus right there meeting Paul and the other brothers.

12. Why did Paul not stop at Ephesus? (20:16) _____

13. What did he do instead of stopping at Ephesus? (20:17) _____

14. Where did Paul meet the elders of Ephesus? (20:17) _____

Paul briefly recapped his whole ministry. The Jews had plotted against him time after time, yet he went about his work teaching and preaching from house to house and in the public lecture hall (20:20).

They saw Paul as one who had mastered his pride, who could take the insults of his opponents without losing heart. They had seen in Paul one who could not be dulled by opposition, and who though exhausted still pressed on. They had seen one who could take criticism without being offended or upset.

Paul reminded the Ephesian elders how he had always told them the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He had held nothing back that was for their good (20:20). He had told them the pleasant things, and the hard things, too. He never watered down the truth to make it more palatable or comfortable. When they had been in the wrong, he had corrected them. When they had done well, he had commended them.

15. What was Paul's principal gospel? (20:21) _____

Not only had he told them the truth, but he had told it to everyone, Jew or Greek alike. He had made no difference between them. They were all one in Christ. To all of them he had preached a gospel of *"repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"* (20:21). He had no favorites, and showed no partiality.

16. What did Paul say about what lay ahead for him? (20:22-23) _____

17. What word(s) would you use to describe his attitude toward the inevitable suffering ahead? a) unconcerned b) unmoved c) fear or d) trust? (20:24) _____

18. Who did Paul say had given him his job assignment? (20:24) _____

19. What was the one main subject of all his preaching? (20:25) _____

20. How completely had he done his job? (20:27) _____

Acts 20:13-38 (NKJV)

13 Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot.

14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.

15 We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus.

16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: *"You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,*

19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;

20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,

21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

25 And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.



A closer look

Living and Caring

From Paul's parting visit with the Ephesian elders, we learn a little about Paul personally, and how he related to his Christian family. Paul spoke to them as a pastor, one who loved and cared for them. His words in Acts 20 show a long and close personal attachment to these believers. Clearly they were one in hope, one in mind, one in purpose. They were one family in Christ.

Paul reminded them of what he had done for them. He had lived among them. They had seen him at work. They had seen how he lived. They had known him as a brother. They had seen him endure hardships for the gospel.

That is why Paul could say, "Copy me, as I copy Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1 Moffatt).

DON'T BE ANGRY

1. Why does Proverbs 22:24–25 advise against associating with “a man given to anger”?
a. He'll make you cry b. You might learn his ways
c. You could ensnare yourself d. Both B & C
2. Proverbs 15:1 says “A _____ turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”
a. Wise man b. Strong shield c. Gentle answer d. Closed mouth
3. In Genesis 49, which two of his sons does Jacob not wish to take council with because of their fierce anger and cruel wrath?
a. Gad & Asher b. Zebulun & Issachar
c. Reuben & Judah d. Simeon & Levi
4. What does Ecclesiastes 7:9 say about the quick tempered person?
a. He gets his way
b. Nobody really likes him
c. He is likely to hurt himself
d. He is a fool
5. What does Proverbs 25:28 say “a man who has no control over his spirit” is like?
a. A dog who returns to his vomit b. A river in flood
c. An overrun city without walls d. A Philistine
6. In 1 Timothy 2:8, what does Paul say we are to do “without wrath or dissension”?
a. Pray b. Live c. Minister d. Communicate
7. What behavior are we told to put aside in Colossians 3:8?
a. Anger b. Wrath c. Malice
d. Slander e. Abusive speech f. All of the above
8. In Proverbs 14:29 we read “He who is quick-tempered exalts _____.”
a. Money b. Himself c. Fear d. Folly
9. Proverbs 19:11 says acting sensibly makes one slow to anger, and that being willing to overlook a wrong:
a. Is to his glory b. Makes him weak
c. Buys him a friend d. Will cause him grief
10. James 1:20 says, that human anger does not produce _____.
a. Anything b. The righteousness God desires
c. The blessing of grace d. Wisdom
11. Which characteristics would disqualify an aspiring bishop (Titus 1:7)?
a. drunkard b. greedy for money c. violent
d. quick tempered e. all of the above f. none of the above

answers on page 20

FROM DANIEL

1. What King of Babylon was responsible for taking Daniel into captivity?
2. What nationality were Daniel and his friends?
3. What were the Hebrew names of Daniel's three friends?
4. What Babylonian names were assigned to Daniel and his three friends?
5. What did the King make for the officials and rulers of his country to worship?
6. Why did Daniel's three friends stand out among all the worshipers of the king?
7. What was the punishment for refusing to comply with the King's command?
8. How do we know they believed their God was able to deliver them from the king's wrath?
9. How many men were thrown into the fiery furnace?
10. What did the king see in the fiery furnace with the men he had thrown in?
11. What burned on the men who came out of the fire?
12. Why was Daniel thrown to the lions?
13. Which Babylonian king was feasting when his kingdom fell and he was killed? What country conquered Babylon?





When a koala isn't eating, it is usually sleeping.

Fuzzy, Furry, Friendly KOALA BEAR

Koalas have special hands and feet to help them hang on tightly when they climb trees. They have *two thumbs* on each hand and sharp claws on both hands and feet.



Koalas are able to get almost everything they need for living from eucalyptus trees, because their bodies are so completely suited to life in the trees.



The koala baby is about 8 inches long



For two months it still uses it as a place to sleep and a place to hide.

Actual Size

At birth, a koala baby is incredibly small. It is only about 3/4 of an inch long and weighs about *one fifth* of an ounce (5.5 grams). The baby koala is smaller than a nickel. Within five minutes, the baby crawls into the pouch (the pouch is open at the back) where it attaches itself to a steady source of milk.



When baby koalas get too big for the pouch, their mothers start carrying them on their backs.



digesting organ, the caecum, which allows more time for bacteria to break down the otherwise indigestible eucalypti fiber.

As this animal rarely drinks, the koala's body must absorb as much water as it can from eucalyptus leaves. Notably, the koala's name comes from an aboriginal word for "does not drink." Their large noses can detect differences between eucalyptus trees, allowing them to choose those with the highest moisture content. The koala rarely drinks water except if—during a draught—the water content of the eucalyptus leaves is reduced. If necessary, the koala can store harvested leaves in

its large cheek pouches and carry them away for future use.

Eucalyptus leaves are extremely poisonous to most animals. Why aren't koalas "drugged out" on



A koala sniffs every eucalyptus leaf before eating it. They are very fussy eaters.



these leaves? Again, our great Designer has equipped the koala to handle this problem. During its slow digestive process, the liver and bacteria in the stomach detoxify the poisonous chemicals of the eucalyptus leaves. (How did the koala evolve this unique process and get it into its genes to pass onto its offspring?)

Although the koala's system must work hard to survive on a diet made up of solely eucalyptus, it is not without advantages. The scent of the eucalyptus permeates the koalas' fur, and the strong cough-syrupy scent keeps them relatively free from parasites.

Their thick, eucalyptus scented fur, also protects them from all sorts of weather—their only shelter is that of the tree branches. And while their pear-shaped body makes them

adorable in the eyes of humans, it also provides great stability for the koala who spends most of its time sitting in trees. They are well suited for their arboreal life. Their bottoms are extra-furry, a cushion of sorts for all the sitting they do. Their Designer has also given them two opposable fingers on their front paws that act against their three fingers like our thumbs do. This "tool" is ideal for clutching a branch. Koalas are master climbers. Clinging and climbing are as much a part of the koala's life cycle as the eucalyptus, if not more so.

Tiny Joey

Female koalas have one baby a year, during the summer-time (while it is winter in the USA). About 35 days after mating, a koala baby (called a joey like all marsupial babies) is born. Weighing about 5.5 grams at birth and no larger than a jellybean, blind, earless and hairless, it climbs through its mother's fur and into her pouch, where it lives and grows on a steady supply of its mother's milk. After about seven months, the joey emerges and spends the next several months clinging to its mothers back, during which time it is weaned and develops a tolerance for eucalyptus leaves. By the time the next breeding season comes around, joey will have moved to its own tree, not too far from its mother's.

Habitat

Koalas are somewhat solitary creatures. Except for mother/joey and mating couples, koalas do not share trees. However, they do live in communities consisting of an area of forest under one dominant male, perhaps a few subdominant males and a handful of female koalas. When searching for its own territory a koala will not only seek out areas with plenty of food and shelter but also (and perhaps more importantly) areas where there are other koalas. Once established, they are sedentary animals, maintaining one area as home all their lifetime of between 13 and 17 years.

With few enemies aside from humans, without drinking, without shelter except that of the trees and their coats, these amazing creatures live their lives in their very specific environment and are uniquely suited to it. How did they do it? How did they adapt themselves to their environment? They are another evidence of our all-knowing, all-powerful Creator.

Like all of us, they are gifted with unique abilities that allow them to survive. Truly they are another incredible and adorable reason to give thanks and praise to our Awesome God, "*who does great things, unfathomable, and wondrous works without number*" (Job 9:10 NASB). ♦

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 18

DON'T BE ANGRY

- (d) You might learn his ways and ensnare yourself
- (c) Gentle answer
- (d) Simeon & Levi
- (d) He is a fool
- (c) An overrun city without walls
- (a) Pray
- (f) All of the above
- (d) Folly
- (a) Is to his glory
- (b) The righteousness God desires
- (e) All of the above

FROM DANIEL

- Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 1:1–6)
- Jewish (Dan. 1:6)
- Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (Dan. 1:6)
- Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Dan. 1:6–7)
- A golden image (Dan. 3:1–5)
- Because they refused to dishonor the true God by bowing to an earthly monarch (Dan. 3:12)
- They were to be thrown into a burning, fiery furnace (Dan. 3:11)
- "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us" (Dan. 3:17)
- Three (Dan. 3:23)
- An angel, described as "*one like the Son of God*" (Dan. 3:24–25, 28)
- Nothing (Dan. 3:25–27)
- Because Daniel prayed to his God in spite of the decree that anyone who petitioned any other than the king would be thrown into the lion's den (Dan. 6:10–16)
- Belshazzar, Medo-Persia (Dan. 5:1, 30, 31)

THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS?

I have just read an older issue of your magazine (March/April 2002). Your determination of the days of Christ's death and resurrection is not consistent with Christ's own statement that He would be buried for three days and three nights (Matt. 12:40). You need to recalculate your days in some manner that allows for burial of three days and three nights.

To understand the Biblical statement that Jesus would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, we need to notice several facts.

Three full days and three full nights would be exactly 72 hours from the time of His burial. The account in the gospels relates that the women came "very early in the morning" on the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1) bringing their spices to anoint the body, when they found Jesus already resurrected. If He was buried at 6 PM on the same day He died, it is not possible that He could be exactly three days and three nights between a late afternoon on a given day and an early morning on another day. (Note: A Jewish day was figured from 6:00 pm to 6:00 pm.)

Among the texts providing the background for the full three days and three nights are the following: Matt. 12:38–40; 27:63; Mark 8:31; 9:31; John 2:18–22. Each of these statements showed that a number of factors were included in the three days and three nights forecast, not just Christ's actual stay in the tomb. Luke 24: 20–21 is specific. This is part of the conversation between Jesus and the two brothers who were walking on the road to Emmaus. When they were telling Jesus about the recent events, they said, "How the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him,...[and] besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened." This statement shows that the three days included the time from His betrayal, through His condemnation, crucifixion, death, and burial, as well as the time actually spent in Joseph's new tomb, through to the point of resurrection. The disciple was specific, that this was the actual afternoon of the third day since those things enumerated were done. If this statement is true, we cannot accept a theory which would say that Christ was in the tomb literally three days and three nights.

In the Gospels are nine references to Jesus' approaching death, in which a period of three days and three nights is

mentioned. But again we should note that in each of these instances His mistreatment by wicked men is included. For example, take the account of the resurrection in the King James Version, Luke 24, beginning at verse 1. The women came early in the morning the first day of the week bringing the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away, and the tomb empty. Two men in shining garments (angels) appeared, saying to them, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: Remember how he spake unto you while he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (verses 1–7). Here is the explanation for our question. "The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men (be betrayed and arrested), and be crucified, and the third day rise again." The whole category of events would take place during the three days and three nights.

Any fraction of the third day could be indicated. It was simply a fact that the events spanned a period of three days, though not necessarily all of each day.

We should also observe that Jesus was never placed in the heart of the physical earth. Joseph's new rock-hewn tomb was cut in a hillside, where they were able to roll a stone up against the entrance. Put in Biblical language, the term "earth" is used to refer to the people of the earth. For example Jeremiah 22:29, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!" Or Isaiah 34:1, "Come near, you nations, to hear; And heed, you people! Let the earth hear."

If we understand Jesus being "in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40 KJV) as His being in "the hands of sinful men" (Luke 24:7 NKJV), we have harmony, because Jesus was in the hands of sinful men during parts of three days and nights. He was betrayed on the evening of Abib 13, was delivered by Judas into the "hands of sinful men", was tried and crucified and buried before the close of that day, Abib 13, which gives us one night and a day. The night following the day of the crucifixion, and all of the next day (Abib 14) He lay in the tomb, which totals two nights and two days. Plus the night and early morning of Abib 15 when Jesus was resurrected from the dead. So the disciples could say in the closing hours of the 15th of Abib, "today is the third day since these things happened," and the prophecy was fulfilled that Jesus was "three days and three nights in the 'earth,' in the hands of sinful men" (Luke 24:7). ♦


To grieve over sin is one thing; to repent is another.

*We can't lead someone else to the light
while we are standing in the dark.*

We can always live on less when we have more to live for.

***“Restore to me again the
joy of your salvation.”***

Psalm 51:12 NLT



You would think it very strange if I were to wish you an “Unhappy New Year.” Yet there is a case to be made for the possibilities that lie in being unhappy.

Look first at that experience we call pain. In the view of most of us, pain is an awful thing. So we have Tylenol for our headaches, Motrin for arthritis, Roloids for our stomach distress, Dristan for our nasal drip, and Thera-Gesic for our muscle aches. And, under prescriptions from physicians, we may find even greater relief from our distresses.

Even the smallest of nature’s creatures, the one-celled animal, gravitates naturally toward pleasurable experiences and seeks to avoid the unpleasant. Everyone likes pleasure. Almost no one likes or enjoys pain.

Yet pain is our ally. It is the warning signal of trouble. The story is told of a man who almost died from a ruptured appendix, because too much time elapsed before he had surgery. But the problem couldn’t be helped, because he had no pain. Had the pain been present, diagnosis would have been easier.

A man who counsels others says: “Often people come into my office under some great mental anguish. As they relate their problems, I sense that they hurt deeply inside and are often moved to tears, whether it be personal or involving others. But in spite of the painful condition, I sense that in the pain itself there is hope. Less sensitive people wouldn’t be there. When a person has done some wrong and is pained by it, I feel that the first step has been taken toward the solution.”

And taking immediate action is important. If one feels pain in the body and stubbornly ignores it, he may be waiting until too late. Recognizing and doing something about the pain is all important. Even though pain seems a terrible thing, it is also our ally. It may point to the illness or to the place of infection and cry out, “You had better do something about this now!” The greater the pain, the more intense the feeling of urgency.

How can we apply this lesson to ourselves? Far too easily life settles down into living in the same old rut. We accept our mediocrities, our moral failures, our stage in life as inevitable. Life is drab. Or we have lost our awareness of the will and way of God. We walk in our own way.

Sadly, it is not hard to find middle-aged people who are spiritual dropouts, no longer caring about God, no longer feeling sensitive to His judgment of right or wrong. Maybe they

started out with a spiritual direction, but during adolescence, or in college, under the pressure of their peers, they came not to need God anymore. Would it not be marvelous if such people could feel themselves in an unhappy state, goaded by the pain, to seek the goal of eternal life?

What is this pain? Let’s call it the guilty conscience. Says a leading psychiatrist, “When someone comes to see me with a guilty feeling about some wrong committed, I actually rejoice, since I know that they are well on the road to recovery if they deal with the guilt properly.”

But there are those who say to the feeling of guilt, “Forget it!” Or “You shouldn’t feel that way. You have a right to make your own decisions.” Guilt is out of date, because guilt reduces one’s self-esteem and makes one feel vulnerable. How contrary is this philosophy to that declared by the God of heaven through His prophet Ezekiel, “*Then you will remember your past sins and hate yourselves for all the evil things you did*” (Ezek. 36:31 NLT). People today often trim their morality to suit their own notions. But from God’s point of view, it will not work. It will not work because it cannot produce the level of character God is looking for.

Is it not one of the problems of our world that we have lost the guilty conscience? Someone has commented, “We lost God first, then we lost His will, and with this loss went conscience.” God is no longer authority to this permissive generation. People make up their own minds about what is right and what is wrong. Social practices which would have been heartily condemned a few years ago are now tolerated in all circles, even in better society.

Many are often missing from God’s house of worship, and feel no guilt because they have no conscience. What is needed is pain to show the place of infection.

If we doubt this, we have only to look at those who have been saved by such feelings of pain. There are many examples in the Bible. One is that of king David recorded in Psalm 51. Here is a classic picture of one who loved God but fell away from Him in a moment of passion. He allowed his lust to lead him to adultery, then to cover his carnality he engineered the death of a loyal member of his armed forces.

What brought the pain to a climax? The Prophet Nathan, sent by God, confronted the king. “*You have done wrong,*” was the core of his message. Psalm 51 records David’s heart response to the pain of sin. Penitently he cried out, “*Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my shameful deeds—they haunt me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight....Your judgment against me is just*” (vs. 1–4 NLT).

That pain made David the sinner take the road to becoming David the forgiven. And with forgiveness came real joy: *"Restore to me again the joy of your salvation"* (Ps. 51:12 NLT). His spiritual health was a direct result of the pain he felt in his conscience, because it said, something is wrong, and he corrected it.

If we turn to the New Testament, we find a man like the most of us—Simon Peter. He was weak and vacillating. Recall the night in the palace courtyard when he denied that he even knew Christ! To add to his shame, Peter remembered that Christ had predicted that very evening that he would deny Him three times. When the reality of his sin struck him, Peter wept. He wept bitterly. Had he not felt this dejection, this guilt, this pain, there might have been no great apostle Peter, or no great leader of the early Church named Peter.

It is in the very place where sin hits hardest that one can grow strongest. A leading surgeon made the statement that sometimes when a bone is broken and mends properly it is stronger at that point than anywhere else. In the spiritual realm, such was Paul's experience. Even though he was living by the law of Moses as he understood it, yet he was working against God.

Paul started by persecuting Christians, a bad and bloody business which he never forgot. He thought he was doing God's service, but when it was made plain to him that he was doing wrong he became so unhappy about it that he *"conferred not with flesh and blood"* (Gal. 1:16) but was immediately obedient to the heavenly vision. Before Jesus struck him down, Paul must have suspected there was something to the Christian faith, for Jesus said to Paul, *"It is hard for you to kick against the goads"* (Acts 26:14). He may have felt some pain and unhappiness, but ignored it. Until suddenly Jesus appeared to him—stopping him in his tracks and sending Paul out to become the greatest Christian missionary. Once shown his error, only full speed ahead.

Pain not only points to the source of infection; but very often prods to action—time is critical. Treatment must be immediate if there is to be a cure. In the realm of the spirit, delay is also harmful, even deadly. One of the greatest dangers is that delay may cause the pain to be accepted, then go unnoticed. This leads to the unpardonable sin—sin no longer felt,

conscience gone to sleep. God forgives sin that is recognized, confessed, and overcome. But the starting point is the pain of conscience—an unhappy New Year.

One of the greatest hindrances to spiritual health is being self-satisfied. We think ourselves good enough, we cease to progress, we no longer grow. At such times, we need something to jar us awake, to make us unhappy with ourselves, to re-awaken in us the desire for change, for constructive action, for improvement.

God is a God of progress. He wants us to grow, and keep growing, that *"speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ"* (Eph. 4:15).

There is a bit of early American history that points up the value of becoming unhappy over our failures. When George Washington assumed the command of the American forces one of his first duties was to order the court martial of Captain Collender, who was guilty of cowardice at the Battle of Bunker Hill. "It is with inexpressible concern," wrote Washington in his official orders, "that the General upon his first arrival in the Army, should find an officer sentenced by a general court martial to be cashiered for cowardice—a crime of all others the most infamous in a soldier, the most injurious to an Army, and the last to be forgiven."

So Captain Collender was deprived of his commission and expelled in disgrace. What did he do next? Collender was so unhappy about his conduct that brought him such disgrace that he immediately set about making a better record for himself. Humiliating as it was, he faced it and re-enlisted in the Army as a private. Soon after, at the Battle of Long Island, Collender exhibited such conspicuous courage that George Washington publicly revoked the sentence and restored him to his captaincy.

That is the action for each earnest life-seeker to take to make maximum progress. Where we have failed, we must be unhappy enough to stand up and look for a new challenge. Then at Judgment Day we will learn that each unhappiness we experienced, each prick of the guilty conscience, goaded us to a change of character so that the great Judge can say to us *"Well done."* Then He will pronounce us fit for a new, immortal body, and grant us a place among His heavenly family. ♦



2006 ABIB Calendar

Abib Means...

"month of green ears," "spring or sprouting month" (*Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon*). God commanded Moses to "observe the month of Abib" (Deut. 16:1; Ex.

12:2; 13:4) as a memorial of the Israelites' departure from Egypt.

Abib 1(or Nisan 1), the first day of the sacred New Year—

begins this year on Wednesday evening, March 29, and continues through Thursday, March 30, Bible time being measured from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32). It was the pattern of the Hebrew people to begin the new year from the first occurrence of the new moon (this year on March 29 at 10:15 am, Greenwich Mean Time) after the Spring Equinox (this year on March 17). 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 when Jesus partook of the Last Supper with His disciples before He suffered—

falls this year on Monday evening, April 10. At this time we partake of the emblems (unleavened bread and grape juice) in obedience to the command, *"This do in remembrance of me"* (1 Cor. 11:24–25). By this sacred rite we symbolize the renewing of our covenant relationship with God. We agree to offer ourselves to obey totally the will of God.

Abib 15, the anniversary of the Resurrection of Christ—

occurs this year on the morning of Thursday, April 13. In ancient Israel, this was the day of the waving of the first sheaf of the harvest before the Lord. On this morning, Christ the firstfruits from death rose triumphant over death and the grave. On this morning, even *"very early in the morning,"* certain women made their way to the tomb (Matt. 28:1). Finding it empty, they heard those immortal words that still thrill and inspire us today: *"He is not here, he is risen! Come, see the place where the Lord lay"* (Matt. 28:6).

Pentecost, fifty days after the waving of the first sheaf offering, falls this year on June 1. ♦

MR. WOODPECKER'S "DIRTY" BEAK

Father Downy was working on his new house.

If you were to ask me what was the worst thing about Mr. Woodpecker's profanity, besides that it was sin against his Creator, I would say it was the fact that he no longer worried about it. So long as a bird is sorry for doing wrong, and sincerely wants to do the right, there is hope for him.

But so many birds nowadays, it seems, not only use profanity, but are not sorry for it at all. They excuse themselves by saying they do not mean any harm by it, that they do not even think the words as they say them, and therefore there is really no harm done. But when one gets to the place of swearing without thinking, that is the worst stage of all!

And that was the stage to which Mr. Woodpecker had arrived. That red head of his—I do not know whether that had anything to do with his profanity or not. I have heard that red heads and anger go together, but I doubt that, because I have noticed that profanity and hot tempers are by no means limited to red-heads!

What was it that cured Mr. Woodpecker? Well, one day while he was building his house in the trunk of a nice dead tree—he is a carpenter by trade, you know—he accidentally missed the hole he was drilling and hit his "finger," with the sharp point of his bill. Of course it hurt! It even brought the blood. And after that you should have heard what he said. Or rather, I am glad you did not!

He hopped down on the ground, and what time he was not sucking his hurt "finger," he was using words which all but made the grass wither. Then he soon forgot all about it. He did not ask God to forgive him, he was not even sorry—he did not think about it enough to be sorry. In fact, I suppose he would never have thought about it again had something not happened a few days later which reminded him in a way that he could never forget.

He was working on his house again and had just paused, after drilling a very hard hole, to catch his breath and to enjoy the nice cool breeze, when down on the ground at the foot of the tree he heard some terrible words coming from two shrill high-pitched little voices. Looking down he saw his own little son Downy Woodpecker and Bill Robin, Mr. and Mrs. Robin's little bird. They had found a worm and were arguing about who saw it first and who should have it, and were using some very, very ugly words. Mr. Woodpecker was shocked.

Well, he parachuted down there beside them in less time than it takes to tell it. He was blazing mad as he said, "What do you birdlings mean by talking like that? Where in the world did you learn such language anyway?"

Downy Woodpecker hung his head. He was either too ashamed or too afraid to answer. But Bill Robin finally said,



"We were playing in the cherry tree a few days ago when you hurt your finger."

Then it was Mr. Woodpecker's turn to hang his head. He had not known that anyone was listening that day. He now saw in a flash that what was wrong for little birds was just as wrong for him, and he said to himself, "Well, if the little birds of Wington are going to copy my language, I must set them a different example."

Then he did a very wonderful thing. He put one wing around each of the little birds and said, "It's all my fault. I am the one that ought to be punished. I am so very sorry and I promise you both that I will never use those bad words again, and I hope you will promise me the same thing."

Then, out there under the blue sky, where all was still and beautiful, they bowed their heads and Father Downy quietly repeated the Third Commandment, "*You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.*" And he asked their Creator to forgive them and for help to never use God dishonoring words again. When they did that, God forgave them for what they had done, and they felt so good inside. But, best of all, not one of the three has broken that Commandment since. ♦

MEMORY VERSE:

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

—Exodus 20:7

FOR DISCUSSION:

If in today's culture it is alright to curse or to swear in God's name, but it is not correct to speak of God as Creator or Almighty. What is the right thing for a Christian to do? Obey God.

Just because we hear others use God dishonoring words doesn't make it right. We want to avoid hearing bad language so we don't get accustomed to it and follow those bad examples. For the command not to "*take the Lord's name in vain*" is still standing today.

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Paul was not teaching alone, or traveling alone. He was guided by God, and he was traveling for a purpose. He was going wherever God would send him.

A Pastor's Warning

One could feel the sadness in the silence that followed his words: *"Ye shall see my face no more."*

But Paul did not give in to despair. He turned to warning. He would not be back to Ephesus. If he should be at liberty to travel, he would head straight for Rome.

Meanwhile they must think about the future and their responsibility. They were guardians of the most precious treasure in the whole world, the true faith of Jesus Christ. Their task would not be easy.

21. What did Paul foresee coming? (20:29) _____

22. What did Paul interpret this as being? (20:30) _____

Where there are sheep, there are also wolves, and there would be wolves among them, not always from the outside, but even from among their own number.

Wherever there is truth, there is a temptation to pervert it, and Paul saw a time coming when the true Gospel would be perverted. They needed to be on the watch for this enemy from within, because it would be a growing danger, and many would be led away (20:29–30).

Again he reminded them that for three years he had warned them *"night and day with tears"* (20:31).

When Paul had finished, he commended them to God and left them with an unforgettable lesson.

23. What was that lesson from Jesus? (20:35) _____

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (20:35). Paul was the example of Jesus to them. He had spent his time giving to them. *"I have showed you,"* he could say and mean it in every respect. *"I have showed you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"*

24. What did Paul and the brethren do as they parted? (20:36–37) _____

"He kneeled down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more" (20:36–38).

They accompanied him to the ship, and Paul and the missionary brothers were on their way to Jerusalem.

The balmy breezes were still blowing, and the sun was still bright. But they traveled silently now. Their hearts were too full for conversation. They were all thinking deeply, and offering a prayer for these loving brothers, and looking ahead to the day when they might meet them in the Kingdom, where *"God shall wipe away all tears"* and there will be no more parting.

Forever.

What was on Paul's mind? Was it worth the suffering? Absolutely! Would he do it again? Absolutely. And again. And again. As long as Christ gave him the strength.

(to be continued)

26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves.

31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

32 So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.

34 Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.

35 I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

37 Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,

38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Miletus was located on a small peninsula that jutted from the south into the bay of the Meander River. The ancient bay made an obstacle for direct land travel from Miletus to Ephesus. Today, Miletus is 5-6 miles away from the Aegean Coast because silt has filled the bay; direct travel between Miletus and Ephesus is now possible on dry land. The southeastern extremity of the ancient bay is now a lake.



(above) Miletus view to the north



(right) Ruins of Miletus marketplace



When You Come to Your Own Gethsemane

*One night when sorrow burdened,
A vision came to me.
A vision of my Master
And His Gethsemane.
I saw His face uplifted,
His prayer just begun,
As He whispered: "O My Father,
Your will, not Mine be done."*

*When you come to your own Gethsemane
And you feel the weight of care,
Of trial and sore temptation,
More than you can bear,
Remember your Master in the garden,
And His strength He'll give to thee.
This Prince of men will speak again
In your Gethsemane.*

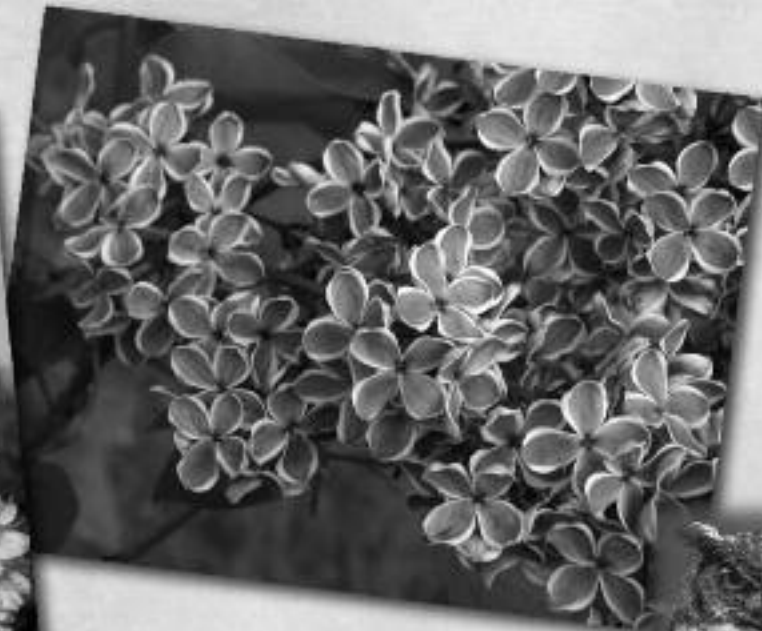
*Oft-times when I am dreaming
A city fair I see
With walls of gold and jasper
Beside a tranquil sea.
I see the Master waiting
And know 'twas not in vain
That in that lonely garden
He bore alone His pain.*

*If you come to your own Gethsemane
And you see the dreary years,
Stretching away before you
Filled with naught but tears,
Remember your Master in the garden
And His strength He'll give to thee—
This Prince of men, who lives again
In your Gethsemane.*



"HE IS RISEN!"

*O happy world today if we could know
The message of that morning long ago!
There is no dark despair that cannot be
Evicted from the heart's Gethsemane;
For faith is always more than unbelief,
And vibrant courage triumphs over grief.*



*A wise old owl sat in an oak,
The more he saw the less he spoke;
The less he spoke the more he heard;
Why can't we be like that wise old bird?*

FAILURE

Failure doesn't mean you're a failure;
It does mean you haven't yet succeeded.

*Failure doesn't mean you have accomplished nothing;
It does mean you haven't learned something.*

Failure doesn't mean that you have been a fool;
It does mean you have a lot of faith.

*Failure doesn't mean you have been disgraced;
It does mean you were willing to try.*

Failure doesn't mean you are inferior;
It does mean you are not perfect.

*Failure doesn't mean you don't have it;
It does mean you have to do something in a different way.*

Failure doesn't mean you've wasted your life;
It does mean you have a reason to start afresh.

*Failure doesn't mean you should give up;
It does mean you must try harder.*

Failure doesn't mean you will never make it;
It does mean it will take a little longer.

*Failure doesn't mean God has abandoned you;
It does mean God has a better way.*

To profit from good advice requires more wisdom
than to give it.

*The Bible is the only window for us in this present time,
through which we may look into eternity.*

Fear can keep a man out of danger, but courage
can support him in it.

*Courage consists not in blindly overlooking danger
but in seeing it and dealing with it.*

We have been taught to pray "Thy kingdom come." If we hear a man swear in the streets, we say he "takes God's name in vain." But there are other ways of taking God's name in vain. It is to ask Him for what we don't really want.

Do you want the Kingdom of God to come? If you don't, don't pray for it. But if you do want His kingdom to come on earth, you must do more than pray for it; you must work for it.

*I do not want merely to possess a faith,
I want a faith that possesses me.*

If We Could Hear—!

Who knows but what the angels now and then
With glorious music flood the midnight air
As once they did to catch the shepherds where
They sat and dreamed and talked of things, and men,
And sheep, and no doubt ills and habits, when
By some strange marvel delicate and rare
For that one instant tuned to heaven they were
And heard what man has never heard again.

By some strange method could we only find
The true vibrations suited to our ears,
As is the thing called radio designed,
We, too, might catch the music of the spheres
And in that holy moment of surprise
Pick up God's program from the midnight skies!

