

Megiddo Message

March/April, 2007

Where Jesus Walked

He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.

—Luke 8:1





DANGER: DESENSITIZATION

Can you imagine how endangered our lives would be if there were no pain, if we could abuse our bodies and not feel any hurt? Long before we were grown up, our limbs and ligaments would be damaged beyond repair, because there would be no "OUCH!" to stop us from injuring our bodies.

All of us have an inner, spiritual being as well as a physical body, and this life, too, needs to receive clear signals of pain when it is injured, so that corrective action can be taken before the life is destroyed. This inner life includes our core beliefs and convictions, our values, our affections and deep desires. The sensory system for this inner, spiritual being is often called the "heart." This heart is constantly receiving, analyzing, and recording signals from our environment that affect our inner being.

The Bible refers to the "heart" more than 800 times, and in the majority of these instances it is describing this center of sensitivity—the seat of desire, inclination, will, emotion, wisdom, and moral character. Protecting the inner life by giving signals of pain is critical, because our core beliefs and values need guarding. *"Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do"* (Prov. 4:23 NLT). Our values form our attitudes, and our attitudes determine our motives. Our motives regulate our behavior, and God judges us by this behavior. He is a *"God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed"* (1 Sam. 2:3).

Since the heart is the pain center of our mind and emotions, when we act contrary to our convictions our heart registers pain, moving us to identify the cause. When our loyalties are attacked, we feel violated at the very center of our being. We have a "heartache," and this heartache is a good thing because it moves us to respond quickly to what is endangering our spiritual well-being.

But what if there is no pain? What if the sight or sound of evil does not affect us? What if we can hear God's name derided, and spiritual values slandered, and feel no heart pain? What if we can violate our convictions and not sense it?

The Bible refers to this condition as a hardened heart, when the heart no longer feels.

The term "hard" in this context refers to a callousness, blindness, or loss of sensation. In other words, the center of one's being has become petrified, like stone, insensitive to the things of God. An example is the people who shouted "Crucify Him!" in Jesus' day; they could see wrong being done, or even do wrong, and feel no heart pain.

The Apostle Paul spoke of those who were *"past feeling"* as being hopeless (Eph. 4:18). Recovery was impossible not because there was no remedy but because they were unaware; sin did not cause any pain.

Desensitization to things spiritual is one of the most seri-

ous side effects of the modern culture. The mindset of many people today seems to be a self-directing freedom, especially freedom from any imposed moral law. It is a concept of moral independence that says, "It's none of your business what I do." Where does it lead? It leads to alcoholism, the drug culture, homosexuality, sexual abandon and pornography.

How many times have we heard that morality cannot be legislated—because an amoral culture wants sex without consequences, drug and alcohol abuse without consequences, immoral behavior without consequences. And anyone who uses Scripture to point out the inevitable consequences of such behavior is accused of being judgmental and intolerant. The response is: "Get out of my face...what I do is none of your business...leave me alone...what I do doesn't hurt you."

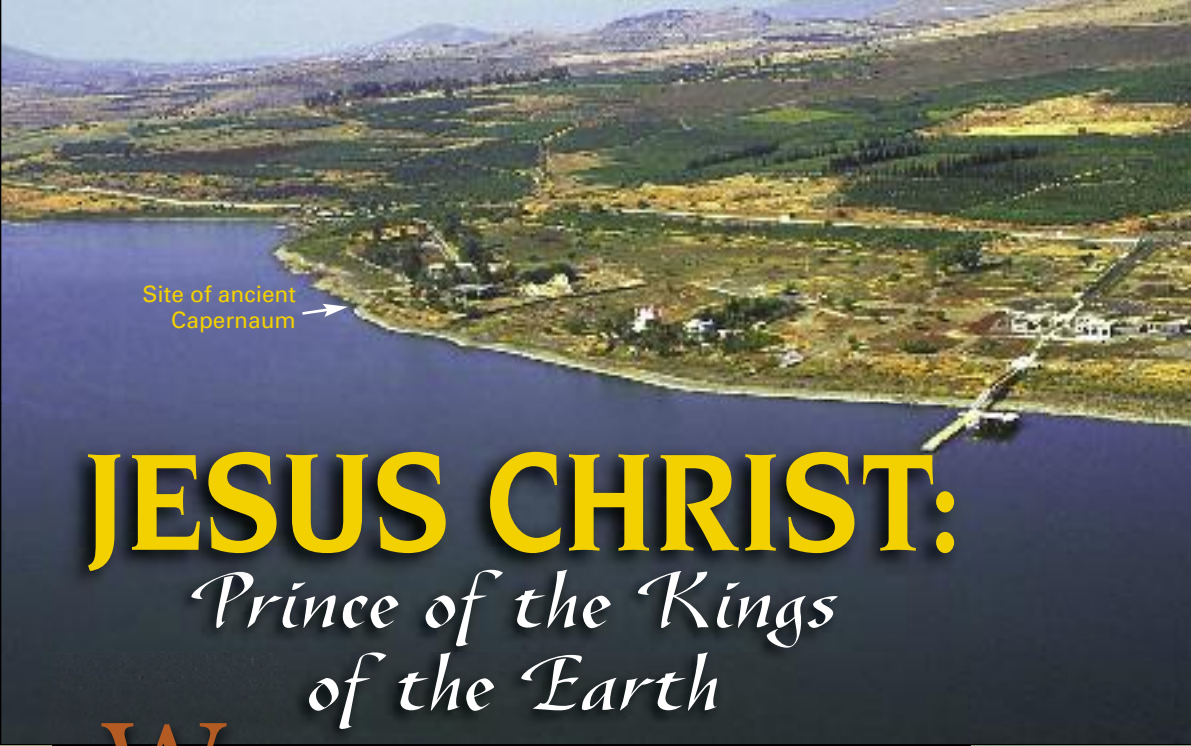
Again, desensitization is one of the side effects of this type of thinking. Conduct that was at first gross, shocking and disturbing gradually comes to be accepted as commonplace. Religious teaching that condemns it is viewed as narrow and restrictive. God is not to be mentioned in public, and even in many religious circles God is seldom mentioned and His Word is not consulted. In many educational institutions, courses in Bible—even Bible stories—have been rewritten to remove every reference to God. Why? Because the bottom line is public acceptance, and general good psychology is more comfortable and "sells" better than clearly stated directives from the God of heaven that say, *"You shall,"* and *"You shall not."*

Another reason for the present desensitization is the idea that Church and State must be separate, even on the personal level. You will hear people say, "This is business, that is Church." They feel that religious faith should be kept in a private circle. (Did Jesus keep His faith private?) And the public side has little feeling for anything except here-and-now value.

The desensitization has brought the mental culture of our youth to the Marilyn Manson level, where a steady diet of godlessness and a fascination with violence, death, and the occult are promoted with captivating lyrics and films. This type of thinking is not isolated; it is culture wide, and fosters problems of anger, hate, and suicide.

Why do young people buy into a psychology that glamorizes the destructive and immoral? One reason is the diet of TV and movies that young people have had now for more than a generation. Consider that the average 13-year old today who watches a conservative 25 hours of TV a week has already seen 30,000 murders, and over 200,000 violent acts. Are these young people shocked by an act of violence on the street? No. Are they horrified at the thought of committing an act of violence to preserve their self-image or self-worth? Not likely. Life for them is lived in terms of what benefits "me,"

continued on inside back cover



Aerial view of Capernaum area from southeast

Jesus made His home in Capernaum, a small fishing town near the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was also fruitful to Jesus' ministry. It was home to Matthew the tax collector, as well as four fishermen: Peter, Andrew, James and John.

Capernaum was one of three cities where Jesus performed the majority of His miracles.

"And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades" (Matt. 11:23). Today there is no city where Capernaum once flourished—just a few buildings mark the site.

JESUS CHRIST:

Prince of the Kings of the Earth

When John on Patmos introduced his writing of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, he described Jesus as the *"Prince of the Kings of the Earth."* Prince means "first in rank or power, chief ruler, magistrate, prince, ruler" (*Strong's Concordance*).

As followers of Christ, we honor Him for His matchless record and highest of high attainment. No one among our human race ever achieved more than He, or in so short a time. No one among us ever received so many "first prize" awards.

How did Jesus excel? In what way is He the Prince of the Kings of the Earth? In what way is He first in rank or power?

JESUS CHRIST THE MESSIAH

Throughout Old Testament times, the coming Messiah was the hope of Israel. Prophet after prophet revealed the details of His life and destiny. All through the Old Testament, from the first prophecy to the last, there is an air of expectancy—SOMEONE is coming!—the One to whom all the prophets gave witness. From earth's earliest ages the people of God looked forward, not only to events in the future but also to the coming of One who would fulfill the Divine promises, who would be Savior, Deliverer and King—the Messiah.

The New Testament opens with the appearance of that expected One, and all history from that time forward became a preparation for His second advent. Jesus throughout His ministry was continually affirming that He was the Coming One, the One who had been prophesied.

But for those who had misread the prophecies and who had anticipated a gallant display of power and authority, His quiet entrance was a disappointment. No splendor, no display, no show of power, He came as a

continued on page 5

Where Jesus Walked



View of Jezreel Valley looking toward Nazareth and Mt. Tabor

Near the horizon at the center of the photo is Nazareth, the town where Jesus spent most of His first 30 years. To the right is Mt. Tabor, scene of the early battle between Sisera's (Syrian) army and the armies of Israel (Judges 4). In the foreground is the Valley of Jezreel, where the forces of Christ and His opponents will begin the Battle of Armageddon, the great and final conflict that will spread until evil is conquered worldwide.

EDITORIAL

- 2 Danger: Desensitization** by Ruth E. Sisson

NEW YEAR FEATURE

- 3 JESUS CHRIST: The Prince of the Kings of the Earth**
A Tribute to Jesus Christ
Where Jesus Walked

ARTICLE

- 9 Did Caiaphas Speak for God?** by Gerald R. Payne

FEATURE

- 10 "Write...Send" to Thyatira** (Part Four)
Get Jezebel Out!

KNOW YOUR BIBLE?

- 17 Name the King • Bible "Who's" • Who Said?**

BIBLE STUDY: THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

- 18 The Great Apostle Suffers for Christ** (Part 32) by Ruth E. Sisson
Paul Tells His Story • Riot Again!

AWESOME DESIGNS

- 23 Designed To Be A Parasite**
The Brown-headed Cowbird and European Cuckoo

YOUTH IN CHRIST

- 24 Prodigal Parents** by J. Calvin Reid
25 Watch Your Step

SEASONAL FEATURE

- 26 Jesus Is Alive**

BACK COVER POEM

The Christian's Creed

FRONT COVER: (*Upper photo*) Plain of Genessaret from Arbel, (*Lower photo*) Rosh Pinna Sill from Northeast, used by courtesy of BiblePlaces.com. For the Holy Land photos on pages 3-8 and much of the descriptive captioned text we are indebted to Todd Bolen 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.

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- ♦ 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.

lowly mortal, another son of Israel, learning and growing like other children. When He began to preach and teach, He told them the plan. He declared plainly that He was indeed the Messiah, that all that had been prophesied would be fulfilled. He had first to prove Himself by a life of flawless purity, then die, be resurrected, and ascend to His Father. And as surely as He was speaking to them, so surely He would return as Conqueror, Deliverer and King.

At Bethlehem, the Christ of prophecy became the Christ of history, and through His brief mortal career He fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies relating to Himself (Luke 4:16–21; 24:27; Matt. 11:10; 12:16–21; 13:11–15; 21:16). Openly He declared that His life and work were the fulfillment of what had been written by the prophets.

Although the greatest part of His work was yet future, with His arrival the prophecies began to be fulfilled. At the early age of thirty three He was cut off, but death could not keep its prey—here was another fulfillment of prophecy (Ps. 49:15; 16:10), and another step toward the complete fulfillment of His Messianic mission—to be the deliverer of His people and the King of the whole earth (Luke 1:31–33; Zech. 14:9).

“ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD”

Jesus began life with a singular distinction—He was the only begotten Son of God. Born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit, by a higher law than is known to us, He was from the start ahead of us in one sense: He had only one human parent. He was the Son of God. But this did not mean that He was part God, or Divine by nature. The Bible describes Him as having been *“in all things ... made like His brethren”* (Heb. 2:17). He was the *“man Jesus Christ,”* a *“partaker of flesh and blood”* like other human children (Heb. 2:14). His honorary distinction was in being the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9); the *“only begotten of the Father”* (John 1:14).

Being the Son of God, He is the Elder Brother of all who become sons of God by adoption (Rom. 8:15), by becoming morally like Christ. *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God”* (Rom 8:14).

This opportunity is open to each of us: to become sons of God—and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. *“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is”* (1 John 3:1–2).

FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD

Jesus had the privilege of being the first among earth-borns to be raised from the state of death, never again to die. A few others had been resurrected before Him, but not to life eternal. The apostle Paul said of Jesus, *“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep,”* the firstfruits to life and immortality (1 Cor. 15:20). Then he continues, *“But each*



Sunset over the Sea of Galilee—and still fishing.

The Sea of Galilee was commercially important to the fishing industry during Jesus' time, and was likely the reason He used fish to illustrate lessons He was teaching. Three varieties were commonly caught. Most common were sardines, likely the *“two small fish”* Jesus used to feed the multitude. The musht fish, known today as *“St. Peter's fish,”* was a larger, tasty fish, often weighing as much as three pounds, which could easily have been responsible for breaking the disciples' nets (John 21:6). A third type, the catfish, was not considered kosher because of its lack of scales, and would likely have been the *“bad fish”* Jesus said would be thrown away (Matt. 13:48).



Aerial view of the Southern End of Sea of Galilee

Much of Jesus' ministry centered around the Sea of Galilee. While important events occurred in Jerusalem, He spent most of the three years of His ministry along the shore of this freshwater lake. Here He gave more than half of His parables, and here He performed most of His miracles.



Huleh Basin Toward Mount Hermon from Southwest

The highest point in Israel (9230 feet), Mt. Hermon was the northernmost boundary of the land conquered by Joshua (Josh. 11:17; 12:1-5). Meltwater from the snow-covered Mount Hermon feeds springs at the base of the mountain which merge to become the Jordan River.

Mount Hermon was a possible site of the Transfiguration, where Jesus took three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John, up on a high mountain for prayer. Before their eyes, Jesus was transfigured.

The Gospels tell of Jesus and His disciples journeying north from Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee to the city of Caesarea Philippi at the southern base of Mount Hermon (Matthew 16:13; Mark 8:27). There, Jesus revealed to them that He would die and be resurrected (Matt 16:18-21).

one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" (v. 23).

PERFECT EXAMPLE

God planned that Jesus should be a perfect example of the entire process by which a mortal can attain the immortal state. To demonstrate this process, Jesus had to die and be raised to life, for this step is part of the career of every one of God's chosen ones, with but very few exceptions.

The apostle Paul's dedication to Christ was motivated by the hope of the resurrection: "*if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead*" (Phil. 3:11). Why did Paul believe in the resurrection? Because He had seen the risen Christ (Acts 9).

Indeed, he wrote, "*But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. But*" —glorious certainty— "*now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*" (1 Cor. 15:13-20).

HEAD OF THE CHURCH

Jesus is the head of the Church, also called the body of Christ, His loyal believers, those who are following His example and conforming their lives to His pattern in hope of receiving eternal honor and blessing in the world to come. The apostle Paul wrote to the Colossian brethren of the eminence of Christ: "*And He is before all things [not in time but in authority, supreme], and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He may have the preeminence*" (Col. 1:17-18). Only Christ occupies this position in relation to the Church.

KING OF KINGS

Among the prophecies of the Old Testament was the prophecy that Jesus would be King. "*And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—the Lord is one, and His name one.*" (Zech. 14:9). "*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). The prophets leave no question as to the identity of this King.

The angel, speaking to Mary, said she would "*bring forth a Son,*" who would be called "*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).

Jesus will be the one and only King of the whole earth. Why His title, "*King of kings*"? The whole earth will be His Kingdom; "*all dominions shall serve and obey Him*" (Dan. 7:27). But He will not rule alone—He will have associate kings seated with Him on His throne of power (Rev. 3:21).

That is why the Revelator saw Him in vision as having on His robe a name written: *"King of kings, and Lord of lords"* (Rev. 19:16).

MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MEN

One of Jesus' distinctive roles is that of mediator or advocate in behalf of His human brethren. God being Almighty and All-powerful, and we mortals being in our natural state so much dust of the earth, God has devised a special plan whereby we may have our requests heard on high. The means: Our mediator, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). When Jesus was talking to His disciples the night He was betrayed, He instructed them to beseech the Father in His name. *"Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you"* (John 16:23; 15:16; 14:13). The apostle John recognized this same arrangement, counting it a favor: *"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"* (1 John 2:1).

When we realize that God's thoughts and ways are as far above ours as the heavens are above the earth, we can thank Him for providing a mediator, one to bring our requests into the Divine presence. When we consider His greatness and our utter insignificance, how we should thank God for providing us a mediator, Jesus Christ.

ALPHA AND OMEGA

Only Jesus can say, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last"* (Rev. 1:11). Actually, this is a distinction He shares with His Father, or rather, receives from His Father. Jesus is the beginning and end of a special new creation called *"a new heaven and a new earth"* (Rev. 21:1), the earth made over new and filled with God's glory. Of that special creation He will be indeed the beginning—the instigator, the one to set up the new government. He will also be its end—its climax—as the finished Kingdom is handed over to the Father, to continue in its perfect state through the eternal ages (1 Cor. 15:24).

SAVIOUR

God alone holds the key to life. He is its designer, and He alone can create life. But life as we know it is not the only life there is. He also designs life on a higher level—the immortal level. And God has given to Jesus the power to bestow this higher level of life on whomsoever He will. We read: *"For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will";* and *"as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man"* (John 5:21, 26–27).

To be able to create life would be honor sufficient; but to Jesus has been given the singular honor of bestowing life immortal. He will be the Judge of all who have agreed to serve God during 6,000 years. All must appear before Him, to be rewarded for what they have done, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10; Luke 14:14; Eccl. 12:13–14).

PHOTOS COURTESY OF "BIBLEPLACES.COM"



Sheep grazing near Nazareth

Nazareth, situated inside a bowl atop the ridge north of the Jezreel Valley, was a relatively isolated agricultural village. At the time of Jesus, it seems to have been very small, having a population of less than 200.



The "Brow of the Hill" at Nazareth

Very early in His ministry Jesus preached in Nazareth, but His preaching was not well received. Infuriated by His message, the people drove Him to the brow of this hill, where they attempted to throw Jesus over headlong. *"But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way"* (Luke 4:28–30 NIV).

As Jesus noted, *"no prophet is accepted in his hometown"* (Luke 4:24 NIV).



North End of Sea of Galilee from Mount of Beatitudes

Here was the setting for Jesus' first recorded sermon. *"And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them..."* (Matt. 5:1–2).



Sea of Galilee at En Gev

The Sea of Galilee was known for its sudden, violent, life-threatening storms. These storms are caused by the cooler air masses from the surrounding mountains colliding with the warm air in the lake's basin.

Two of Jesus' most dramatic miracles were done on the water itself when he stilled the storm (Luke 8:22–25) and when He walked on the water (Mark 6:47–52).



First century boat reconstructed



Jordan River & Rift

"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'" (Mark 1:9–11 ESV).

The Jordan River is a small, winding stream that makes its way from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. The river winds so much that it runs about 130 miles to cover a distance of 60 miles if it took a straight course. It was viewed as an obstacle to travel both in Old and New Testament times.

Jesus pictured Himself in this vital role as a shepherd dividing the sheep from the goats, setting the sheep on His right hand and the goats on the left, and dispensing to the sheep the ultimate blessing: *"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you"* (Matt. 25:31–34). At the same time He will deliver the curse to the unfaithful, saying *"Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire [destruction]"* (v. 41).

FIRSTBORN TO IMMORTALITY

At the present time, of all our earthborn race, only Jesus Christ has received the immortal crown.

Only He has received the full, final salvation, the change to immortality (1 Tim. 6:15–16), and He has had the singular honor of receiving that reward in His Father's presence (John 17:5).

But soon He will give that same salvation to all who have served God faithfully. He is returning with the rewards (salvation) for all worthy ones (Isa. 40:10; 25:9; Heb. 9:28). Jesus Christ is coming to change *"our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious"*—immortal—body (Phil. 3:20–21). For *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God...we shall be changed...For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality"* (1 Cor. 15:50–53).

FIRST TO ENTER HEAVEN

Jesus is our High Priest, *"who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens"* (Heb. 8:1). Only He of our mortal race has received this high honor, following the pattern of the high priest in Israel, who went once each year into the most holy place alone.

Jesus has now gone to heaven, from which He will return. He is our Priest forever, *"according to the order of Melchizedek"* (Heb. 7:17).

"WITHOUT SIN"

Jesus is the only one of our race to leave behind a perfect record—He never sinned once He knew the Law. Of all our stumbling race, only to Him can go the honor of rendering a life of perfect obedience. Only He was *"in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin"* (Heb. 4:15). Only of Jesus could it be written that He was *"such a High Priest,...who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens"* (Heb. 7:26).

How we should thank God for our Elder Brother, this Prince of God and Future King! We should thank Him, too, that we are also called to be children of God. As the apostle Paul wrote, *"Think what this means. If we are his children we share his treasures, and all that Christ claims as his will belong to all of us as well one day. If we share in his sufferings, we shall certainly share in his glory"* (Rom. 8:16–17 Phillips). MM



Did Caiaphas Speak for God?

by GERALD R. PAYNE

“I see that you do not believe Jesus’ death is the answer for all our sins. Why then does the Bible say, ‘It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish’ (John 11:49–50)?”

The text you cite is part of a statement made by the high priest Caiaphas at a time the Jews were looking for a reason to condemn Jesus to death. The passage reads:

“Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.’ Now this he did not say on his own [not of himself]; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad” (John 11:49–52).

This text raises several questions:

- 1) Why did Caiaphas make this statement?
- 2) Since the Bible says that Caiaphas said it *“not of himself,”* what was the source of his statement?
- 3) Was God speaking prophetically through Caiaphas?

1) Why did Caiaphas make this statement?

Read John 11, the account of Jesus coming to the home of Mary and Martha, and restoring Lazarus to life. After Jesus resurrected Lazarus, we read that *“many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him”* (John 11:45). Seeing a man who had been dead four days walk out of the grave was amazing!—no wonder *“many of the Jews believed”* in Jesus.

But when the Jewish leaders heard about it, *“the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council”* to discuss the problem, because they were jealous of Jesus’ popularity. (Matthew and Mark both record that it was because of their envy that the Jews put Jesus to death—see Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10.) *“‘What shall we do?’”* they said. *“‘For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation’”* (John 11:47–48). As they saw it, Jesus’ popularity was growing at such a rate that soon everyone would be following Jesus, Rome would take over, and they (the Jewish leaders) would be out!

At this point Caiaphas spoke up with what he considered a superior and more defined view of the situation. As his words are phrased in the New Jerusalem Bible, Caiaphas said, *“‘You do not seem to have grasped the situation at all; you fail to*

see that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people, rather than that the whole nation should perish.’ He did not speak in his own person, but as high priest of that year he was prophesying that Jesus was to die for the nation—and not for the nation only, but also to gather together into one the scattered children of God. From that day onwards they were determined to kill him” (John 11:49–53 NJB). The council saw the problem, while Caiaphas had the solution: put Jesus to death. Caiaphas says it is to their advantage that *“one man”* (Jesus) should die, rather than the whole Jewish nation be lost because of Jesus and the Romans. In short, Caiaphas said, it is either Jesus or us!

Was Caiaphas thinking Jesus should die for the sins of the world, as commonly taught? No, it was clearly a political move.

2) What was the source of Caiaphas’ statement?

The Bible says that Caiaphas said it *“not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied...”* (John 11:51). Caiaphas was speaking the idea just expressed by the council. He was voicing the thoughts of the Jewish rulers.

3) Was God speaking prophetically through Caiaphas?

There is no indication that his statement was inspired by God. Just because *“he prophesied”* does not mean God inspired the prophecy. In Caiaphas’ view, Jesus had to die, and one way or another, Caiaphas would see that it happened. It is common to hear someone say, *“I prophecy such and such will happen”* based on a logical view of cause and effect. It doesn’t need Divine inspiration to come to some conclusions.

How can we be sure this was not a prophecy inspired by God? If it had been of God, it would have come to pass. That was the test of the prophet, as God directed Moses: *“When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him”* (Deut. 18:22).

Looking Back on the “Prophecy”

Did Caiaphas’ prophecy come to pass? He said 1) that Jesus would die so that the nation might be spared; 2) that Jesus’ death would result in the scattered *“children of God”* being gathered together.

continued on page 16

“Write...Send” to

PART FOUR

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.

But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—

“He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels”—as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. —Revelation 2:18–29

Thyatira



TO THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA:

GET Jezebel OUT!

Suppose you find out that you have cancer. Your doctor says to you, “Take a couple of aspirin and you’ll be fine.” Would that advice take care of the problem?

Suppose two boys are caught robbing a store. The policeman says, “Boys will be boys” and sends them home to their parents.

Suppose there is a three-alarm fire, and the fire chief says, “Give it some time, it will burn itself out.”

There is a time not to settle for the easy, painless solution. That is the lesson in Jesus’ letter to the Church at Thyatira. It is as if Jesus is saying, “You have done a lot of good, but you are ignoring the real problems. Jezebel is destroying the Church from the inside!”

SMALL BUT BUSY!

Unlike Pergamum or Ephesus, Thyatira was a small city, and relatively unimportant. Pergamum had the sophisticated, big city atmosphere.



Thyatira was a small military outpost on the Roman road leading to Pergamum. It was intended by Rome to be a buffer city. An enemy army attacking Pergamum could be slowed down at Thyatira while a runner took warning to Pergamum.

Likely the Church at Thyatira was also small. But "small" does not carry any stigma in Christ's view. In fact, a small city may have had advantages for the Church. If Thyatira lacked the big city life, it also lacked the big city Caesar worship and the big city temptations. It didn't have as many images of the great hero gods. There is no mention here of persecution.

What can we learn from Jesus' letter to the Church at Thyatira? They may have been small, but were they busy! Jesus says (Rev. 2:19), "I know your works, love, service, faith...." He says. I see a lot of devoted, persevering, faithful service. Lovingkindness was flourishing among the members.

"And your patience." Patience is perseverance, cheerful enduring in the face of opposition. Jesus says, I see good work in your Church. You care for one another, help one another, serve one another, and build up one another in the faith.

Then there is one more compliment: "And the last are more than the first." You are doing more and more, He says. Even when the going is rough, you help one another and keep going.

Can't we almost see the leaders of the Church smile as they read Jesus' commending words?

"NEVERTHELESS..."

Then the tone changes. Jesus says, "Nevertheless, I have a few things against you."

What is the problem, Jesus? "I have a few things against you because you allow that woman Jezebel..." Jezebel! The mere mention of Jezebel raises a red flag!

continued on page 12

The ancient site of Thyatira is now occupied by the modern city of Akhisar, Turkey. Untouched by archeologists until 1968, excavations have uncovered a colonnaded stoa (marketplace), coins, a public building and numerous inscriptions.

VISIT FIRST-CENTURY THYATIRA

Jesus sent the longest message to the smallest Church

During the first century after Christ, Thyatira was a busy, thriving commercial center located halfway between Pergamum and Smyrna. Built along the trade route that ran from Pergamum and through Laodicea, Thyatira was an important trade center.

Thyatira started its rise to prominence when the site was reconstructed by Seleucus Nicator about 300 BC. For centuries it served as a frontier fort, first being on the western edge of Seleucid territory and then later being on the eastern frontier of the kingdom of Pergamum. Along with the rest of the kingdom of Pergamum, Thyatira became a Roman possession in 133 BC. As part of the Roman Empire under the Roman Peace, the fort had no purpose, so Thyatira became a wealthy trade center.

A city of merchants, craftsmen and trade guilds, the sound of marketers and industry filled the air. Common trades included garment-making, leather tanning, metalworking and cloth-dyeing. But where there was industry there were trade guilds. And where there were trade guilds, there were also the two worst enemies of the Church: idolatry and immorality.

Thyatira was home to a large number of wealthy trade guilds, whose members worshipped the patron gods with lewd and immoral ceremonies. Although membership in these guilds was not mandatory, it would have been difficult to get employment without it. The city also boasted a special temple to Apollo.

Do we wonder that the Christians in Thyatira were tempted to compromise?

Today the modern city of Akhisar occupies the site where ancient Thyatira once prospered, however very little of the ancient city has escaped being destroyed, lost or covered.



Situated near the river Rukos, Thyatira had productive agricultural land that sustained the people of the area.



Jesus compared Thyatira's liberal leader to "Jezebel."

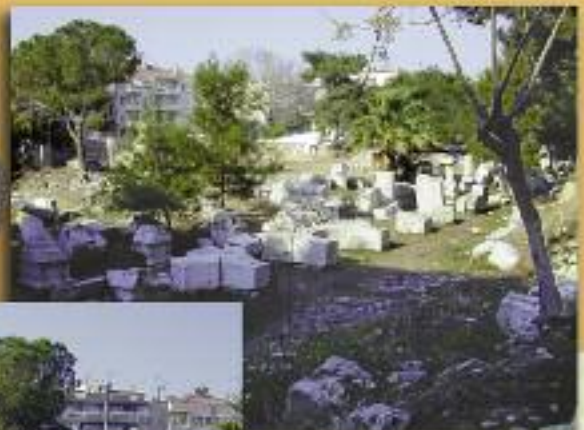
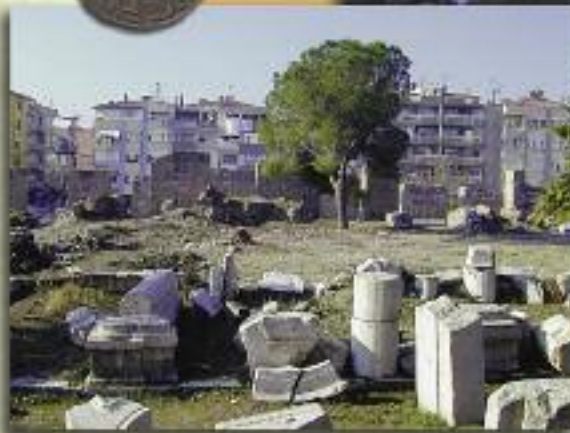


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WHAT SHOULD I AVOID?

While away at college, John Wesley is reported to have written to his mother, asking for a list of sins he should avoid. Her response is a model of biblical wisdom:

"Whatever weakens your reason,

whatever impairs the tenderness of your conscience,

whatever obscures your sense of God, whatever increases the authority of your body over your mind,

whatever takes away from your relish for spiritual things, that to you is sin, no matter how innocent it is in itself."

This is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said: "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thess. 5:21–22 NIV).



KEY WORDS

- ❑ **JEZEBEL**—a person (or persons) in Thyatira who had the character likeness of Jezebel, wicked and idolatrous wife of King Ahab (see 1 Kings, chapters 16–21), who seven centuries earlier had led Israel into the depths of sin. Jezebel's commitment to her false gods and to getting what she wanted brought painful consequences.
- ❑ **ALLOW**—tolerate, permit, compromise
- ❑ **PROPHETESS**—one who speaks or claims to speak by Divine authority
- ❑ **SEDUCE**—to entice, to tempt to violate the law of God
- ❑ **SATAN**—any one who opposes God and His cause or advocates against God
- ❑ **JEZEBEL'S CHILDREN**—those who accept her teaching

NEVER DO EVIL THAT GOOD MAY COME

Perhaps some in Thyatira reasoned this way: Yes, we are compromising. But look at the benefits. Now we have financial prosperity. Now we have money to support our church. Now we have good jobs, education for our children, and money for all the things our families need. We are not so bad as others, so we are a good influence.

Apparently some of Paul's enemies were slandering him by saying that he taught a gospel of "Let us do evil so that good may come." Nothing could have been further from the truth. He said all such should be condemned. (Rom. 3:8)

The very name spells wickedness—idolatry, lying, murder, seduction, intrigue!

Jezebel, the wicked, scheming wife of King Ahab during the days of the kings of Israel (1 Kings 16–19).

Jezebel, whom Ahab brought to Jerusalem to become his wife.

Jezebel, the daughter of a king-priest of Baal, who promoted Baal worship in Israel.

Even though the people as a church are showing love and helpfulness to one another, no amount of good can cover for the evil the leaders are letting in. He says, "You allow." "You permit." They were letting in an influence and a standard of misconduct that destroys Christian homes, Christian families, Christian hearts, Christian lives. Jesus says in effect, Jezebel is inside your Church—with your permission!

What else does Jesus say about her? She "calls herself a prophetess." She presents herself as one having Divine authority. Who is she teaching? She is teaching (actually, "seducing") "my servants," those committed to serving Christ. And what is she teaching them? She is teaching them how to be immoral! She is teaching them "to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols."

THE SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM?

Why would people of the Church be drawn into idol worship? Thyatira's economy may be the answer.

Life in Thyatira was good. A prosperous trade center, the city attracted many businesses. Goods of all kinds were manufactured and delivered to the big city of Pergamum, from which they were exported, traded, or sold on the market.

Work was abundant, and you could generally choose your trade. You could be a worker in wool, or leather, or linen, or bronze. Or you could be a maker of garments, or a dyer, or a potter.

Along with the trade came membership in that trade's guild. Since life was organized by skill sets, there was a guild for every skill, and everyone was expected to belong to a guild.

Innocent? No, because the guilds controlled the jobs, and the guilds were associated with the city's religion. To get work of any kind in Thyatira, you had to belong to a guild. With membership in a guild came an obligation to

the guild's social life. You had to pay your dues and attend the guild's socials—feasts, parties, dances, games and all. Can you picture a serious follower of Christ attending a guild event that began with a sacrifice to a pagan god? Can you imagine being part of the various rites, incantations, dances, and sex orgies that followed, and the ceremony of eating the meat that has been sacrificed to an idol?

Perhaps the Church leaders said, "Do you think you should break your connections with the trade guild?" To which Brother Believer replied: "What am I to do? My family has to eat, which means I have to have a job, which means I have to belong to the guild. I can't help it if they are immoral."

How would Brother Paul, or Peter, or James have answered? What did Paul say to the Corinthians? "Flee from idolatry!" (1 Cor. 10:14). And Peter said, "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). And James said, "Whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4).

But apparently the leaders of the Church at Thyatira looked the

other way with an attitude of "Do what you have to do. We don't want to know." Or maybe they said nothing to avoid being involved. But Jesus, who could read their hearts (Rev. 2:23), knew they were compromising. Because they didn't say "No!" they were allowing it, approving it, endorsing it; because they didn't tell the offenders, "You can't belong to the trade guilds AND belong to the Church." So one family in the Church joined the guilds, and another, and another. And Jezebel was *in*.

Many hundreds of years earlier, Ahab had been a compromiser. When he took the kingship in Israel, he wanted the northwest border of his nation to be safe. He also wanted Israel to share in the prosperity of the Sidonians. What did he do? He made a pact with the Phoenicians, and sealed it by taking Jezebel, the daughter of a priest of Baal, to be his wife. By this compromise, he opened Israel's door to the abominable worship of Baal.

Did the Thyatira Church leaders feel they were averting more serious trouble by compromising? Perhaps Jezebel was threatening. "If you don't let us earn a decent living, we won't come to Church at all." So the leaders "allowed" Jezebel in, to save offending people. Instead, they offended Jesus.

The Church at Thyatira was condemned because of what they allowed.

The lesson? Compromising with sin is always fatal. We may think we are compromising just a little, but "just a little" soon becomes more and more. It is like putting a small hole in the dike. Soon you have no dike at all.

The lesson also has a twenty-first century application. The chief difference between Thyatira and us is in the nature of the gods worshiped. Today we give them different names—like money, pleasure, lust, selfishness. But it is all idolatry, and God says, "*Flee from idolatry*" (1 Cor. 10:14).

Paul made the same point when he wrote to the Corinthians. "*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?*" (2 Cor. 6:14–16).

There is only one solution: "*Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean...*" (2 Cor. 6:17).

SHE WON'T REPENT

Jesus was merciful. We don't know the details, but He says, "*I gave her time to repent*" (2:21). God is good! Repent is a hope line, but she (they, the offenders, those who followed Jezebel) refused. They did not want to repent. Why?

There may have been five basic reasons:

No Harm. They could not see any harm in what they were doing. God could overlook the compromising, because He knew they had to have money, they had to eat, they had to support their families. They could rationalize and say, in effect, "It's a non-issue. We are not harming anyone."

No Heart. They had no heart (desire) to change. Who would want poverty (and be totally loyal to God) when they could compromise and have plenty? The world was in their heart, and their heart was in the world. Yes, they had compromised, but they were still serving God. Yes, they joined in idol worship with the guild, but they could still fellowship with the Church.

WHAT IF WE COMPROMISED?

What would happen if we as a Church compromised just a little? What if we compromised our stand on dedicating one day a week to the Lord and said that an hour or two of worship would suffice?

What if we compromised our stand on premarital sex, or adultery, or homosexuality, or divorce and remarriage and said, "Do whatever seems good to you"?

What if we compromised our view on the complete obedience God requires (John 14:15; Matt. 5:48), and began teaching that God's love is unconditional—that He loves us no matter what we do?

Would we still be a Church standing for the Bible if we started teaching that the Kingdom is in our hearts, a present reality and not a future certainty?

Would we still be the Church we are if we allowed common-law relationships, or wife (or husband) swapping?

Would we still be the Church we are if we sanctioned television, movies, and relationships where virtue is ridiculed or scorned, where God is dishonored, and His name is used in vain?

Would we still be the Church we are if we let a modern day "Jezebel" in our midst advocate love for the world and its pleasures?

The world still wants our attention, our allegiance and love.

As Christians we face a daily battle for our hearts and souls. The spirit of compromise threatens the very heart and soul of the Church.

The lesson from Thyatira: *When we compromise our standards, unless we repent and cease the sin, we will have no part in Christ's Church.*



KEY LINES

- ◆ **N**EVER ASSUME THAT YOUR STANDARD IS CHRIST'S – CHECK IT BY THE WORD.
- ◆ **C**OMPROMISING WITH SIN IS ALWAYS FATAL.
- ◆ **W**HO OR WHAT DO I LOVE MOST—THE WORLD, OR GOD?
- ◆ **B**E MOST CONCERNED ABOUT GOD'S VIEW OF YOUR CHOICE!

continued on page 14

ALWAYS TURN RIGHT!

How should the Christian evaluate a job, an opportunity, a vacation, a purchase, a book, a movie, a TV show, a friendship, or any other choice in life? These five questions may help to determine the right answer:

1. Does it honor and glorify God? (1 Cor. 10:31)
2. Will it strengthen my faith in God? (Heb. 11:6)
3. Will it draw me closer to God and my hope of eternal life? (Rom. 2:7)
4. Will it cause anyone to stumble? (1 Cor. 10:32)
5. Does it arise from a pure motive? (Jer. 17:9)

If something does not pass the test, be ready to make better choices, turn off the set, put down the book, walk away from the friendship.

Always be ready to turn right! After all—it is a matter of life and death.



Paul's first convert in Philippi was Lydia, a seller of "purple fabrics" from Thyatira (Acts 16:14). The city was famous for the dying of purple cloth often sold to royalty or people of distinction. From inscriptions discovered we learn that it had an extraordinary number of trade guilds.

No Humility. They felt no regret, no guilt, no humility of heart. They were not ready to face the issue and say, I am wrong, the Lord hates this sin. To repent meant giving up the sins that brought pleasure and temporal benefits.

It felt good to have the approval of the people around them. Give it up? Never! This was all apart from the worship of God, anyway. Why should it interfere?

No Hurry. Life was good. They did not feel any urgency to change. They *wanted* their jobs, and the good money, and the good things that money could buy. Maybe when the house was paid for, and the children were grown up, and everything was under control, perhaps then they could consider it. In the meantime, there was no hurry.

No Hope. They did not feel the need for hope. Christ offered a bright future, but that was a long way off. They were enjoying the present—the good times, the good families, the good friends, the games, and all the influence Jezebel brought. The future could wait.

That is why Jesus says, in essence, "*Repent, or else....*" He says, I'm going to spoil your pleasure. I'm going to give you a sick bed.

CONSEQUENCES

Sin has consequences. Their sin would have immediate consequences. "*Indeed I will cast her into a sick bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and other churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works*" (2:22–23). The immoral living would bring a curse. Her children, those who followed her advice, would die—they forfeited the hope of eternal life. And these consequences would be published, a lesson to all that God pays according to what we do.

"*I am He who searches the minds and hearts.*" Did these people think they could hide their real intentions from Christ? They didn't have to tell Him why they were compromising. They didn't have to tell Him how much money they had in the bank. They didn't have to tell Him what they were spending their money for. They didn't have to tell Him what they really loved and enjoyed—because He already knew! "*I am He who searches the minds and hearts.*" I know what you are thinking, He says. I know what you are planning. I know what you love most, and it is not Me.

"*And I will give to everyone of you according to your works.*"

This is God's always-fair method. He gives just according to what we do. "*Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap*" (Gal. 6:7). Always fair, always just, God gives exactly what is right.

TO THE LOYAL ONES: HOLD ON!

After warning the transgressors, Jesus turns to another group, who are loyal and true. "*Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine [who are not following the prophetess Jezebel], who have not known the depths of Satan,...I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come*" (2:24–25).

Everyone in the Church was not guilty of the offense. There were some who were loyal and true, and to them He says: "*Hold on.*" "*Hold fast.*"

Jesus even adds a statement that shows He was writing to more than first century Thyatira. "Hold fast what you have till I come." Jesus knew that He would not be returning during the lives of these first century believers. These words were being recorded for the benefit of those who would be living when He would return, far, far in the future. To them and all in between He says, "Hold fast what you have till I come." In other words, keep making the right choices. Keep that uncompromising spirit, that determination to stand true against anything immoral or impure.

Here is long-term meaning that reaches even to us. Jesus is saying to us, Don't compromise. Take these lessons to heart.

THE PROMISE!

Jesus closes His letter by restating the promise to the one who "overcomes," and adds a special incentive. Do the people at Thyatira enjoy having authority over others? That, too, is part of the promise. "He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations"—over nations, not just over a few individuals—"....and I will give him the morning star" (2:26–28). Notice that this promise is not for compromisers but overcomers, those who overpower all sin and evil in their hearts and lives, those who resist the influence of Jezebel, who are willing to repent and reform according to Christ's standard.

For those who overcome and hold on to the end, Christ says, "I will give,..." and His gifts include power, authority, and life! It is a bright promise of a place in Christ's coming Kingdom on earth for the overcomers, for those who refuse to compromise! MM

"To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'— just as I have received authority from my Father." –Revelation 2:26–27 NIV

JESUS' ASSESSMENT

Introduction. "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass'" (2:18). Eyes "like a flame of fire" and feet "like fine brass" suggest the ability to see to the heart and to judge motives. Jesus says, My eyes penetrate your coverings. I see what you are doing.

Critique/Commend. "I know your works, and your love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first" (2:19). Some in the Church were growing spiritually and bearing good fruits.

Critique/Condemn. "Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols." (2:20–21). The Church body had "Jezebel", a sinister influence that was allowed and was gaining a following.

Ultimatum and Judgment. "I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent." Here is the most serious indictment: the offenders refused to repent when given the opportunity. So what does Jesus say? "I will cast her [Jezebel] into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works" (2:22–23).

Counsel. A word to the stalwarts: "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come." (2:24–25). The test is in holding on to the right way when challenged. "Hold fast ... till I come."

Crowning. Promise. "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'—as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star" (2:26–28). Notice that power and authority is the reward for serving Christ faithfully to the end. Always the promise is to the overcomers, those who refuse to compromise.



PHOTO COURTESY OF "BIBLEPLACES.COM"

Pieces of pottery—broken potsherds, unearthed at Thyatira



ROYAL RESOLUTIONS

- I** will study the language of gentleness and refuse to use words that bite and tones that crush.
- I** will practice patience at home, lest my testy temper break through unexpectedly and disgrace me.
- I** will remember my neighbors have troubles enough to carry without loading mine on them.
- I** will excuse others' faults and failures as often and as fully as I expect them to be lenient with mine.
- I** will cure criticism with commendation and build healthy muscles by service.
- I** will sweeten my nature by smiling, even when I do not feel like it.
- I** will pray fervently, think good thoughts, and do a full day's work every day as to the Lord.

Did Caiaphas Speak for God?

continued from page 9

What happened? Jesus did die at the instigation of the Jews. They hired Judas to betray Jesus into the hands of His enemies. And then the Jewish leaders demanded of Pilate that Jesus be crucified.

Did Jesus' influence end as a result of the crucifixion? Actually it grew—and rapidly. Within three days after the crucifixion, God raised Jesus from the dead, and within two months the movement Jesus started received new thrust. For after Jesus ascended to heaven and was glorified, He sent the Holy Spirit on His followers at Pentecost as He had promised (John 14:26; Acts 1:8–9). From that point forward, His apostles went out with new courage, faith and power, preaching everywhere in the known world the Gospel of Jesus Christ—crucified, resurrected, ascended to heaven and coming back as King of all the earth.

What happened to the Jewish nation? Instead of being spared as Caiaphas prophesied, in less than forty years Jesus' prophecy would come true, that the Jewish temple would be destroyed. *"There shall not be left ... one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down"* (Matt. 24:2). This prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.

Did Jesus' death result in gathering *"together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad"*? Again, it did not. After AD 70, the Jewish people were scattered even more than they had been—a fact which confirms that Caiaphas was not speaking for the God of heaven. He was speaking the mind of that segment of the Jews, who were protecting their positions of authority.

As far as the principle of one dying to save a nation, it was never a principle of God that one person should die in place

of another. No doubt, Caiaphas had no conscience for either the righteousness of Christ or the sin of the nation. And even if Caiaphas had thought in terms of Christ being an atoning sacrifice, God never condemned an innocent person to suffer in the place of others. The person who sinned was the one who had to suffer. *"A person shall be put to death for his own sin"* (Deut. 24:16).

God's View of Human Sacrifice

It seems clear that Caiaphas was thinking in terms of eliminating Jesus in order to "save" the nation (Jewish leaders) from losing their authority. This action was making Jesus into a human sacrifice, a pagan practice God abhorred. Human sacrifice was strictly forbidden among the Hebrew people (see Deut. 12:31), among the Israelite kings (2 Kings 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; 23:10; Jer. 32:35; Ezek. 16:21; 20:26, 31), or among any people who claimed Him as their God. The prophet Micah spoke God's mind when he said, *"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"* These were not the sacrifices God required. But *"He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"* (6:6–8).

Caiaphas had his way. Jesus was crucified, His followers scattered, and the Jews maintained their positions for the time. But Jesus triumphed! God overruled their treachery by bringing Him back to life the third day. Caiaphas or any human could not thwart the Almighty's purpose. **MM**



Who was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds?

9. Who of the early Christians was stoned to death by the Jews?
10. Who was addressed as a mighty “man of valor”?
11. Who was called the Apostle to the Gentiles?
12. Who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem after the captivity?
13. Who was called a “ready scribe in the law of Moses”?
14. Who shot an arrow as a warning that David might flee from Saul?
15. Who called King Cyrus by name and foretold his doings many years before the birth of that sovereign?
16. When blessing his sons, of which son did Jacob say, “Thou art he, whom thy brethren shall praise: thy father’s children shall bow down before thee”?
17. Who had a vision of a ladder reaching from the earth to heaven?
18. Who was the high priest that commissioned Saul to go to Damascus to persecute Christians?
19. Who was the prophetess that saw Jesus when He was only a few days old?
20. Whose mother came to Jesus asking that her two sons might sit one on His right hand and the other on His left in the Kingdom?
21. Who were deceitful concerning the price of a piece of property they sold?
22. Who restored Saul’s sight at Damascus?
23. Who was found plowing with twelve yoke of oxen when called to become a prophet?
24. Who were the three great men Ezekiel said could deliver only themselves by their righteousness?
25. Who died for touching the ark?

NAME THE KING

1. What king of Israel was noted for his furious driving?
2. What king had his life lengthened 15 years in answer to prayer?
3. What king was humbled until he acknowledged the God of Daniel?
4. Of whom was it said? “You are weighed in the balances and are found wanting”?

BIBLE “WHO’S”

1. Who had a vision on a housetop?
2. Who slew a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass?
3. Who openly rebuked the Sanhedrin for the murder of Jesus?
4. Whom did Peter raise from the dead?
5. Who heard his dumb beast seem to speak words of wisdom?
6. Who commanded Naaman to bathe in Jordan to be healed of his leprosy?
7. Who was the member of the Sanhedrin that visited Jesus secretly by night?
8. Who delivered God’s message to David that he could not build the house of God?

WHO SAID?

1. “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come”?
2. “Is that you, O troubler of Israel?”
3. “My father chastened you with whips, but I will chasten you with scorpions”?
4. “I perceive that God is no respecter of persons”?
5. “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”
6. “The fool has said in his heart there is no God”?
7. “To obey is better than sacrifice”?

ANSWERS FOR QUESTIONS ON PAGE 25

FAITH *in Action*



Acts 21:35–22:7 (NKJV)

35 When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"

37 Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek?"

38 Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?"

39 But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."

40 So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying,

22:1 "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now."

2 And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said:

3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.

4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,

5 as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

6 Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.

7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'

by RUTH E. SISSON

THE GREAT APOSTLE SUFFERS FOR CHRIST



Read Acts 21:35–22:2

The great Apostle suddenly found himself in peril for his life. Totally innocent, he was the victim of two flagrant lies. The first lie was the Jews' assumption that Paul had taken a Gentile named Trophimus into the temple. The second lie was that Paul was teaching Jews to break their laws. Suddenly the Jews from Asia had stirred up a full scale riot. Ablaze with religious passion, they vented their hatred on Paul, threw him out of the temple and into the court, and started beating him.

What did James and his fellow Jewish believers do to help Paul? Apparently nothing, at least nothing Luke knew about. Why didn't they speak out in Paul's behalf? Or why didn't they try to secure his release? Why didn't they at least appeal to the Jews to be fair with Paul? Perhaps they did not know what to do, or what they could do without becoming victims alongside Paul. In the meantime, the people were determined to get rid of Paul, and would have succeeded had it not been for word of the uproar reaching the head of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem.

The quick action of the Roman chief captain and his soldiers saved Paul from being beaten to death, but also put him into the hands of suspicious officers who did not hesitate to level more accusations against him. This situation could have been very disheartening to one who felt defenseless. It was bad enough to have the hatred of the Jews, but to also have the Romans against him...!

But Paul was not feeling sorry for himself.

1. What request did Paul suddenly put to the chief captain (21:39)?

Saved from the furor of a violent mob, the great Apostle saw in front of him a rare opportunity to address a large gathering of people—set aside the fact

that they had gathered for a riot! So he asked the chief captain for permission to speak.

2. When his request was granted, how did Paul get the attention of the people? (21:40) _____
3. How did he begin his address to this mixed group? (22:1) _____
4. In what language did he address them? (22:2) _____

Notice how tactfully Paul handled the situation. *“Paul stood on the stairs and raised his hand for silence.”* He did not try to out-shout them, or return anger for anger. He knew the power of a *“soft answer”* to *“turn away wrath”* (Prov. 15:1), and made a respectful appeal for their attention. Then with proper dignity he addressed the crowd that had been threatening his life: *“Men, brethren, and fathers.”* He appealed to them to listen to him: *“Hear my defense.”* When they realized he was speaking in their own common language, they listened even more closely. Many a person having Paul’s education and background would have wanted to impress the educated in the audience by speaking their language. But not Paul. He wanted the attention of the majority, and so used the vernacular that the common people understood, the simple language he had spoken as a child.

Paul Tells His Story

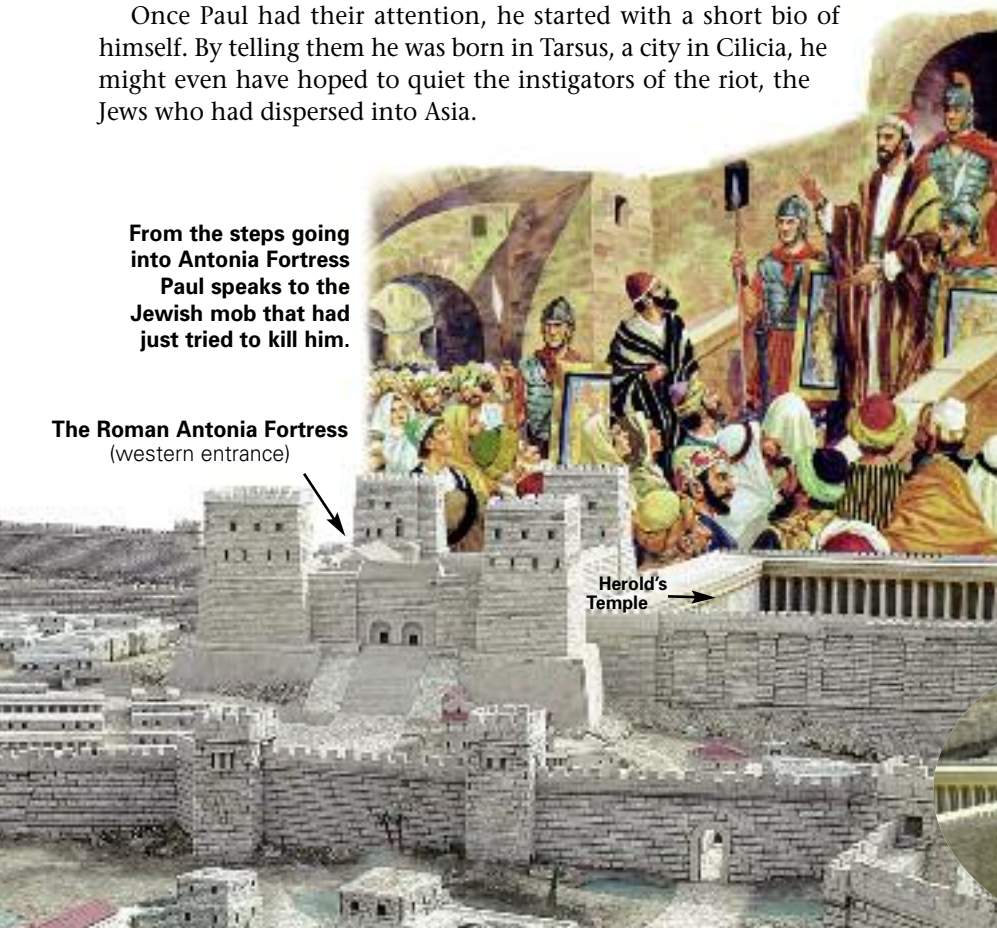


Read Acts 22:3–21

Once Paul had their attention, he started with a short bio of himself. By telling them he was born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, he might even have hoped to quiet the instigators of the riot, the Jews who had dispersed into Asia.

From the steps going into Antonia Fortress Paul speaks to the Jewish mob that had just tried to kill him.

The Roman Antonia Fortress
(western entrance)



Paul addressed the Jews from one of two sets of stairs leading into the Antonia Fortress. Notice that the fortress was conveniently attached to Herod’s Temple—Jewish center of activity.

Acts 22:8–13 NKJV

8 So I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’

9 And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.

10 So I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.’

11 And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

12 Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there,

13 came to me; and he stood and said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that same hour I looked up at him.



Paul’s Attitude Toward Government

Even as a victim of unlawful arrest, Paul maintained his respect for civil authority. He viewed civil government as ordained by God. He both accepted the responsibilities the government put upon him and claimed the rights and privileges that went with them.

A proper attitude towards government is part of the Christian’s duty, as Paul explained in Romans 13. He viewed government as a God-ordained institution for the good of everyone, and its laws to be accepted rather than resisted because God is the ultimate source of all authority. Government has a place under the authority of God. Without government, there would be only anarchy and confusion.

Paul could make these statements about government even though at the time the emperor was the infamous Nero.



The Antonia Fortress
(eastern entrance)

Acts 22:14–23 (NKJV)

14 Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.

15 For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.

16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

17 Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance

18 and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.'

19 So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You.

20 And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'

21 Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'

22 And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!"

23 Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air,

5. What did Paul say about his early education? (22:3) _____

6. Under what important educator had he studied? (22:3) _____

It is possible that Paul referred to his early education in an effort to allay suspicion and hostility. By introducing himself as both a Hellenist (from the city of Tarsus) and as a student of one who was regarded as the greatest teacher of the day (Gamaliel), Paul might have hoped to disarm the hostility. Gamaliel was viewed as a moderate, non-threatening, and non-violent.

7. What did he say about his earliest actions toward believers in "this way"? (22:4–5) _____

8. What did he do with those he captured? (22:5) _____

With such a background, which many in his audience could likely confirm, no one should question that he began as a dedicated, zealous, full-blooded Jew. Something had happened to change the direction of his life.

9. What interrupted him on his journey to Damascus? (22:6) _____

10. What does he say about his reaction, and who spoke to him? (22:7–9) _____

11. What question did Paul ask? _____
What was the answer?(22:10) _____

12. What does Paul say about the physical effects of the experience? (22:11) _____

13. How did Paul arrive in Damascus? (22:11) _____



A closer look

"I Copy Christ"

Notice a few details about Paul's speech.

◆ Paul spoke in the common language of the people.

An educated man, Paul could easily have spoken in Greek, the language of the elite, and many in the audience would have understood him. A lesser character might have wanted to impress those in authority by showing that he could speak the cultivated tongue of the civilized world. But not Paul. He spoke the popular Hebrew dialect so that everyone within hearing could understand him. He was copying Jesus, who used examples from everyday life so that every farmer and fisherman could understand. Paul was a humble follower.

◆ Paul spoke without a sign of bitterness

How easily he might have taken the

opportunity to comment on the unfair treatment he had received not only in Jerusalem but in Asia Minor—it was still Pentecost season, and people from that area were in his audience. But such was not Paul's purpose. He spoke quietly and without rancor. He even went so far as to give the people the benefit of the doubt and assumed that when they arrested him they were acting in the interests of their religion. Paul described himself in the days before his conversion as *"zealous toward God, as all of you are this day"* (22:3). *"As all of you are this day"*—here was a generous concession for one to make who had just been beaten nearly to death by a furious crowd.

◆ Paul had no enmity in his heart.

Had the speech been prepared, Paul could have edited out his resentment and fury. But Paul showed his character and the strength of his self-discipline when he could speak on the spur of the

moment, a moment that had been blazing with fury, and without a trace of resentment. Here is an achievement that belongs only to those who have brought their whole being into subjection to the law of Christ, as he preached (Col. 3:8–10). In short, Paul was practicing what he preached.

◆ Paul spoke from his own experience.

Paul did not try to be deep and philosophical. He simply told where he came from, and why he was there. He frankly admitted his early hatred of the Christians—perhaps hoping that some heart in his audience might be touched.

He then went on to tell what happened on the road to Damascus, as he had told it hundreds of times before. This was the event in his life he could never forget, the event that explained the rest of his life. It was evidence that no cynic or unbeliever could withstand. From that point forward he was Christ's man.

14. Who was the first person Paul saw in Damascus? (22:12-13) _____

Paul made it clear that Ananias was a Jew whose life was above reproach, and who did not hesitate to call him "brother." Paul also indicated clearly that the Lord had been in touch with Ananias, and revealed to him what was to be Paul's life work.

15. Where did Paul go after leaving Damascus? (22:17) _____

16. What instructions did Paul receive in Jerusalem at this time? (22:18) _____

It is likely that these instructions to leave Jerusalem "with all speed" (Weymouth) were, in reality, saving his life. Had he not obeyed these divinely given instructions and continued preaching, he would possibly have met the same end that Stephen met.

As Paul told his story, he told how, in his youth, he himself had been where his hearers were right now. He was saying, in essence, I understand where you are because I was there also, and I would like you to be where I am now. Paul had "imprisoned and beat" the believers, even mentioning that he was present at the violent death of Stephen. Paul was emphasizing the point that believers had to risk their lives in earlier times, even as he was doing at that very moment.

17. To what people was Paul divinely sent? (22:21) _____

Riot Again!



Read Acts 22:24-30

18. What one word in Paul's message upset his hearers? (22:21) _____

19. What was the response of the people to Paul's statement? (22:22-23) _____

At the mere mention of "Gentiles," what had looked like an attentive audience suddenly turned into a rioting, hateful mob. Someone has suggested that if the courtyard had been paved with loose stones, the angry Jews would have been hurling them at Paul. As it was, they could only tear their clothes and fling them in the air, and throw dust at him.

20. Who brought the situation under control? (22:24) _____

The Roman officer's most important duty was to maintain order. Viewing Paul as a troublemaker who had caused the second disturbance within a few hours, he felt he had to do something to get to the bottom of the problem.

21. What order did the chief captain give regarding Paul? (22:24) _____

Scourging was the Roman means of getting criminals to talk. One of the most violent forms of torture, it often left the victims maimed for life, if not dead.

Paul had been whipped by Jews at least five times, and beaten with rods by the Romans at least three times (2 Cor. 11:24-25). But the Roman scourge was far worse.

22. At this point, what did Paul do? (22:25-26) _____

Acts 22:24-30 (NKJV)

24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and undemanded?"

26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman."

27 Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes."

28 The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen."

29 Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.



Insight

The Turning Point

It is worth noticing that all went well with Paul's speech until he used the G-word: "*Gentiles*." As Paul told about his early training, even about his conversion, there was no sign of unrest. But when he told how the Lord had commissioned him to go to the Gentiles, that word was like a spark to a fuse. At that second, his audience turned on him like a pack of angry dogs. "*Away with such a fellow from the earth, they yelled. 'He ought not live.'*" Paul not fit to live? One cannot help wondering how they classified themselves!



The Roman scourge was a leather whip studded at intervals with pieces of bone and lead. An instrument of torture, it often left victims maimed for life, or dead.



Insight

When Paul Used His Citizenship

When the Roman commander ordered Paul taken into the barracks and prepared for torture and the lash, Paul spoke out. *"Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman citizen, and uncondemned?"* (22:25). Paul had learned to be content with little or nothing in the way of comforts, but that did not mean he welcomed torture.

Paul never tried to conceal the fact that he was a Roman citizen. It gave him a status that he otherwise would have lacked, because not everyone who happened to live in the Empire was a Roman citizen.

Paul's citizenship gave him, among other things, the protection of Roman law against the violence of the mob. The surprising fact is that Paul took advantage of his privilege so seldom. It seems, he did not use his Roman citizenship to make things easier for himself. He only used it when his life was in danger. He was willing to take the insults and the unjust accusations. He was willing to be put in prison and not even mention that his persecutors were violating the law. But when the chief captain ordered him to be tortured, that meant permanent injury, if not death. Paul needed his rights and privileges as a Roman citizen.

In our day, people frequently flaunt their "rights" solely for personal advantage or convenience, or to save themselves from discredit. Paul used his rights not to get free from legitimate responsibilities but to make it possible to serve others better.

One of the signs of mature character is the ability to use privileges wisely.



(left) A diptych such as this could have contained official record of Paul's Roman citizenship. Paul was free born.

(above) The Roman commander said he paid a large sum for his Roman citizenship.

Paul knew that what they were doing to him was illegal. He was willing to suffer for Christ's sake, but there was no virtue in suffering for suffering's sake. It is very possible that Paul saved his life by being able to prove his Roman citizenship.

23. What was the reaction of the centurion to whom Paul spoke? (22:26) _____
24. Receiving the word about Paul's citizenship, what did the chief captain do? (22:27) _____
25. What did Paul tell the chief captain about his Roman citizenship? (22:28) _____
26. What was the chief captain's response? (22:29) _____
27. What became of the scourging? (22:29) _____
28. When examining by scourging didn't happen, what steps did the commander take to learn about Paul's case? (22:30) _____

The chief captain knew that Paul, as a Roman citizen, had a right to bring charges against him even for putting him in chains, charges that could result in him losing his position, or even being executed. Roman citizenship was highly respected.

Even though Paul was a Roman citizen, this fact alone did not grant him a release. The responsibility of the chief captain was to maintain law and order, and at this time Paul was viewed as the offender. Since the Jews were the chief proponents of the arrest, the chief captain had a duty to give the Jews opportunity to present their case.

29. How did the chief captain arrange to hear the Jews' accusations? (22:30) _____

The chief captain referred the matter to the Sanhedrin. It seems strange that he did not personally ask Paul to tell his story, but perhaps he thought a prisoner would not likely tell him the truth. MM

to be continued



Did you know...

The Sanhedrin...

The Sanhedrin met in Jerusalem and acted as the supreme Jewish court. It was a governing body of the Jews formed some time after the Captivity. Through the years it had varying levels of authority due to the political upheavals of the Maccabean times. During the time of Jesus it was largely responsible for the internal government of Judea.

DESIGNED TO BE A PARASITE

The Brown-headed Cowbird and European Cuckoo are Brood Parasites.



Brown-headed female cowbird

There is no cowbird “family” as the adult birds have many and various mates. The female lays her egg in another bird’s nest and then flies away, leaving the work to the host “mother.” Did the cowbird just chance to acquire these specialized habits that allow it to exist as it does? Not a chance.

European cuckoo



Dependent on foster parents to incubate her eggs and raise her young, the cuckoo jettisons a host’s egg to make room for her own.

The cuckoo plays parasite to some 300 species. Remarkably, it even lays eggs that resemble those of its host—the better to make sure its eggs are treated like those of the foster parent. How could such a remarkable instinct be taught or evolved over time?

Newly hatched, a cuckoo ejects its host’s eggs. How could such a unique instinct become part of a bird’s genetics without a Designer?

A huge young cuckoo begs “mother” for more food.

The European cuckoo is another bird notorious for the habit of depositing its eggs in the nests of other birds, leaving the involuntary hosts with the work of incubating the eggs and feeding the young. The cuckoo parasitizes some 300 species.

Can anyone think that parasiting is a chance arrangement for survival? It is yet another evidence of our Creator’s awesome designs in providing for His creatures.



(above) “Mother” blue-winged warbler feeds a giant cowbird chick. Cowbird chicks usually hatch a day or two before the eggs of the host bird, and grow rapidly, giving the cowbird chick a competitive advantage. As a result, the host’s chicks often perish. Just think how many “just right” things have to be to have brood parasiting work. Only a Designer could mastermind this feat!

One unwilling host, a yellow warbler, tried to foil the parasite by roofing over its eggs. But each time the cowbird laid another egg. The cowbird won—its egg is on top. (below) Cutaway view shows the five-story apartment.



Each female Brown-headed Cowbird deposits as many as 40 (some say 80) eggs per year in nests that belong to other bird species.



Youth in Christ

Phoebe Cowbird never learned, "Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't think only of your own affairs" (Phil. 2:3-4 NLT).

PRODIGAL PARENTS

What is the matter with the young birds nowadays? Why are so many of them so wild?" How often these questions are asked in Wington when it is reported how many young birds quarrel and cheat and steal and stay out late at night! It is common knowledge that the Owl children and the Nighthawk children sometimes stay out until dawn!

Well, Mr. J. Edgar Kingbird, being the Head of the FBI (the Feathered Bureau of Investigation) says the real trouble with the young birds is the old birds—by which he means their fathers and mothers.

For example, it is not surprising that the Owl children stay out until the wee small hours, because their parents are night-owls themselves! Not so very long ago as Mr. and Mrs. Owl started out to their club one evening, Mrs. Owl said to little Hoo-Hoo Owl, "Don't bother to wait up for us, dear. We have a key." But, when she and Mr. Owl returned, several hours later, little Hoo-Hoo opened the door for them. Said Mrs. Owl, "You should have gone to sleep. I told you we had a key."

"Yes," said little Hoo-Hoo, "but Grandmother is not in yet, and she does not have a key."

But, back to Mr. J. Edgar Kingbird. "So many parents," he says, "being quite busy with parties and meetings of all kinds, allow their children to roam the woods and the fields, leaving the responsibility of their up-bringing to social workers and neighbors and teachers and the Sunday School. But, it does not work," says he, "because there is no substitute for the love, care, and the personal attention, and especially the good example which every little bird needs and has the right to expect from its own father and mother. In general," insists Mr. Kingbird, "the wildness of the young birds is accounted for by the neglect of the old birds."

A good example—or rather, a bad example—is Mrs. Cowbird. Do you know how she raises her children—I mean, how they get raised? She is too lazy to build her own nest and too taken-up with parties and clubs to hatch her own eggs. So, the other day while Mrs. Warbler was attending choir rehearsal, Mrs. Cowbird sneaked up to her nest and slipped one of her own eggs into the little brown nest—then sneaked away again.

When Mrs. Warbler returned, she exclaimed, "What, again? Twice is once too many! I'll not do it a second time!" You see, Mrs. Cowbird did the same thing last year, and Mrs. Warbler, having a very warm heart under her warm feathers, let Mrs. Cowbird's egg stay. And, having placed three of her own beside it, she sat on all of them until they hatched. But, what do you think? Mrs. Elsie Cowbird's egg hatched two days earlier than her own. Thus Phoebe Cowbird had the start on the three little Warblers, and whenever Mrs. Warbler brought home a worm, Phoebe would grab it first and swal-

low it before one of the little Warblers could so much as get a nibble. She was so selfish and greedy that Mrs. Warbler's own little children almost starved to death, and all of them were very much relieved when one day Phoebe Cowbird flew away and never came back.

Everywhere Phoebe went she was selfish and quarrelsome, never dividing the worms and bugs she found, and stealing whatever she could from other birds. For this reason she was very unpopular in Wington. She was what one would call "A Bad Egg"—only she was already hatched! Which was really worse than if she had never been born at all.

Her mother met her one day and gave her quite a scolding. "You should be ashamed of yourself," she said. "You are a disgrace to Wington. Why have you turned out like this? You have always had everything you wanted!" Which, perhaps, was the very reason Phoebe was spoiled and wild. She had always had everything she wanted.

Be that as it may, now that she is grown she looks so much like her mother that you can hardly tell them apart—and acts like her too, for who do you suppose it was that laid the Cowbird egg in Mrs. Warbler's nest this year? Not Elsie, but Phoebe Cowbird! And that is what made Mrs. Warbler so angry when she found the second Cowbird egg in her nest. "Like mother, like daughter!" she exclaimed. "I'll never hatch another Cowbird egg as long as I live!"

So, Mrs. Warbler did a very clever thing. She just added another floor to her nest—by which I mean, she put a new layer of grass and straw on top of the Cowbird egg and left it down there in that cold cellar while she hatched her own little brood in the nice warm nest above.

So far as I know, Phoebe Cowbird's egg is still there, unhatched, and by this time, no doubt, spoiled. And now you know why Phoebe Cowbird has no little children. **MM**



Phoebe Cowbird grabs the worm first from Mrs. Warbler.

The above story is reprinted with permission from *Bird Life in Wington* by J. Calvin Reid. Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI.

WATCH YOUR STEP

"Kenny, my boy. What are you doing?" The big, booming voice startled Kenny, and he glanced up to find his uncle standing next to him. Quickly, Kenny put the magazine he was reading behind his back.

"Oooohhh, Uncle Walter! I—I didn't hear you coming," he stammered.

Uncle Walter raised his eyebrows. "So I noticed. Would you like to go with me to the construction site of the new bank? I have some business with the contractor."

"Oh, yes!" Kenny jumped up. "Let me ask Mom."

"I already did. It's fine with her." Uncle Walter turned toward his car. "Let's go."

Kenny started to follow him, then remembered the magazine in his hand. "Ahhh, Uncle Walter, wait a minute. I've—I've—ahhhh, I'm thirsty." Quickly, he slipped into the house. After hiding the magazine in his bedroom, he stopped in the kitchen for a drink. After all, he had said he was thirsty.

At the construction site, Kenny and his uncle put on hard hats. Shielding his eyes, Kenny looked up—up—up at the tall steel frame. "Wow!" he exclaimed. "Look, Uncle Walter. See those men working way up there! That looks scary!"

"It is," Uncle Walter agreed. "You'll never see a steel worker running or turning flip-flops or doing gymnastics on his job."

"I guess not!" Kenny couldn't keep his eyes off the men above him. "They have to watch every step."

"When I see these steel workers way up there, it reminds me of a Bible verse. It says,

'See then that ye walk circumspectly.' That means to be very, very careful to please God in the way we live," Uncle Walter explained. "The verse ends by saying, *'...not as fools, but as wise.'* It would be foolish for those workers not to walk carefully, and it's just as foolish for Christians not to live carefully."

Kenny slowly lowered his gaze and saw that Uncle Walter was watching him closely. Kenny's face turned red. "I know what's coming," he said. "You saw the magazine I was reading. I can't hide anything from you."

"Or from God," Uncle Walter reminded him.

Slowly, Kenny nodded. "Or from God," he repeated softly. MM



Step (Live) Carefully

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT:

When the Bible talks about your "walk," it is often referring to your life. As a Christian, you should walk—live—*very* carefully. When we are careless Christians we stumble and fall into sin. Remember: one wrong step can get you into lots of trouble. Watch your steps—your reading material, your habits, your language, your friends, every part of your life!

Adapted from *KEYS FOR KIDS* 1997

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON PAGE 17

NAME THIS KING

1. Jehu (2 Kings 9:20)
2. Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:6–7)
3. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:34–37)
4. Belshazzar (Dan. 5:22–27)

BIBLE "WHO'S"

1. Peter (Acts 10:10–17)
2. Samson (Judges 15:15–16)
3. Stephen (Acts 7:52–54)
4. Dorcas (Acts 9:38–41)
5. Balaam (Num. 22:28–30)
6. Elisha (2 Kings 5:10–11)
7. Nicodemus (John 3:1–2)
8. Nathan the prophet (2 Sam. 7:1–5; 1 Chron. 28:3)

Picture: Moses (Acts 7:22)

9. Stephen (Acts 7:58–60)
10. Gideon (Judges 6:11–12)
11. Paul (Acts 9:15; Eph. 3:8; Rom. 11:13; 2 Tim. 1:11; 4:17)
12. Nehemiah plus helpers (Neh. 6:15)
13. Ezra (Ezra 7:6)
14. Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:22, 37)
15. Isaiah (Isa. 45:1–3)
16. Judah (Gen. 49:8)
17. Jacob (Gen. 28:10–12)
18. Annas (Acts 4:6; 9:1–2)
19. Anna (Luke 2:36–38)
20. The mother of James and John, wife of Zebedee (Matt. 20:20–21; 4:21)

21. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–10)
22. Ananias (Acts 9:17)
23. Elisha (1 Kings 19:19–21)
24. Noah, Daniel and Job (Ezek. 14:14, 20)
25. Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:6–7)

WHO SAID?

1. John the Baptist (Matt. 3:4–7)
2. Ahab (1 Kings 18:17)
3. Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:12–14)
4. Peter (Acts 10:34–35)
5. Nathaniel (John 1:46)
6. David (Ps. 14:1)
7. Samuel (1 Sam. 15:22)

Jesus Is Alive!

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

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

What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to me?

Because He lives, I, too, may live!

CONSIDER THESE FIVE “E’s”

1. THE **EMPTY** TOMB.

Is this singular? Look and compare: Confucius’ tomb—occupied. Buddha’s tomb—occupied. Muhammad’s tomb—occupied. Jesus’ tomb—empty! Why is Jesus’ tomb empty? The enemies of Christ would not have stolen His body—they requested a guard to avoid such a scandal. The friends of Christ would not have stolen His body—why would they die for what they knew to be a lie?

2. **EYE-WITNESS** REPORTS.

The apostles and many others were eye witnesses of the resurrected Jesus (see Matt. 26:1–5; Luke 24:1–12; Acts 1:3,22; 2:31,32; 4:33; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8). The disciples had no reason to propagate this event if it did not occur, much less be willing to die for proclaiming it.

3. **EARLY** WRITTEN ACCOUNTS OF THE RESURRECTION.

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

4. THE **EMERGENCE** OF THE **EARLY** CHURCH.

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

5. **EXTRA-BIBLICAL** EVIDENCE.

Even non-believers made statements that together confirm the resurrection of Jesus. Altogether, more than a hundred such statements have been found. Together they corroborate the Bible documents beyond question.



Knowledge without wisdom is as dangerous as an automobile without steering wheel or brakes.

Go to your Bible regularly, open it prayerfully, read it expectantly, live it joyfully.

Set your goal high, and be sure it has the approval of God.

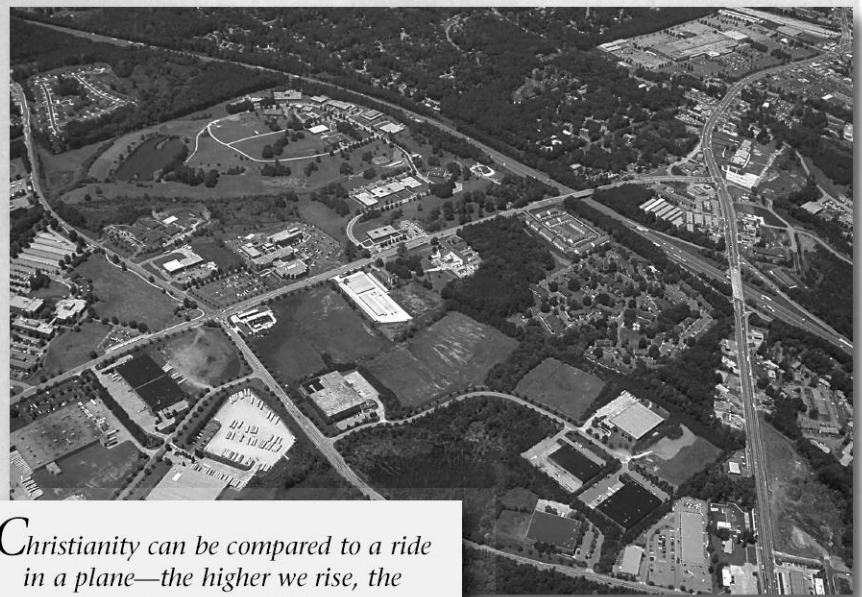
Contentment has been praised more and practiced less than any other condition of life.

Hate is a luxury no one can afford.

The best things in life are difficult to obtain and hard to retain.

It is easy to begin, but the test of character lies in persevering.

If you live right each day, you will be neither afraid of tomorrow nor ashamed of yesterday.



Christianity can be compared to a ride in a plane—the higher we rise, the smaller things on earth become.

To the cheerful hearted, everything looks brighter.

Make worthy choices, and avoid taking foolish chances.

People who are unkind are the wrong kind.

The lazy person speaks much about yesterday and tomorrow.

what promotes "my" interests, and what looks ought for "me."

Do we wonder why the Bible tells us, "Come out from among them and be separate, ... do not touch what is unclean"? (2 Cor 6:17). Do we belong to Christ's family one might delude a sensitivity to spiritual things, and to become sensitive to spiritual things one might separate from the present culture. We cannot become sensitive to the higher things while we continue to expose ourselves to the culture, its TV and entertainment, its pop-and-shoot video games, its violent films, its sensual music, its brutal behaviors.

A keen sensitivity to spiritual things is more than an idea—it is a command. In fact, it is a life-or-death matter spiritually speaking. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Rom. 8:6-7). He said also, "Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit....if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Rom. 8:5, 13).

Separate, then Saturate

How can we become sensitive to things spiritual? First, we must separate ourselves as much as possible from exposure to the media and its way of thinking. And then we must saturate ourselves in the Word of God, learn God's way of thinking about the issues of life, and what He approves and disapproves. This sensitivity is what the author of Hebrews calls "discernment," having our senses exercised "to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14).

Why? Why all this concern for spiritual values? Why be concerned with what God loves and hates? Because God holds the verdict on our lives. If we want a share in the eternal inheritance He has promised His children, we must meet His standard. "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He [Christ] is pure" (1 John 3:3).

What is the right sensitivity? Feel it in these words of the great Apostle: "This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:9-10 NIV).

There is no other way. MM

*Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls—
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

Habakkuk 3:17–18



The Christian's Creed

What though the labor of olives shall cease;
And though the fields do not yield their increase;
Yet we will trust in God; do His will;
Let His Rod guide us still;
And His law now fulfill—Yes!
Although disease and drought ruin the fold,
And only empty stalls we may behold,
Yet we will never fear, but obey;
God is near, and His way
Is the best for us always.

What though misfortune should visit us here,
And take away all that we may hold dear;
Yet we will press ahead, just the same,
Ever led by His Name,
For His law is the same—Yes!
Although our health and wealth pass in the night;
Our friends and loved ones all vanish from sight;
Yet we'll rejoice in God, naught can harm;
There's no cause for alarm.
Mighty to save is His arm! — L. L. Snyder