

Megiddo Message

September/October, 2006



*This is the Lord's
doing, and it is marvelous
to see. -Psalm 118:23 NLT*





Added Value

"We are workers together with God" –2 Cor. 6:1 NCV

What determines the **value** of a new product? How much is it **worth**?

In manufacturing, these are difficult questions answered only after extensive data gathering and analysis.

Through my years of involvement in product manufacturing and quality control, I have been impressed with a lesson I would like to share.

In this article, I am using **value** as the cost of an item, and **worth** as its **market price**, or what the end user is willing to pay for it.

Every product on the market has **value** (cost) associated with it simply as a result of being designed and produced. In manufacturing, a product must not have more **value** (cost) than it is **worth** (to sell), or the investment will be lost.

When a company decides to make a new product, they first research the market to find the sales potential for the product. Then a team of engineers designs the product, and the drafting department makes drawings that are sent to other factories who will build unique parts. Meanwhile, the company's buyers search the market to get the best price on parts commonly available that will meet the engineers' requirements. Add carton design, advertising, planning and scheduling, promotional literature costs and other details of product development, and you have a figure that represents a large amount of **value** (cost)—while the product is still **worthless**: it hasn't yet been manufactured!

During the later stages of product development, quality control becomes involved. Quality control must approve every part that goes to production. They monitor production for correct assembly and packaging. They evaluate the finished product for appearance and functionality. When the product is finally being sold, they analyze products returned from the field, to determine the cause of failure and to recommend corrective action.

What determines the level of quality required? Ultimately, how the product is to be used. For example, consider the manufacturing of batteries. We expect a flashlight battery to fail after a few hours' use. But what if the battery is to assure continuous operation of a person's heart pump? For such a use, one would want the most reliable battery available that is regularly checked to be sure it is working properly and well charged. Here the **worth** dictates the quality to be of greatest importance.

Now I would like to make a parallel to the project in which each of us is involved: how we add **value** to the product (godly character) that the great Inspector (Jesus) will count **worthy** of full value (eternal life).

God the great Creator is the owner and operator of this special manufacturing firm. He is looking for those who will work with Him (2 Cor. 6:1) in producing the product of greatest **worth** in the universe: a godly character. Toward this end He provides the largest part of the initial investment (**value**). Through His Word He provides instructions, a clear statement of the standard of quality He expects, and an abundance of examples. He even includes details about one who added **value** perfectly, Jesus Christ, making a template for others to follow. God also provides a team of quality control experts, angels that encamp about us (Ps. 34:7) to guide the project. They arrange circumstances that test our **worth**, making it possible for us to know where we are failing and make changes as required.

God expects us to add **value** to the product (our character). How do we add **value** that has the **worth** our heavenly Father is looking for? Read the answer: *"Now change your lives and start doing good and obey the Lord your God"* (Jer. 26:13 NCV).

Whatever we do or think, we should always consider its **worth** to God. When His representative, Jesus Christ, returns, He will be interested in only one thing, our **worth**. Our **worth** will be the direct result of the **value** we added. *"Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy...and to stand before the Son of Man"* (Luke 21:36).

If a wrong (or defective) part is mounted on a circuit board, **value** (cost) will be added, but the product is **worthless**—because it won't function as intended. The only way to give the product **worth** is to correct the problem. This is just what God requires of us while we are building a character of **worth** to Him. He knows that sometimes we will add a wrong part to our character that spoils our **worth** (pride, anger, hate or bitterness, for example). To be of **worth** to God we must replace that wrong part (i.e., pride) with the right part (i.e., a humble mind) while we have opportunity.

Our one concern is to be sure that the **value** we add has **worth**; for we are not building a product that is soon consumed, but rather a character to last eternally. For this reason, the **value** we add must be of the highest quality. The angels that camp about us are inspecting every part that we put into our character to be sure that it has the highest value. We can put in defective parts and take them out again, but this delays production, and our time to make the finished product to His standard can be no more than the length of our life, *"before [our] feet stumble on the dark mountains, and...He turns it into the shadow of death and makes it dense darkness"* (Jer. 13:16).

When Christ returns, He will inspect every finished prod-

Everlasting Mercy

"from everlasting to everlasting"

The following comments made by our founder in the year 1900 point up his deep insights into the work and purposes of our Creator years before the vastness of the heavens was perceived or documented by scientists.



L. T. Nichols
Founder of the Megiddo Church
Born October 1, 1844

NASA, ESA and A. Nota (STScI/ESA)



Our Great Creator's Handiwork!

This is a Hubble Space Telescope view of a region calculated to be 210,000 light-years away in a satellite galaxy of our Milky Way. At the center of the photo is a brilliant star cluster called NGC 346. A myriad of smaller, compact clusters is also visible throughout the region. – *HST news*

As I was looking into the heavens last night, I thought, how grand to be able to visit those lovely worlds! They seemed so bright and beautiful; it made me think of a little rhyme:

*Twinkle, twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.*

How I wonder! If we were to take a trip to even the few stars we see, it would take us a good long time; but then if we spent a thousand years on each one, we would have just as much time left. My! To think of taking such a trip as that! But it is just as certain that the faithful will enjoy these things, as that there is a great Creator who is the Ruler of them all.

In the first of Genesis God is enlightening us regarding His plan of salvation upon this earth. But people in general have such a vague idea of God's plan of salvation. I was talking a few days ago with an individual, and during the conversation the point came up that only few would work out their salvation during the six thousand years from Adam to the Millennium. He thought it a dreadful thing that so few should be saved from a six thousand year time span; thought that God had made a failure of His plan of salvation. I asked him, "When do you think the first man was made?"

He replied: "About six thousand years ago."

I said to him: "Do you not think it would be a much greater failure if in all the thousands and millions of ages in the past not one man had been created, not once until six thousand years ago had God moved the wheels of salvation?"*

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*While the Bible states positively that God is the Infinite, All-wise Creator, it does not tell *when* any specific creative event took place. The first three chapters of Genesis, Nichols believed, were intended to be a table of contents for the Bible, as it were; an outline in the form of an allegory pointing to highlights of God's plan of salvation. This plan is the central subject of all Scripture from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. For further discussion of Genesis, chapters 1-3 as a prophetic outline, see our booklet, *God's Spiritual Creation*.

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Myself

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MEGIDDO MEANS...

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

WE BELIEVE...

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

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

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

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

THE HERALD AND THE KING

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

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

Ah! My friends, that family of God has been from eternity past and still is expanding continually. They extend on and on to other planets and universes. God has plenty of space, and plenty of time. Because time is so precious and so limited to us is no sign that it is limited to God. His purpose is to fill this earth with righteous people, glorifying Him. Go to Numbers 14:21, and there we read His purpose: *"But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."* Ah! God has not made a failure. He would not make a failure if it took Him millions of years to accomplish His purpose. But He would make a failure if the inhabitants of the earth were the only ones in all the universe to be saved.

We read in Ps. 103:17–18 how long this day is in which God has been showing mercy. *"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."* His mercy is *"from everlasting to everlasting."* It has been from eternity past and will be to eternity future.

How could God's mercy be from everlasting to everlasting unless there were men and women living who needed that mercy? I cannot be kind to the poor if there are no poor. The Divine Record declares that His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon those that remember His commandments to do them—this shows that from an eternity in the past, and not simply for six thousand years, there have been those who have remembered God's commandments to do them.

Adam and Eve were merely the first of our race to be called into the service of the Lord; they were not the first beings to be given life. God has unnumbered worlds in His mighty universes filled with happy immortal beings who have worked out their salvation; and there are unnumbered others which are passing through the probationary stage the same as we are. Salvation on this earth is only according to His eternal purpose. This operation on our earth is only one fold of many in the more than wonderful plan of the Almighty. Paul tells us of it in Eph. 3:10–11: *"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."* His plan on this earth is not His eternal purpose, but only according to His eternal purpose; a sample of the glorious plan of salvation which He has been working out through untold ages in the past on other planets, God's happy family in glorified worlds above.

With his mind expanded to grasp the magnitude of this plan, I cannot wonder that Paul exclaimed (Eph. 3:14–15): *"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."* The *"whole family in heaven and earth"* are all named of God—a family that includes the inhabitants of glorified worlds on high, those saved through an eternity past.

Dear friends, the Bible does not teach the false theory that God commenced His work only about six thousand years ago. Great light is thrown upon this subject by Eccl. 1:9–10: *"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us."* God's plan on earth is only according to that which has been going on through eternity. There is no new thing under the sun. No wonder Paul could exclaim (Rom. 11:33), *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"* ♦

NASA, The Hubble Heritage Team and A. Riess (STScI)



More of our Great Creator's Handiwork!

According to Hubble Space Telescope news, this spiral galaxy (named NGC 1309) resides 100 million light-years from Earth. It is one of about 200 galaxies that make up the Eridanus group of galaxies.

This image is roughly 82,000 light years wide.

"The image is complemented by myriad far-off background galaxies." – HST news

“Write...Send” to

PART THREE

To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: “These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.

I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.

Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.”

—Revelation 2:12–17 NIV

Pergamum



TO THE CHURCH AT PERGAMUM:

YOU ARE *Too Tolerant*

An important political and religious center in the Roman Empire during the first century, Pergamum was the capital city of the province of Asia. Highly prosperous and politically strong, of the seven churches Jesus addressed, Pergamum likely provided the most difficult environment for a Christian church. At the same time, the church at Pergamum was probably one of the most “alive” of the seven churches, with an abundance of members, programs, and activities for all ages. What lay under this seeming contradiction?

The problem was subtle, and the introductory words of Jesus’ letter bring it into sharp focus. He is telling these people that Christian commitment is serious, as serious as life and death.

“These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword” (Rev. 2:12). The sword was a symbol of a life-death verdict. The Roman Proconsul at Pergamum had the right to pardon or execute, no jury or higher authority needed. In Roman times, capital punishment was symbolized by the sword, and numerous references to swords linked Pergamum to capital punishment. Jesus was saying in effect, “Do you fear the Roman Proconsul? I hold the two-edged sword with the author-

ity of heaven. Are you thinking about pleasing people—or pleasing Me?"

"YOU REMAIN TRUE"

Jesus begins with words of praise for those who have been standing strong in the face of serious persecution. Even in suffering, He says, "*you remain true to my name.*" Even though there was great pressure to return to pagan worship, to burn incense to the emperor, and to declare that Caesar is Lord, some among these believers held fast to Christ's teaching. Remaining true required bravery and courage. No doubt they recalled Jesus' words, "*If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you*" (John 15:20), and refused to disown the faith.

These people were standing firm even to death! Jesus makes notable mention of "*Antipas My faithful martyr who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*" The attitude was, "You may take my life, but you cannot take away my faith." We do not know anything about Antipas, except that he was faithful to death. He will be one who will hear "*Well done, good and faithful servant*" when he is resurrected and rewarded.

"WHERE SATAN DWELLS"

Did "Satan" live in Pergamum? Satan lives anywhere evil thrives. The "devil" or "Satan" is a term the Bible uses for people and systems opposed to God and His cause (see John 6:70; Rev. 2:10; Matt. 16:23). The name Satan is also used as a personification of evil. Jesus says, in effect, I know you face the powers of evil every day. "*...You dwell where Satan's throne is*"—the system that contrives and promotes evil was right in town—their town and ours also. It was all clear on His radar screen.

THE PROBLEM: TOLERANCE

"But..." there is a problem in Pergamum. Is the presence of Satan's throne the problem? No, Satan has a "presence" in every city in the world, then and now. As long as the ship is in the sea and the sea is *outside* the ship, all is well. The problem is when the sea starts getting into the ship. And in Pergamum, Jesus saw the sea (the immorality and corruption of the world) getting inside the ship (the Church).

The problem was the too tolerant attitude of the leaders of the Church.

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WHO WAS BALAAM?

Below is a free paraphrase of the Bible account of Balaam, condensed from the book of Numbers, chapters 22–25, and 31:7–16 NLT.

Then the people of Israel traveled to the plains of Moab and camped east of the Jordan River, across from Jericho.

Balak, the Moabite king, knew what the Israelites had done to the Amorites. And when they saw how many Israelites there were, he and his people were terrified. So Balak, king of Moab, sent messengers to Balaam* to request that Balaam come to help him:

"Please come and curse them for me because they are so numerous. I also know that the people you bless are blessed and the people you curse are doomed." [Balaam was allied with the Midianites and may have even been a Midianite of high rank. See Numbers 31:7–8.]

Balak's messengers urgently explained to him what Balak wanted. "Stay here overnight," Balaam said. That night God came to Balaam. "Do not go with them. You are not to curse these people, for I have blessed them!" [Neither Balak nor Balaam had any idea that they were dealing with the Omnipotent God of heaven.]

The next morning Balaam told Balak's officials, "Go on home! The Lord will not let me go with you."

Then King Balak sent for Balaam again. This time he sent even more distinguished officials. "Please don't let anything stop you from coming. I will pay you well and do anything you ask of me. Just come and curse these people for me!"

But Balaam answered them, "Stay here one more night to see if the Lord has anything else to say to me." [Balaam really wanted that reward.]

That night God told Balaam, "Go with them. But be sure to do only what I tell you to do."

So the next morning Balaam saddled his donkey and started off with the Moabite [and Midianite] officials.

But God was furious that Balaam was going, because Balaam's intentions were not right. So God sent the angel of the Lord to stand in the road to block his way.

Balaam's donkey suddenly saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword and bolted off the road into a field, but Balaam beat it and turned it back onto the road.

When the donkey saw the angel, it lay down under Balaam. In a fit of rage Balaam beat the donkey ... with his staff.

Then the Lord caused the donkey to speak. "What have I done to you that deserves your beating me these three times?" it asked Balaam.

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THE CHRISTIAN CONNECTION

Into this city of thriving paganism came Christianity in the early centuries. We do not know exactly when or how, but perhaps the Apostle Paul was the instrument. We read in Acts 19 that when he was on his third missionary journey, during the two years he was in Ephesus, "all Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10). So it seems possible that he or some of his co-workers visited the city during that time and perhaps set up a church there, where converts started worshipping the true God.



KEY WORDS

- ❑ **BALAAAM**—Old Testament diviner (sorcerer) widely known for his curses and blessings, who was deeply involved in pagan religious practices and could not resist the tempting pull of money and idolatry. Balaam forfeited the reward Balak offered for his services when God would not let him curse Israel. But later he gave advice that enticed the Israelites into taking part in sexual idolatrous practices with Moabite (and Midianite) women. This led to the Israelites' worship of Baal, violating their sacred covenant with the true God and bringing God's anger on them.

Even though God spoke through Balaam and his donkey, Balaam was hostile to God and earned a reputation for being greedy, proud, covetous, deceitful, envious and malicious. In New Testament times his name became a catch-word signifying licentious, idolatrous, immoral behavior.

- ❑ **NICOLAITANS**—Possibly derived from two Greek words, *nikan*, meaning to conquer, and *laos*, meaning the people; suggests a group of people who compromised their faith in order to enjoy the sinful, forbidden practices of their society.

EARLY CHURCH HISTORIANS KNEW OF THE NICOLAITANS

The early church historians mention the Nicolaitans. Whether their statements are true, we cannot say, but they all suggest the type of lifestyle that Jesus warns Pergamum against.

Irenaeus says of them that "they lived lives of unrestrained indulgence" (Against Heresies, 1.26.3).

Hippolytus says that "he departed from correct doctrine, and was in the habit of inculcating indifference of food and life" (Refutation of Heresies, 7:24).

The Apostolic Constitutions (6:8) describe the Nicolaitans as "shameless in uncleanness."

Clement of Alexandria says they "abandoned themselves to pleasure like goats...leading a life of self-indulgence." William Barclay comments, "The Nicolaitans obviously taught loose living."

—See Barclay's *Daily Study Bible* (NT) on Rev. 2:6.

HEARING EARS

- ◆ Is there any area of my life about which Jesus could say, "You are compromising?"
- ◆ Am I alert to the dangers of "just a little" liberty?
- ◆ Under what guise is the doctrine of Balaam taught today?

There was too much of a "let's-get-along-with-everybody" attitude. In spite of their valiant stand against persecution, the leaders were compromising on issues of morality. "I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel. You also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:14–15). Some who "hold the teaching of Balaam" were inside the Church.

Balaam was a desperately wicked man.

BALAAAM'S TREACHERY

The story of Balaam comes from the time when the children of Israel were about to enter Canaan. They had camped in the plains of Moab, east of the Jordan across from Jericho. Moses was still their leader.

Quite naturally, the people of Moab were apprehensive about their presence. Moab's king Balak, hearing how the Israelites had defeated the Amorites, was afraid of what the Israelites and their strange, powerful God might do to his small country. Why not be proactive?

Accordingly, King Balak sent for a soothsayer named Balaam, who had a reputation for delivery of curses and blessings. Perhaps, Balak thought, he could bribe Balaam to put God's curse on the Israelite people.

Though the Biblical account shows that Balaam's real god was money, on this occasion God chose to use Balaam to speak on His behalf.

At first Balaam refused to help King Balak because Balaam could only say what the Lord wanted him to say; he could not curse Israel. But when Balak dangled the prize of great wealth, Balaam took on the challenge, thinking that somehow he could change God's mind. But contrary to Balak's request, Balaam could only bless Israel.

Balak was angry. Feeling helpless and used, he railed on Balaam!

Worried that he might lose the bribe, Balaam told Balak he had another idea: Get the people of Israel to corrupt themselves, and their own God would curse them! It was a devious plan, but perhaps, Balaam knew Israel's weakness for lust and idolatry.

What was the plan? Send some pretty young Moabite and Midianite women into the Israelite camp and invite the young men to come sleep with them. Then have a feast, sacrifice to the gods of Moab, dance, eat and drink—enjoy what the gods of Moab can give.

The Israelites fell for it. They worshiped the Moabite idols, revelled in their sex orgies, and committed every conceivable sin against the holiness of God. And just as Balaam had predicted, "The anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel" (Num. 25:3). The God who had delivered the Israelites from Egypt, who had brought them through the Red Sea, who had fed them every day with manna and sent His angel to lead them through the wilderness was deserted for some pretty faces and a heart full of lust.

THE DOCTRINE OF BALAAM

So what was the doctrine of Balaam? Balaam said, If it pays, go for it! In Balaam's view, the "*wages of unrighteousness*" (2 Pet. 2:15) can justify any sin. Indulge! Give the people what they want, because "Everybody does it"—free sex, lurid dances, drugs, alcohol and all the rest. Mix with the pagans, do whatever feels good, and enjoy yourself. Forget the consequences!

But the consequences came. God acted by sending a plague, and 24,000 perished (Num. 25:9). The plague was stopped only when a brave Israelite man named Phinehas (Aaron's grandson) killed two flagrant offenders "*because he was zealous for his God.*"

Do we see the seriousness in Jesus' words to the leaders at Pergamum, "*You have those who hold the doctrine of Balaam...and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate*" (Rev. 2:14-15).

Jesus says sin is deadly! It ends in disaster. He says, You cannot blend with the pagans and worship Me. If you allow that wickedness in your midst, if you want lust, you forfeit Me. You cannot serve God and mammon (Luke 16:13). There cannot be holiness to the Lord alongside the worship of sex and godlessness. When you live in sin, you invite God's wrath.

The Corinthians faced this same temptation to immorality, lust and idolatry. They also were letting Satan in, and the Apostle Paul condemned it. Why, he asked, do we have the record of those sinful Israelites? Because "*these things*" are "*our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted*" (1 Cor. 10:6). He says, You face the same temptations. "*Do not become idolaters as were some of them.*" He even reminds them of the serious consequences of Balaam's treachery, Paul says, Do not "*commit sexual immorality as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell*" (vs. 7-8).

If we are friends with the world, says the writer of James, we make ourselves God's enemies (Jas. 4:4). And God has judgment reserved for His enemies.

Do we wonder why Christians are called to "*come out from among them, and be separate*" and are forbidden even to touch the unclean? (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

The Church at Pergamum was more

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Balaam – continued from page 7

Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel standing in the roadway with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam fell face down on the ground before him.

"Why did you beat your donkey those three times?" the angel demanded. "I have come to block your way because you are stubbornly resisting me."

Then Balaam confessed, "I have sinned. I will go back home if you are against my going."

But the angel told him, "Go with these men, but you may say only what I tell you to say."

King Balak went out to meet him, "Did I not send you an urgent invitation? Why didn't you come right away? Didn't you believe me when I said I would reward you richly?"

Balaam replied, "I have come, but I have no power to say just anything. I will speak only the messages that God gives me."

The next morning Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth-baal. From there he could see the people of Israel spread out below him.

Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here by your burnt offerings, and I will go to see if the Lord will respond to me. Then I will tell you whatever he reveals to me." So Balaam went alone to the top of a hill and God met him there. Then the Lord gave Balaam a message for King Balak and said, "Go back to Balak and tell him what I told you."

Balaam returned, but in spite of himself, he could only utter the blessings God put into his mouth.

Then King Balak demanded of Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies. Instead, you have blessed them!"

But Balaam replied, "Can I say anything except what the Lord tells me?"

[However, Balak wouldn't give up. Two more times he would have Balaam curse Israel, but instead, God through Balaam's mouth uttered prophecies along with blessings on Israel and curses on its enemies.]

It was too much. King Balak flew into a rage against Balaam. He angrily clapped his hands and shouted, "I called you to curse my enemies! Instead, you have blessed them three times. Now get out of here! Go back home! I had planned to reward you richly, but the Lord has kept you from your reward."

Balaam replied, "I told you that I could say only what the Lord says! Now I am returning to my own people. But first let me tell you what the Israelites will do to your people in the future."

This is the prophecy Balaam delivered:...

I see him, but not in the present time.

I perceive him, but far in the distant future.

A star will rise from Jacob;

a scepter will emerge from Israel.

It will crush the foreheads of Moab's people,...

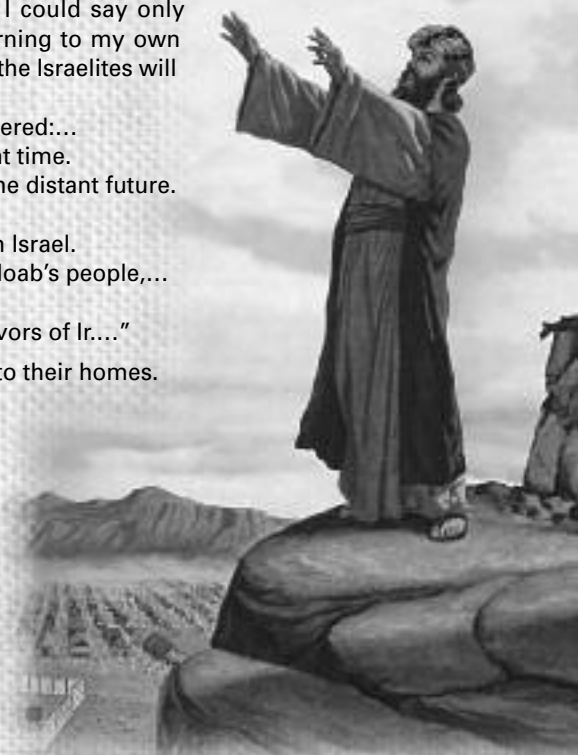
A ruler will rise in Jacob

who will destroy the survivors of Ir..."

Then Balaam and Balak returned to their homes.

However, that was not the end of the story. Balaam coveted Balak's rich reward. Though he had forfeited it because he had been utterly unable to curse Israel as Balak wished, he returned to Moab with a devious plan to secure that reward. He would use Israel's weakness to follow pagan religions so that they would bring God's curse on themselves. The plan worked, but Balaam did not live to enjoy his reward.

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VISIT FIRST-CENTURY PERGAMUM

About 60 miles north of Smyrna and 16 miles from the Aegean Sea, the ancient city of Pergamum towered over the surrounding region, an illustrious display of wealth and strength. Built on an acropolis over 1000 feet high with nearly sheer sides, the city was easily defended. The land surrounding it was a fertile tributary of the Caius River.

Originally a small colony founded about 1000 BC, Pergamum was a key city under Alexander the Great. When he died, his kingdom was divided among his four generals, and one division, the Seleucid Empire was headquartered at Pergamum, and became a center of Greek culture. They had the games. They had the Greek gods. They had the Greek glory. Everything to do with Greece was strong in Pergamum.

As Rome was rising into power, the city made a strong political alliance with Rome, and in 133 BC, the ruler of Pergamum stated in his will that his kingdom should be turned over to Rome at his death. The transition was without any destruction, and under Roman rule, Pergamum maintained its prominence. First century Pergamum was home to a large Greek amphitheater, along with many lavish temples to various pagan gods and Roman emperors.

Pergamum excelled in education and learning. Its massive library was second only to the Alexandrian library in Egypt. Marcus Antonius was so impressed with the library that he gave all its 200,000 handwritten volumes as a wedding present to Cleopatra, to be added to the collection in Alexandria.

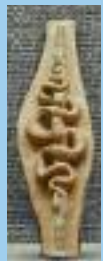
The city was wealthy because they had discovered a process for making a suitable writing material (parchment, or paper) from wood pulp instead of the more expensive Egyptian product papyrus. Some historians believe the name Pergamum comes from the Greek word for parchment (pergamena).

Apparently there was competition between Alexandria and Pergamum over the science of writing on papyrus, and Alexandria refused to disclose their secrets. But Pergamum did not need Alexandria to succeed.

Pergamum was also a religious center, with temples to every pagan god imaginable. The most impressive was one to Zeus, whose hundred-foot-square altar still stands today on top of a huge acropolis. Another notable temple was erected to Dionysius-Bacchus, the god of wine, also known as the goat god.

Pergamum also excelled in medicine, a science linked to the highly revered Asklepios, the god of healing. Asklepios was worshiped in the form of a serpent. Pergamum was also home to the Asklepium, a luxury health spa where the ill and afflicted came to be "healed." It is said that modern psychiatry had its early roots in Pergamum.

In the fourteenth century, shortly after an occupation by the Ottoman Turks, the city was abandoned. The modern city of Bergama began to develop at the foot of the acropolis, and survives today.



Aesculapius, represented by a snake, was believed to have power to heal and save.

Pergamum: Where Aesculapius "Healed"

Aesculapius (Greek Asklepios) was the Greek demigod of medicine and healing.



Aesculapius is almost always portrayed with a snake, Propylon, who was supposed to have given him healing powers.



Pergamum was famous for the Aesculapium, a cultic healing center where people came to be healed by worshipping Aesculapius.

(right) The Aesculapius Sacred Passageway (tunnel) led to the treatment rooms (below right). At night as patients walked from one end to the other, "doctors" shouted down positive words from holes above, in order to help patients feel better. Also part of the treatment was water dripping into and running along the passageway.



(right) Ruins of the elaborate Aesculapium round building where patients were treated. A fountain at center created an eerie atmosphere for patients in cubicles.



(left) Pergamum's Aesculapium pool, where patients could bathe and cover themselves with mud. Therapy at the Aesculapium ranged from snake bites to mud baths.



(right) Even the theatre at Pergamum was dedicated to Aesculapius, the snake god that could "heal." It had seating capacity for about 3500 persons.



Pergamum was first settled in the third millennium BC. It gained importance after Alexander the Great conquered Asia Minor in the fourth century BC. Alexander's general Lysimachus made Pergamum a military base.



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able to fight the enemy outside than the enemy within. What about today, when the greatest sin in the world is the sin of intolerance, and those who dare to speak against immorality are condemned? Hear Jesus' plea: "Repent!"

Jesus started His ministry by commanding separation. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). In other words, change your direction. Stop pleasing self, and start pleasing God. The Apostle Paul says it another way: "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22).

They had to get rid of the compromisers.

REPENT!

Jesus' call to Pergamum was "repent!" In other words, turn around 180 degrees! Those who were selling the fashions, the feasts, and the frivolities of paganism in the Church must be stopped! Christians could not remove Satan's throne from Pergamum, but they did not have to let it flourish in the Church! It was all to gratify the low, sensual and fleshly appetites. Paganism had nothing to offer Christians.

Jesus' rebuke to Pergamum includes the eating of foods sacrificed to idols. His point is that we are to avoid even the appearance of evil doing. Meat sold

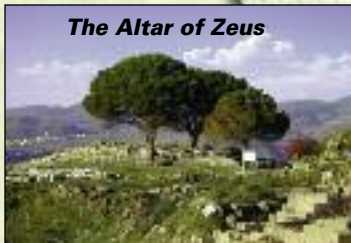
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(below) The huge altar of Zeus, constructed during the city's golden age (197–159 BC), was one of the most famous parts of

Pergamum. All that remains on the site today are the stairs and foundations.

When Jesus said "Satan's Seat" was in Pergamum, He may have been referring to the altar of Zeus or the

shrine of Heron (right). Pergamum was a center of Roman worship and veneration of the Caesars. It was also one of the first places where Christians were persecuted by the Imperial Government, which saw them as traitors because they refused to worship the emperor.



The Altar of Zeus



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Balaam – continued from page 9

[Numbers 25 tells what happened from Israel's side.]

While the Israelites were camped at Acacia, some of the men defiled themselves by sleeping with the local Moabite (and Midianite) women.

These women invited them to attend sacrifices to their gods, and soon the Israelites were feasting with them and worshiping the gods of Moab.

Before long Israel was joining in the worship of Baal of Peor, causing the Lord's anger to blaze against His people.

The Lord issued the following command to Moses: "Seize all the ringleaders and execute them before the Lord in broad daylight, so his fierce anger will turn away from the people of Israel."

So Moses ordered Israel's judges to execute everyone who had joined in worshiping Baal of Peor.

Just then one of the Israelite men [in open defiance] brought a Midianite woman into the camp, right before the eyes of Moses and all the people, as they were weeping at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

When Phinehas son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron the priest saw this, he jumped up and left the assembly. Then he took a spear and rushed after the man into his tent. Phinehas thrust the spear all the way through the man's body and into the woman's stomach. So the plague against the Israelites was stopped, but not before 24,000 people had died.

The Israelite man killed with the Midianite woman was named Zimri son of Salu, the leader of a family from the tribe of Simeon. The woman's name was Cozbi; she was the daughter of Zur, the leader of a Midianite clan.

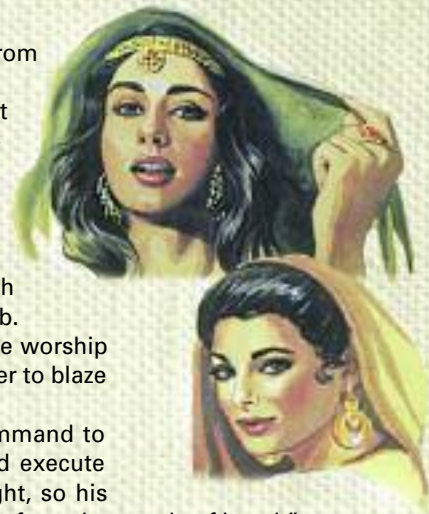
Then the Lord said to Moses, "Attack the Midianites and destroy them, because they assaulted you with deceit by tricking you into worshiping Baal of Peor. All five of the Midianite kings—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba—died in the battle. They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.

[Balaam's advice brought a curse on the disloyal Israelites, but he died with Israel's enemies.]

After they had gathered the plunder and captives, both people and animals, they brought them all to Moses and Eleazar the priest, and to the whole community of Israel.

But Moses was furious with all the military commanders who had returned from the battle. "Why have you let all the women live?" he demanded. "These are the very ones who followed Balaam's advice and caused the people of Israel to rebel against the Lord at Mount Peor. They are the ones who caused the plague to strike the Lord's people" (Num. 31:16).

Balaam's reputation has come down through Bible history. His name has become synonymous with insidious advice, covetousness, deceit and seduction for gain. He is mentioned in Deut. 23:4–5; Micah 6:5; 2 Pet. 2:15, 16; Rev. 2:14. ♦



Baal the Canaanite god for which the Israelites forsook Jehovah. In his hands he holds a club and thunderbolt.

INFLUENCE BY ASSOCIATION

If we think we are not influenced by our associates, we are only closing our eyes to reality. To avoid the influence we must avoid the association. When Balak sent the Moabite women into the camp of Israel, if disgusted Israelite men had immediately ordered the young women to go home, there would have been no lust, no feast, and no disastrous consequences. The problem was the Israelites really wanted the socializing. And socializing led to lust, and lust led to abandonment, the dirty fun, and the sensual exhilaration.

And it was their ruin.

Maybe the people of Pergamum thought, "This looks interesting. Just once won't hurt anything." But can't we hear Jesus shouting, "Don't do it! Don't associate with those who package and sell sin, and say it won't hurt you. Don't compromise." That is why Jesus says, "These things will kill you. Repent!"



White stone pillar with names of victors inscribed on wreaths.

TAKE ACTION!

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you" (Matt. 5:29).

Shameful behavior is everywhere—in magazines, in movies, on television. Immorality is even joked about. Religious people are made the object of ridicule, and serious Christians are pictured as people without any sense or intellect. The culture is seeking to convince everyone that nothing is sin anymore, that everyone is free to make right/wrong decisions for himself. As Christians we must be alert to these subtle and not-so-subtle influences.

Perhaps the greatest danger is the desensitizing effect. Being exposed to increasing levels of violence, filth, and meanness, our society accepts—even demands—more and more, until almost nothing is off limits.

The permissive attitude opens the door to destructive influences that are affecting even very young children. That is why Jesus advised dealing radically with evil. *"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you"* (Matt. 5:29). He didn't mean that we should maim our bodies, but that we should take strong action against sin. Keep a strong hatred of it. Show your children the pain and anguish that result from indulging in alcohol, from smoking, and "free" sex. Show them examples where wrong choices ended in tragedy, and take deliberate steps to avoid any books, magazines, or video images that arouse sensual, lustful thoughts. This is what Paul meant when he said, *"Put to death the deeds of the flesh"* (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5).

If we are indifferent to the sin around us, we will soon be trifling with it, and our spiritual loyalty will be compromised.

What is Jesus saying? Take action! Sin is serious. Sin is deadly. *Sin will kill you!*

in the marketplace wasn't intrinsically evil, as the Apostle Paul carefully explained (1 Cor. 10). But He did not want them doing anything even questionable. It would be guilt by association.

PROMISES FOR THE OVERCOMERS

Jesus appeals to those with open ears. There are promises for those who overcome: hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name.

A pot of manna was placed in the ark of the covenant as a memorial of God's goodness to Israel.

Among the gods of Pergamum was the goddess Demeter (goddess of the harvest). This god was called the "grocery god." The people worshiped this god because she put groceries on the table. Jesus was saying, I have something better. I have hidden manna, nourishing food, food that gives life eternal.

The names of winners at events were inscribed on white stone. Jesus used the white stone as a symbol of the honor to be given overcomers. "I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written" (Rev. 2:17).

Then Jesus had a second promise: *"I will give him a white stone."* A white stone indicated that the candidate had been approved. A black stone indicated disapproval. The white stone suggests acquittal, recognition and honor.

And in the white stone was to be *"a new name written,"* a name signifying honor, power, wealth and every blessing. A "new name" would put special value on each overcomer.

Someone has suggested that the Romans had a plan of awarding a winner with a special name. This name gave that individual free right to attend all the official doings in the town. Perhaps Jesus is saying, To all who overcome I will give a new name, and that name will give you the right to the greatest of all celebrations, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9).

What high compensation for resisting the influence of Satan! What honor to have the approval of Christ—the hidden manna, the white stone, and the new name! ♦

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The gymnasium at Pergamum was used for running events and to condition young males for competition. It was dedicated to Hercules, Hermes and the emperor.



KEY LINES

- ♦ **DON'T TEAM UP WITH UNBELIEVERS.**
- ♦ **DON'T COMPROMISE WITH ANYTHING GOD FORBIDS.**

STRESS, STRESS, STRESS!

by JEAN TREHARNE

We hear so much about stress in our world today. I wonder how many prophets would have suffered from it if they had not put their trust in God. From the beginning of the Bible to the end, there was stress, stress, stress on God's prophets, usually because people did not want to obey God. But always God's people found relief in God.

At times the stress might have been on God's people directly because of what God asked them to do. What did Noah think when God said to him, *"I intend to make an end of all flesh for the land is filled with violence"*? God told Noah to build an ark to escape from the flood which was coming upon the land. This ark was no ordinary boat. It was huge, 450 feet long, and many years passed while it was being built. Noah preached at the same time. I'm sure he was ridiculed for building this huge boat on dry ground, when it wasn't raining. What faith Noah had! How did he know this great vessel would be water-tight? How did he know it would float? How did he know there would be enough food and enough air for the animals he was told to take inside? What stress it could have been! But the responsibility was on God because we read that *"Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him"* (Gen. 6:22 NLT); also, *"Noah walked with God"* (Gen. 6:9). No reason for stress here.

What about Moses? By rights he should have been killed at birth. What stress for his parents! But Jochebed and Amram did what they could, and the child was saved—miraculously—when the daughter of Pharaoh discovered the baby floating in the river in a home-made basket.

One day when Moses was a grown man he took vengeance into his own hands and killed an Egyptian who was fighting with a Hebrew (Ex. 2:12). When Pharaoh heard of this he wanted to kill him, so Moses ran away to Midian. Here was serious stress, brought about by his own wrongdoing.

Forty years later, while tending sheep for his father-in-law, he saw a bush that appeared to be burning but was not burned up. From that bush God's angel spoke to him and said, *"Go, I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring My people out of Egypt"* (Ex. 3:10, free paraphrase). This was the beginning of a long period of stress for Moses, while Pharaoh refused to release the Israelites. Then there was more stress as they were chased by Pharaoh's army, even before the 40 years of wandering in the desert.

How much more stress Moses endured as the people complained bitterly and continually through forty years of wandering, and refused to trust God to provide. Then there was more stress as Moses tried to settle their disputes by himself. Here his father-in-law, observing the stress, persuaded Moses to ease his burden by appointing *"able men"* to help with the judging (Ex. 18:13–27). Very good advice!

What stress Moses suffered again when he came down from Mount Sinai and found the people dancing wildly in pagan revelry around the golden calf (Ex. 32:19). Later, when



10 out of the 12 scouts returned from exploring Canaan with a bad report, and the 10 were struck down by a plague, what stress! The people rose up in rebellion against Moses and Aaron—they even wanted to return to Egypt! Was Moses stressed? He took it to God, and God told Moses what to do.

A little later we read about Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their great rebellion against Moses' leadership—weren't they just as qualified as Moses? Normally this type of jealousy would have created high stress. But again, Moses took it to God. The Lord answered their complaint, and these men were destroyed when the earth opened and swallowed Dathan and Abiram and their families.

The very next day there could have been more stress as the people murmured against Moses saying, *"You have killed the people of the Lord!"* (Num. 16:41). Again, God took action. The Lord sent a plague, and we read that 14,700 people died. The offenders and their sympathizers were removed. The stress was gone.

When Moses was pressured by the Israelites to give them water again, Moses failed to obey God and in anger struck the rock at Meribah—a sin for which God barred him from entering Canaan. Wouldn't this be the ultimate in stress? Again Moses took it to the Lord, asking that the penalty be removed (Deut. 3:23–26). When God said no, Moses submitted to His verdict, without stress. And when the time came for Moses to climb the hill and view the land from a distance, there was still no stress. God was with His servant, all the way to the end. There Moses died, and there he was buried by the angels (Deut. 34). What an honor!

David the shepherd boy had reason for stress even before he was finally crowned king. When a youth, he had killed a lion and a bear, and had been called to play his harp and sing before the king. Then he had to face the giant Goliath. Could stress ever be greater, a lone youth facing an imposing giant? But David trusted in the Lord. He said to Goliath, *"You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied"* (1 Sam. 17:45). Did he feel stress? Maybe a little. But did he fight Goliath alone? Never! God guided David's hand, and Goliath fell (v. 49).

I hope if I find myself in a stressful situation I will remember Noah, Moses and king David and put my trust in the Lord as they did. ♦

Waiting, Waiting

"Be dressed for service and well prepared, as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks.

There will be special favor for those who are ready and waiting for his return. I tell you, he himself will seat them, put on an apron, and serve them as they sit and eat!"

—Luke 12:35–37 NLT

*We are waiting, yes, we're waiting with our candles burning bright,
In the darkness of the midnight, grateful for the heav'nly Light;
'Tis the light of holy teaching from God's chosen men of old;
'Tis the light of holy living, clean and upright, pure as gold.*

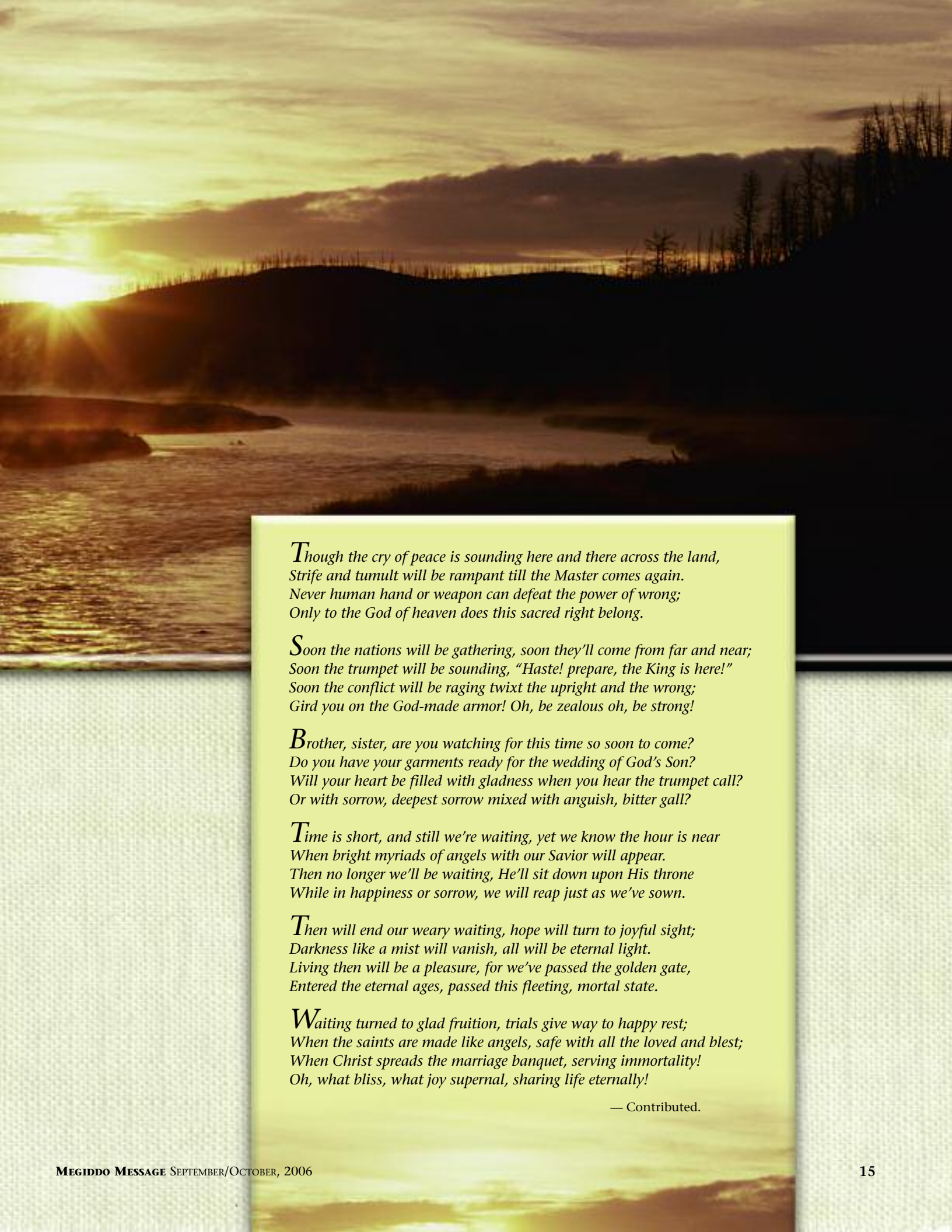
*We are waiting, yes, still waiting for the grand auspicious Day,
When the Mighty, Great Creator by His power will hold sway;
Over all He'll take dominion, unto Him all nations bow;
He the Mighty God of heaven: Keep, oh! keep with Him your vow.*

*We are waiting, we are anxious: words of hope our ears have heard,
And we see the signs fulfilling, as recorded in His Word.
Soon He'll fill this world with glory—not the glory of earth's fame,
But with goodness, justice, mercy, honor, truth that will remain.*

*We are waiting, yes, we're waiting for the herald and the King,
And the blasting of the trumpet that will make the heavens ring.
Hosts of angels swift arriving, all the dead in Christ shall wake.
With the living saints united, they will watch the morning break.*

*We are waiting, we are anxious, Christ the blessed Lord to view!
What a glorious day to hope for, when the earth is made o'er new!
Not one care to pain the sad heart, not one trouble to perplex,
Not one anxious thought to weary; not a single hurt to vex.*

*We are waiting for His advent while the earth yet groans with strife,
War and pestilence and famine, hate and violence all rife.
But the saints remain unshaken, trusting God to be their tower,
Who can keep them from all danger, sheltered safely every hour.*



*Though the cry of peace is sounding here and there across the land,
Strife and tumult will be rampant till the Master comes again.
Never human hand or weapon can defeat the power of wrong;
Only to the God of heaven does this sacred right belong.*

*Soon the nations will be gathering, soon they'll come from far and near;
Soon the trumpet will be sounding, "Haste! prepare, the King is here!"
Soon the conflict will be raging twixt the upright and the wrong;
Gird you on the God-made armor! Oh, be zealous oh, be strong!*

*Brother, sister, are you watching for this time so soon to come?
Do you have your garments ready for the wedding of God's Son?
Will your heart be filled with gladness when you hear the trumpet call?
Or with sorrow, deepest sorrow mixed with anguish, bitter gall?*

*Time is short, and still we're waiting, yet we know the hour is near
When bright myriads of angels with our Savior will appear.
Then no longer we'll be waiting, He'll sit down upon His throne
While in happiness or sorrow, we will reap just as we've sown.*

*Then will end our weary waiting, hope will turn to joyful sight;
Darkness like a mist will vanish, all will be eternal light.
Living then will be a pleasure, for we've passed the golden gate,
Entered the eternal ages, passed this fleeting, mortal state.*

*Waiting turned to glad fruition, trials give way to happy rest;
When the saints are made like angels, safe with all the loved and blest;
When Christ spreads the marriage banquet, serving immortality!
Oh, what bliss, what joy supernal, sharing life eternally!*

— Contributed.

Is War RIGHT or WRONG?

"I am interested in your Church's stand on conscientious objection and details regarding your founder's opposition to war."

As a Church we are conscientious objectors to war. We believe war under human direction is wrong because it involves taking the life of our fellowmen; and since we as human beings without Divine help cannot tell who is worthy to live or die, to kill in war is to make a judgment we are not qualified to make.

What is the basis for this position? When a group of soldiers came to John the Baptist and asked, "What shall we do?" He answered them, "Do violence to no man" (Luke 3:14)—a strange directive to soldiers, but he was teaching the Divine principle.

When the Apostle Peter raised his sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest on the night Jesus was betrayed, Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back in its place ... for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matt. 26:52 NIV). The Apostle Paul wrote also that "though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does" (2 Cor. 10:3 NIV).

Because of these commands, the founder of our Church group, Rev. L. T. Nichols, took the position during the Civil War that it was not right for the follower of Christ to bear arms. At that time (in 1864), at age 20, when he was drafted into the Army, the United States did not protect conscientious objectors, and standing firmly for his convictions in an unfriendly atmosphere nearly cost him his life. Hearing of his resistance to bearing arms, an overzealous sergeant took it upon himself to place young Nichols before a firing squad. Had it not been for the timely intervention of a superior officer, Nichols would have been executed. He appealed to the President, who granted his request and allowed him to serve in a non-combatant position (in a military hospital).

During World War I, our pastor Maud Hembree appealed to the President of the United States to recognize our Church as conscientiously objecting to personal involvement in military combat. The request was granted, and since then our Church position has been recognized. At present there is no draft law, but should one be enacted, our position would be the same, that we do not bear arms.

However, we do not take a position of non-cooperation when and if our country should participate in acts of war. War under human direction is sometimes a necessary evil.

What is our individual responsibility as citizens? We are willing to serve our country in areas of national importance, i.e., forestry, hospitals, civilian duties, and if at all possible, under civilian direction. Our government allows this type of service for conscientious objectors, for which we are grateful. We would not be violating our conscience to serve under military supervision in non-combatant duties, but one can never be sure when he might be summoned to bear arms in such an environment, hence our preference for alternative civilian service duties.

Why war is wrong

The taking of life is not the only aspect of war that is forbidden the Christian. As Christians we are forbidden the emotions that underlie the war-like spirit: the urge to retaliate, to take revenge, and to hate. Greed, jealousy, strife and bitterness are likewise forbidden. The Christian can never under any circumstances harbor feelings of anger against anyone. The law is plain: "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath"—no exceptions (Ps. 37:8). "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior" (Eph. 4:31 NLT).

Furthermore, war is the desire to hurt, not help; to tear down and not build up. If everyone in the world were willing to work sincerely for the good of all others, if everyone followed the Bible laws on unselfishness, love and forgiveness, there would be no war nor any need for war. There would be no strife even between individuals, much less between governments or nations.

Another belief underlying war is that of the superiority of one's own nation over others. This attitude is often used to justify offensive as well as defensive actions. Also, in war one cannot choose the side he will support or the actions he takes, and may be forced to violate his conscience. As Christians, we want to serve our country in a capacity where at the same time we can serve our higher loyalties—God.

Our attitude toward war

Are we pacifists? No. Do we support war? No. Do we protest our government's involvement in war? No.

Three Bible principles govern our attitude toward war:

1) We must obey the government under which we live. "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God" (Rom. 13:1 NIV).

Even though we may not at all times agree with the actions of our government, we do not protest or adopt an attitude of non-cooperation. If we resist our government, we resist God. If our government should ask us to act contrary to our conscience, e.g., to bear arms, we would obey our government by accepting the penalty.

2) Our country does not violate the law of God by going to war because they are performing their God-assigned function: to maintain safety and order (Rom. 13:4–5), a task which may sometimes include war against those who disturb order.

3) Those who have pledged to obey God's laws cannot be entangled in "the affairs of this life" and expect to please Christ (2 Tim. 2:4). Being under God's authority, they must wait to get involved when God takes control.

As individuals, we are grateful to God for allowing us to

live under a government that provides a peaceful environment so that, in the words of the apostle Paul, “we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1 Tim. 2:2 NIV). We should show our appreciation by serving Him wholeheartedly.

□ About Angels and Cherubim

“I see that you do not believe angels have wings. I would suggest that you read or review Ezekiel 10:5, 12, 16, 19, 22. Thank you.”

The passages cited all speak of “cherub” and “cherubims,” rather than angels.

Is there a difference between cherubim and angels?

First, what are cherubim? According to *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, a cherubim is “a cherub or imaginary figure.” *The Hebrew Lexicon* repeats this and adds the following: “a figure compounded of that of a man, an ox, a lion, and an eagle (3 animals which come together with man, symbolize power and wisdom, see Ezekiel 1 and 10).”

The cherubim are mentioned many times in the Old Testament, once in the New. Each time they are figures, or objects, not living beings. In no case are they said to perform any activities, as living beings. They do not minister, or walk, or talk, or eat with humans as the angels did. In no case do they deliver a divine message or do any work in behalf of God. On the contrary, they are described as having been “made,” or “carved,” or “engraved” (see I Kings 6:23, 35, 36; Ex. 26:1, 37:7–9).

The cherubim which were carved for a place in the temple of King Solomon were elaborate pieces of artwork, each being ten cubits (fifteen feet) high and having a wingspread of fifteen feet “from wing tip to wing tip” (I Kings 6:23–24).

The cherubim are mentioned often along with the Tabernacle, also the Temple. Here they seemed to serve as a representation of the Divine power and presence. From anything we are able to find in Scripture, they are used solely in this representative capacity. If they have any counterpart in the celestial realm, we are not told.

What about the cherubim seen by Ezekiel in vision? The fact that Ezekiel saw cherubim moving and talking in his

visions is not evidence that they were animate beings. A vision was a type of dream given by God to reveal information or knowledge. In a vision, inanimate objects may be seen as having living or human properties; for example, in the dream of Joseph, twelve sheaves bowed down to him. In other visions or dreams, animals or creatures were used to represent nations or classes of people, as in Daniel’s vision of the four beasts (Daniel 7).

Cherubim were part of the imagery in Ezekiel’s visions, and were seen as flying, speaking, etc. We are not told the meaning of the visions, but the imagery seems to have been drawn from settings familiar to the Israelites, i.e., the Temple, and its appurtenances. From this may come Ezekiel’s references to the cherubim, especially as they relate to the Divine presence.

Both in the Tabernacle and in the Temple, the cherubim were positioned with their wings touching overshadowing the mercy seat. The cherubim in this position symbolized the providence and protection of God over His people. God was said to be with His people via the mercy seat; it was a point of meeting. This imagery is used in Psalms, where the Psalmist speaks of God “coming down” or “dwelling...between the cherubim.” “The Lord reigns; Let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; Let the earth be moved!” (Ps. 99:1). “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth!” (Ps. 80:1). “O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth” (Isa. 37:16). Each of these suggests God’s presence with His people, using the imagery drawn from the Tabernacle or the Temple.

Ezekiel’s visions use this same imagery. In them the cherubim are given living properties, i.e., they are said to move and fly, walk and talk, just as did the other living creatures he saw, the wheels, and other symbols.

We cannot find any evidence in Scripture that cherubim were living, animate, created beings like the angels, or that they are a different “level” or “order” of angels.

Much as we might like to know more of the heavenly realm, we are limited to what God has revealed in His written Word. ♦

Nehemiah’s True Calling

continued from page 21

ask the king for a great favor. Put it in his heart to be kind to me.

(Nehemiah arises and goes to table; sits with head in hands as in deep meditation)

(Soft rap on door. Immer enters quietly; hesitates.)

Nehemiah: *(stands—speaks kindly)* Immer, what is it?

Immer: *(anxiously)* My master, I fear for you. I—I overheard your words to Haknaz and the others.

Nehemiah: *(calmly)* There is nothing to fear, Immer. I have taken all precautions.

Immer: *(surprised)* You have?—How?—Where?

Nehemiah: Right here.

Immer: *(puzzled)* I don’t understand.

Nehemiah: I put it into the hands of our heavenly Father, Immer. I shall continue to seek His help with prayers and fastings.

Immer: *(clearly relieved)* Thank the God of heaven and earth! *(his face radiant)* Now I see...*(with conviction)*. Our God will provide a way.

(Next Issue: A CHALLENGE MET)



WHO GETS THE PRIZE?

Have you heard about the spring dress-up contest sponsored by the Wington High School? It was quite an event for the various birds. The rules provided that the award should go to the bird wearing the most stunning costume. Every bird knew that color would be a major factor in determining the winner. The school furnished to all contestants the materials from which to cut the costumes, but each was responsible for making his own garb.

On the assigned day, the birds assembled to get their materials. A certain room in Wington High was in utter confusion. It was worse than a bargain basement of a store on the morning of a Summer Clearance Sale—with various birds grabbing, pushing, screaming—each trying to get the best for himself.



... each trying to get the best for himself

"I'm first!" yelled Bill Parrot. "Gimme green!"

"I'll have this piece of blue," shouted Robert Bluejay, tucking it quickly under his large wing so no other bird could see it.

"I'll have me three yards of black," cried Jim Crow.

"Red! Red! Red! Gimme red!" screamed Tucky Cardinal.

"This piece of yellow for me," shouted Goldy Finch, and off he flew.

During all the screaming and grabbing, there was one little bird who sat back quietly saying nothing and getting nothing. When Miss Hummingbird the teacher at last restored order, she asked as loudly as she could, "Has any bird been overlooked?" This quiet little bird timidly raised his right wing.

"Why Dave Bunting," exclaimed the teacher, "where have you been? Why haven't you asked for anything?"

"I was waiting my turn," answered Dave, demurely.

"I wonder," said the teacher slowly, "I wonder if I don't have something very special for a bird that was willing to wait his turn."

Some of the other birds, overhearing the teacher, were beginning to feel very ashamed of themselves for being so selfish. And was the one bird that had been unselfish and courteous enough not to grab and push and scream going to get something especially beautiful? Wouldn't that give him an unfair advantage?

Goldy Finch was the first to speak. "I have more than I need. He can have half a yard of my yellow."

Whereupon Tucky Cardinal said, "I will give him a piece of my red."

Then the others, some gladly and others only because they were ashamed not to, came by and each gave Dave a small piece of material.

"Just a collection of scraps," smirked Robert Bluejay to Jim Crow on their way out.

"At least we know one bird that is safely out of the contest. Serves him right," answered Jim. "I wonder where in the world he got the idea that it pays to be unselfish?"

Well, Robert and Jim were wrong. David was not out of the contest because of his "scraps." He took those scraps of material and combined them so skillfully, with a bit of one color here and a dash of another there, that when he had finished he had a perfectly gorgeous costume. When he flew through the air in the sunlight, his coat seemed to flash all the colors of the rainbow, yet blended into a lovely harmony.

No other costume began to be as striking and beautiful as his, and he was unanimously chosen for the award. From that day on, everyone in Wington began to call him "Painted Bunting." He was, of course, as happy as could be. And almost as happy was Miss Hummingbird, the teacher who remembered how courteous and unselfish he had been.



The Painted Bunting

A RAINY SUNDAY

Did it rain! I should say so! All Saturday night long—and Sunday morning too! But Mr. Mocking-bird was at church regardless; in fact, he arrived a little earlier than usual. That was his way. "When it rains," he said to himself, "someone will probably fall down on the job, so I will be there early in case I am needed." What would the First Birderian Church of Wington do without Mr. Mocking-bird?

Strange as it may seem, Mrs. Pelican and Mrs. Owl were present on this rainy Sunday too. They enjoyed going to church chiefly because it gave them a chance to air their troubles. Both of them rather liked a rainy day because it made them feel worse than usual. Neither was ever happy except when complaining. Both enjoyed ill health and talked

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NEHEMIAH: God's Man for the Hour

BY MARGARET A. TREMBLAY

Nehemiah's True Calling

SCENE ONE

Characters:

Nehemiah—the King's cupbearer
 Immer—Nehemiah's steward
 Hanani—Nehemiah's brother just returned from Jerusalem
 Elam—Jew from Jerusalem
 Joel—Jew from Jerusalem
 Haknaz—Persian officer, friend of Nehemiah

Scene: Study or library of wealthy. Table, bench and chairs; many scrolls and oil lamp. Nehemiah reading at desk when curtains open. (Rap at door)

Nehemiah: *(startled)* Enter

Immer: *(bows)* Visitors, my lord Nehemiah.

Nehemiah: *(hardly looking up)* Jeshua and Azgad the scribe?

Immer: No. Strangers, my lord.

Nehemiah: I am not seeing strangers this afternoon.

Immer: They said it was urgent.

Nehemiah: I will see them tomorrow.

Immer: They said to tell you it was about Jerusalem.

Nehemiah: *(rising to his feet suddenly interested)* Jerusalem! *(excitedly)* Show them in.

Immer: *(bows)* Yes, my lord. *(exits)*

(enter Hanani, Elam and Joel. They look tired.)

Nehemiah: *(stares in disbelief)* Hanani, *(rushes to embrace him)* Hanani, my brother!

Hanani: *(affectionately embraces)* Nehemiah! It has been a long time.

Nehemiah: Oh! How good to see your face, Hanani! *(excitedly)* Please! What is the news from Jerusalem? *(suddenly aware of the others)* And who are these?

Hanani: *(proudly)* Elam the son of Baanah and his eldest son, Joel. Both stalwart men for our God.

Nehemiah: *(pleased)* Shalom. Welcome to Shushan, and especially to my home.

Elam: *(bows slightly in respect)* Shalom. Thank you, my lord.

Joel: *(also, bows slightly in respect)* Thank you, my lord.

Nehemiah lived some five centuries before the birth of Christ. This was a critical interlude in Jewish history, a time that called for special courage.

With several sieges and several deportations of the people to Babylon, it looked like the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were history. But God's prophets had foretold a future for Israel. As surely as they were carried away, so surely they would return.

After the Persian Cyrus conquered Babylon, it happened, just as prophesied. Cyrus issued a decree that those Israelites who wished could return to their homeland and rebuild their city and temple (2 Chron. 36:22–23; see also Ezra, chapter 1).

The first group to leave Babylon went under the leadership of Zerubbabel about 538 BC. Their primary task was to rebuild the temple, but they were thwarted at every turn. Some fifty years later, Ezra led another group back to Babylon.

Things still were not going well. The returned Israelites had enemies who wanted to sabotage the effort and keep Israel weak; secular-minded nobles were more interested in making money than in building a godly nation; and Samaritans, still resentful from the time Zerubbabel had refused their help in building their temple, were constantly coming up with new schemes to hinder progress.

It was time for God to send another man. His name: Nehemiah.

At the time of our story, Nehemiah is an Israelite who holds a unique position in a Persian court. He is cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. Since many kings have met their death by poisoning, being royal cupbearer was a position of great trust and influence.

It is now 445 BC. As the scene opens, Nehemiah's brother has just returned from Jerusalem bringing news of dismal conditions in the city. He tells about half-hearted Jewish leaders, resentful enemies, fearful nobles, and walls still in ruins.

How will Nehemiah respond?



Nehemiah: (*looks around*) You look tired. Do you have lodging?

Hanani: Not yet. We came straight here.

Nehemiah: Then you must lodge with me. (*turns to Immer who is waiting for instructions*) Immer, have Beniah prepare two guest rooms. Order fresh garments and water for these men. Also, please inform Adin I have company and wish to dine at the first hour.

Immer: (*bows*) Yes, my lord. I shall also see to their mounts. (*exits*)

Nehemiah: Come. Be seated. (*all sit*) (*Nehemiah eagerly*) What is the news from Jerusalem? Tell me!

Hanani: (*seriously*) Nehemiah, I wish it were a happier report. Enthusiasm ran high when we left Shushan 12 years ago under Ezra—

Nehemiah: Ezra, how is he, Hanani?

Hanani: (*discouraged*) Like Jerusalem, Nehemiah. (*big sigh*) Helpless.

Nehemiah: (*shocked, sits forward*) Is it that bad?

Hanani: Ezra has tried, but the problems are too great and too many. Even though the temple is rebuilt, the city is still a disaster. Her walls are broken down, her gates burned. God's people—our own brethren—are suffering and disgraced.

Elam: We are defenseless against our enemies. Many have moved out of Jerusalem—

Joel: Soon the city will be deserted.

Nehemiah: No! (*rising*) No, it can't be that bad.

Elam: But it is, my lord. (*others nod sadly*)

Nehemiah: (*thrusts fist into hand*) But why? Our enemies—are they stronger than our God? What is wrong?

Hanani: (*sadly*) What we deserve, I'm afraid. God has given our people ample opportunity—

Elam: (*finished with much feeling*) But they have rejected Him and His laws.

Hanani: (*desperately*) I am sorry, Nehemiah, but because time is running out we have come here for help.

Nehemiah: (*drops into chair, buries head in hands; finally looks up and says emphatically*) You shall have help!

Hanani: (*with thankful gesture*) O thank Almighty God. (*relieved*) You will help us recruit new men?

Nehemiah: (*determined*) More than that, Hanani!

Hanani: More? (*other men look questioning also*)

Nehemiah: (*emphatically*) I shall go myself.

Hanani: (*shocked*) You—Nehemiah? (*sitting upright*) But you cannot go. You are Cupbearer to the King.

Nehemiah: I know (*looks dazed*) but I shall go. I *must* go. Somehow, I will go!

Hanani: (*in panic*) Nehemiah! (*seizes Nehemiah by shoulder*) Don't do it. Stay here. You will help us more by remaining near

Artaxerxes. We have so many enemies in Israel. Like Sanballat...

Nehemiah: (*with contempt*) Sanballat the Samaritan?

Hanani: Yes. He and all the Samaritans want rights in our temple.

Elam: But there are others just as dangerous. Our people are defenseless against the raids of the Arabians. And the Ammonites.

Joel: All the surrounding nations are determined that Jerusalem shall *never* raise her head.

Hanani: (*hopelessly*) O, God has again forsaken His people because of their sins—at every level, intrigue, mixed marriages, idolatry—

Nehemiah: (*shakes head sadly*) Will Israel ever learn? Where are the devout men and women?

Hanani: (*disheartedly*) God knows we have tried, Nehemiah, but we cannot stem the downtrend. We tell the people, "Turn to the Almighty God and you shall be strong and prosper. He *will* bless you!" They retort, "Why turn to the Almighty God? See how the heathen prosper—and our God can't even give us bread!"

Nehemiah: (*shakes head in disbelief*) No bread either?

Joel: (*flatly*) There is a famine in the land.

Nehemiah: (*emphatically*) Then there is no question where I belong.

Elam: But, my lord, our enemies send lies to Shushan. You must be at court to answer for us. You must be our spokesman *here* in Shushan.

Nehemiah: (*determined*) No. I *must* go. (*rap at door; Nehemiah pauses as if coming back to reality*) Enter.

Immer: (*bows*) My lord, Haknaz is here to see you.

Nehemiah: (*a little disturbed*) Tell him I have company and cannot see him now.

Immer: (*bows*) Yes, my lord. (*before Immer exits*)

Nehemiah: (*suddenly*) Immer—wait.

Immer: Yes, my lord?

Nehemiah: On second thought, show Haknaz in.

Immer: Very well, my lord. (*exits*)

Nehemiah: (*explains quickly*) Haknaz is my friend. A high officer of the King, but one of the most loyal and prudent men I know. Too bad he isn't a Jew.

Haknaz: (*enters, looks surprised to see others*) Oh—I am sorry, Nehemiah. Am I intruding? I didn't know you had guests.

Nehemiah: (*very cordially*) No, no, Haknaz. Meet my brother Hanani, his friend Elam, and Elam's eldest son, Joel. They've just arrived from Jerusalem.

Haknaz: (*cordially*) Welcome! Welcome to Shushan.

Three: (*bow*) Thank you, my lord.

Haknaz: (*upbeat*) And what is the news from Jerusalem?

Nehemiah: (*dismally*) Bad, Haknaz. Very bad.

Haknaz: (*more seriously*) That bad?

Nehemiah: So bad that I must go there.

Haknaz: (*stares in disbelief*) Nehemiah!—*you* cannot mean that.

Hanani: That is what we tried to tell him. *You* tell him, my lord. Tell him he must *not* go.

Haknaz: He must not? He cannot! The Cupbearer of Artaxerxes does not just leave when the desire strikes him.

Nehemiah: (*quietly*) But I shall ask permission.

Haknaz: (*getting upset*) You will do *what*?

Nehemiah: I shall ask the King for a leave of absence.

Haknaz: You would *dare* ask such a thing, Nehemiah? Do you realize what you are saying?

Nehemiah: (*firmly but thoughtfully*) Yes, I know. Still I shall request it.

Haknaz: (*angry*) Just like that! (*acts as he speaks*) And Artaxerxes, what will he say? (*in feigned voice*) Why, of course, Nehemiah you must go to Jerusalem. They need you in Jerusalem far more than I do. It's not disloyalty to love your native city more than your king. After all, being cupbearer to the King isn't a very honorable office...perhaps you want to be a prime minister or regent...

Nehemiah: Please! Haknaz—you don't understand—

Haknaz: (*shoots back indignantly*) You're right *I don't!* No one in his right mind would believe you would give up such a position as yours for a post in that insignificant land. They would believe you were leaving Shushan to plot...Certainly it would give Artaxerxes reason to suspect your motives.

Nehemiah: (*earnestly*) What do *you yourself* think, Haknaz?

Haknaz: (*cold laugh*) *I?* (*sarcastically*) What *I* think does not matter.

Nehemiah: (*earnestly*) Haknaz, do you think me capable of treason?

Haknaz: Far from it. But I know you, Nehemiah.

Nehemiah: And does not Artaxerxes?

Haknaz: (*emphatically*) It is far easier to get *into* the Persian Court than to get *out*—honorably, at least!

Nehemiah: (*thoughtfully*) Still I must go. (*pause*) How I shall ask, I do not know, but the God of my fathers, the God of heaven who has helped His servants in the past, shall be with me to put the proper words in my mouth.

Haknaz: (*pauses—in quieter voice and somewhat reverent*) Nehemiah, I perceive that your God is a different God. Not like the gods

of Persia or any other nation. But Artaxerxes is our master here. He can—and *does*—do whatever he pleases.

Nehemiah: (*thoughtfully*) No. (*determinedly*) Artaxerxes is the servant of the most High God. He will do what the God of heaven pleases.

Haknaz: (*bows*) May your God be with you and protect you, Nehemiah. I know you will need His help. (*softly and earnestly*) If you are really determined, my friend, I will help you in any way I can.

Nehemiah: Thank you, Haknaz. (*worried*) You will keep all in confidence—will you?

Haknaz: Yes, you have my word. (*puts hand on Nehemiah's shoulder*) I don't understand, but I admire you. (*abruptly*) I must leave now. Farewell. (*nods to others*)

Others: Farewell.

Nehemiah: Good day, Haknaz. (*Immer shows Haknaz out.*)

Nehemiah: (*to Hanani*) You are weary. We can talk together later. Now you must refresh yourselves.

Hanani: (*putting hand on Nehemiah's shoulder*) God bless you, my brother. We feel encouraged already.

Joel: (*relieved*) Hanani assured us you would help!

Elam: (*sincerely*) How we needed to be reminded that we are servants of the most high God.

Nehemiah: (*very sincerely*) It is a privilege not to take lightly. (*in business voice*) Immer will show you to your rooms. If you need anything, my servants are at your service.

Hanani: Thank you, Nehemiah.

Elam & Joel: Thank you, my lord.

(*Immer exits with the three men.*)

(*Nehemiah left alone falls on his knees and prays*)

Nehemiah: O Lord God, O great and awesome God who keeps His promises and is loving and kind to those who love and obey Him, hear my prayer! Listen to what I say! Look down and see me praying for Your people Israel.

O God, I confess that we have sinned against You in not obeying the commandments You gave us through Your servant Moses. Oh, remember what You told Moses! You said,

If you sin, I will scatter you among the nations. But if you return to Me and obey My laws, even though you are exiled to the farthest corners of the universe, I will bring you back to Jerusalem. For I have chosen her.

We are Your servants, the people You rescued by Your great power. O Lord, please hear my prayer! Heed the prayers of those who delight to honor You. Please, Lord, help me now as I go in and

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I Have Quills!

by PATRICIA A. FLEMING

In the cool forests of North America lives one of the special creatures of our Great Creator. Although its black to brownish-yellow fur, its strong, stubby legs, its small face and snout are easily recognized, this slow, lumbering rodent is best known for its arsenal of some 30,000 loosely attached quills.

A ready defense: quills

The porcupine's hair is a coat of multibarbed quills that give it a unique defense system specially designed by the Creator for this otherwise defenseless creature. The porcupine has quills on all parts of its body except its face and stomach. Each quill is controlled by a separate muscle. The longest quills—some as long as 5 inches—are on its rump; the shortest are on its cheeks. Coarse guard hairs, eight to ten inches long, give porcupines their shaggy look.

The porcupine's quills are usually held flat against its body. But when the porcupine senses danger, it raises its quills upright so that the quills can easily lodge in the unfortunate enemy that brushes against it. The raised quills also make the porcupine look much bigger and more dangerous.

A threatened porcupine, wanting to protect its vulnerable head, will turn its back on its enemy, tuck its head between its front paws, and swish its tail. Sometimes the force with which a porcupine swings its tail can dislodge loose quills, but porcupines do not "throw" their quills.

The porcupine's quills are no chance product of evolution. Each quill is an evidence of phenomenal design. Hollow for most of the shaft, the porcupine's quills are truly lightweight armor—it takes 4000 of them to weigh an ounce! And each quill becomes solid as it tapers to a stiff point covered with reverse barbs. If the porcupine feels threatened, woe to the predator that gets hit with its tail! As the victim's body heat causes the barbs to expand, the quills become even more deeply embedded, making their

removal painful and difficult. It takes only the lightest contact for a quill to puncture an enemy's skin, and many predators and curious pets have come to grief for their interest in this little animal!

But no loss to the porcupine—its quills, like hair, soon grow back!

What's for dinner?

The porcupine is a strict herbivore. It feeds mostly at night, and almost entirely in and on trees, though occasionally it enjoys green plants like skunk cabbage and clover. In the summer it searches out the tips of branches to get the tenderest buds, leaves, fruit, and nuts. During the winter it feeds on the cambium layer under the bark of trees. Is the porcupine a threat to the forests? Actually it is a friend. Seeking out the weakest, tenderest trees, it thins out overly dense areas, helping forests to thrive and grow. In a sense, porcupines are God's foresters!

And God designed them to do the job. Equipped with strong, sharp, curved claws, they are excellent climbers. And like all rodents, the porcupine's front top teeth continue to grow throughout its life, so it must keep gnawing on hard things like tree branches to keep the teeth from becoming overgrown. These teeth have another singular feature. They have a thick layer of enamel on the front side of the tooth and none on the back, so that as the tooth wears down it stays very sharp. Just think! God has given the porcupine its own set of built-in, self-sharpening wood chisels! The Great Creator made this creature with the exact tools it needed to obtain food and survive in its niche.

Living with quills...

Are you thinking it might be dangerous to climb around in trees wearing a coat made of needles? You are right. A bit chunky to begin with and not the best at balancing, and having a strong preference for the tender, young growth at the end of branches, the porcupine is at high risk for taking quite a tumble and landing on its quills. Ouch! But it is not hope-



less. The porcupine is surprisingly adept at removing quills from itself, using paws and teeth. And here is something else amazing: The porcupine's quills are covered with a grey, greasy substance that is actually antibiotic in nature and keeps quill wounds from becoming infected! The antibiotic properties work on enemies as well, and most predators that meet with a porcupine's quills will not die of infection but of being unable to eat due to quills in the throat and mouth.

Although porcupines may not have the best balance or speed, they are good swimmers. Their hollow quills increase their buoyancy.

Where is 'home'?

Porcupines are solitary creatures, and rarely is more than one seen at a time. They do not hibernate and they do not put a lot of value on their dens. They may stay in their dens of sorts (a hollow log, hollow tree, a cave, or simply behind a rock) during severe weather or to hide from predators, but their real love is up in the trees.

Porcupines mate in the fall, and the female usually gives birth to a single baby in the spring. The baby porcupine is born with soft quills that harden completely within hours of birth. Within minutes of birth the baby can walk, and in just a few days can begin to climb trees and forage for food. It stays with its mother only a few months before going off on its own.

All by design

Even though the porcupine is a rodent, it is not like any other. And can you think for a moment that it came



Quills are tipped with backward-pointing barbs that are difficult to remove; and if left alone, they actually work their way deeper into the flesh.

Quills are featherweight—about 4,000 to the ounce.



Victims of porky's defense will often die of being unable to eat due to quills in the throat and mouth.

about by blind chance—did it turn its hair into sharp, hollow, barbed quills because the porcupine saw it needed a defense mechanism? Did it develop strong, sharp claws because it was living in trees and found it difficult to move around? Did it start making antibiotic ointment so that its quills would not infect itself? No, God made this animal to be exactly what it is today. He has created everything

by design and the variations that make every creature unique to its kind are *not* by chance but are created very deliberately by the Almighty God. ♦

ARE YOU A PORCUPINE?

Ever see a porcupine you wanted to cuddle?

A man told about being in a deep canyon in Wyoming, and coming across the biggest porcupine he had ever seen. Alone. "As he lumbered toward me," he said, "I watched him closely and gave him plenty of room. I was not about to get near this creature whose quills looked like missiles. No wonder he was alone!"

For a short time every year, during November and December, porcupines choose to relax their quills while they raise their families—then they return to their prickly selves.

Sometimes the most would-be-helpful people have sharp quills of criticism or sarcasm or arrogance. Our instincts tell us to avoid them, but God places us among this type of people so that we can learn qualities of patience, kindness and forgiveness. It can also help us to see ourselves and what others feel when we play the porcupine part; because in our honest moments, we have to admit that we have quills, too.

Do you wonder why Paul said, "*Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other*" (Rom. 12:10 NLT)? Or why Peter wrote, "*all of you should be of one mind, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds*" (1 Pet 3:8 NLT).

It is as if they said, "Relax your quills." Even if other people are prickly, defensive, critical or fault-finding, we don't have to return that type of behavior.

The Apostle John wrote, "*He who loves God must love his brother also*" (1 John 4:21).

Transforming quills into loving support—that is the power of the gospel!

If someone pricks you, you don't have to prick back.



The baby porky is born with soft quills that harden completely within hours of birth.

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The two had a perfectly miserable time

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about their aches and pains no end at every opportunity. For this reason each thought the other was a bore.

On this particular Sunday morning they sat across the aisle from one another, each trying to look as glum as possible. Mrs. Pelican made no effort to sing because the church was too dark. Mrs. Owl, on the other hand, did not open her book because the light blinded her eyes. Just as Mrs. Owl was pulling her feathers up around her neck, because she felt a draft, Mrs. Pelican was pushing hers back because the sanctuary was so stuffy. Mrs. Pelican did not like the anthem by the choir because she could not understand the words. Mrs. Owl's complaint was that it was entirely too loud. Mrs.

Pelican said she would have enjoyed it more if she could have seen the choir. Mrs. Owl's feathers were ruffled because of a certain member which she did see! But both of them did very much appreciate Pastor Penguin's prayer for those in trouble. For each felt that no one in all the world had more cares and burdens than herself.

Both felt that Pastor Penguin's text was extremely inappropriate for the day. He preached on *"Be of good cheer."* Mrs. Pelican thought he might have chosen *"As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more."* Mrs. Owl had hoped he might select, *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death."* Both were agreed that he should have had more to say about comfort and less about cheer.

"It is a terrible day," said Mrs. Pelican to Pastor Penguin as she shook hands on the way out. "Did you ever see such horrible weather?" was Mrs. Owl's remark. Then the two walked home under the same umbrella, having a perfectly miserable time discussing rheumatism, operations, strikes, bad eggs, and worm shortages. Mrs. Sparrow and Mrs. Mocking-bird, on the other side of the street, were walking home side by side too—talking about the wonderful sermon, the needed rain and their many blessings.

Perhaps Pastor Penguin did use the wrong text that day—I would suggest Galatians 6: 7—"Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." ♦

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HOW MIKE LEARNED HIS BIBLE VERSE

"I just can't learn this Bible verse," said Mike. Learning was hard for Mike. His sister Mary had no trouble at all, but Mike did.

"Mike, why don't you study the way Mary does?" suggested Mike's grandmother.

"No two people are alike," said his mother. "Book learning and memorizing comes easier for Mary, but when it comes to fixing or making things Mike loves it."

Then Mike tried to learn that verse again. "Which Bible verse is it?" his mother asked.

"Psalm 119:11," said Mike, and read, *"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You."*

"Let's see if I can make it easier for you," Mike's father said, who was listening. "This verse tells of a *good thing* in a *good place* for a *good reason*. What is the good thing? What is the good place and the good reason?"

Mike studied the verse. "'Your word' is God's Word—is that the good thing?"

"That's right! Go on," encouraged his father.

"Your word I have hidden in my heart," he read. "My heart must be the good place."

"And what is the good reason for hiding the good thing in the good place?" his father asked.

"That I might not sin." That's a good reason," said Mike.

Now Mike knew the three parts: the good thing, in a good place, for a good reason. With that help Mike could easily say the verse from memory. What's more, he also learned what the verse teaches. He learned that God's Word in his heart could keep him from sinning. ♦

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT:

What did Mike have a hard time learning?

How did Mike's father help him learn his memory verse?

What is the good thing to hide?

What is the good place to hide it?

What is the good reason for hiding the good thing in the good place?

Can you say this Bible verse from memory?

MEMORY VERSE:

Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You (Psalm 119:11).

LET US PRAY: Dear Lord, please help me hide Your Word in my heart. Then when I am tempted to do wrong, I will remember Your Word and say, "No, I must obey God." I don't want to sin against You. Amen.



BIBLICAL FEET

1. Before the Israelites could enter the promised land, the priests had to place the soles of their feet where?
2. The Psalmist prophesied of the Messiah that God would make whom His footstool?
3. In the New Testament, who prophesied of John the Baptist that he would give light to them that "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death," and "guide our feet into the way of peace"?
4. Who did not want Jesus to wash his feet?
5. A certain lame man's feet were strengthened when he was healed in what place?
6. Who did not receive enough inheritance to set his foot on?
7. According to the Apostle Paul, we should have our feet fitted with what?
8. In the book of Romans we find that the feet of the wicked are swift to do what?
9. In Revelation, the "one like the Son of man" had feet like what?
10. In Revelation John saw four angels standing on what?
11. In Revelation, who stood on their feet after being dead for three and a half days?
12. According to Moses, what did NOT happen to the feet of the Israelites during the 40 years in the wilderness?
13. What did Moses put on the big toe of the right foot of Aaron and his sons?
14. God told the Israelites that He would not give them a foot breadth of this land.
15. In the dream Nebuchadnezzar had of an image, what were the feet made of?
16. Balaam's donkey crushed Balaam's foot against what?

IT STARTS WITH AN "A"

To those who have time to study this rhyme,
Each name you will say begins with an "A."

1. This saint of the Lord was cut off in his youth—
But he was a witness for God and His truth.
2. Faithful, obedient, righteous was he;
The father of nations he was to be.
3. He brought his brother to Jesus, we read,
Can we not follow his loving, kind deed?
4. In sinful revolt he lost his life;
Thus ended the tragic civil strife.
5. An infamous king, he turned from the Lord,
Even nailed the doors shut on the house of God.
6. An Eastern King, he made a decree
Of great import to the Jews' safety.
7. He coveted, stole, and hid one day,
And brought to his family great death and dismay.
8. This King was almost persuaded by Paul.
In customs of Jews, he was expert in all.
9. A fellow prisoner of Paul was he,
A co-worker, and loyal as he could be.

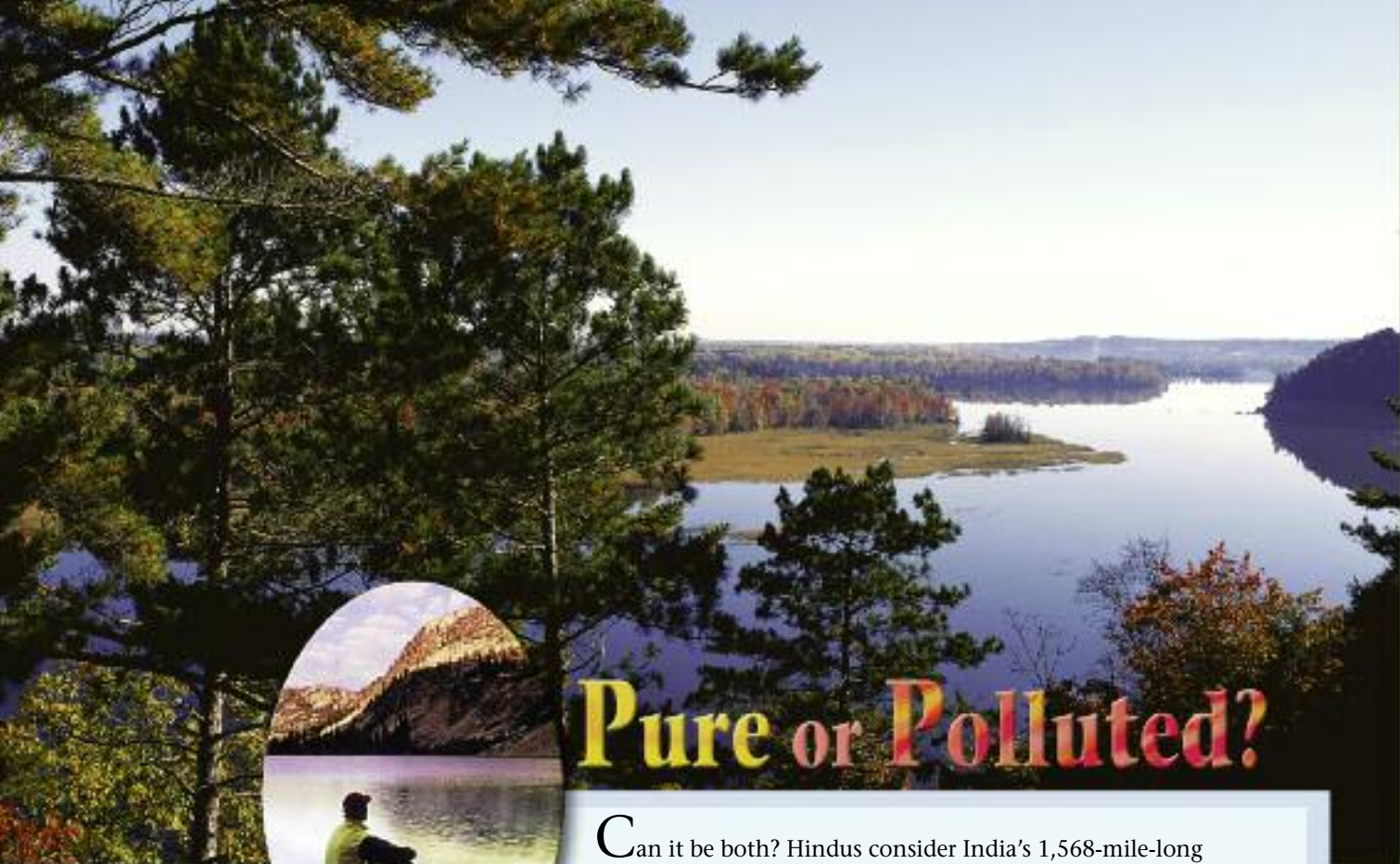
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOVE

IT STARTS WITH THE LETTER "A"

1. Abel (Gen. 4:8)
2. Abraham (Gen. 17:5)
3. Andrew (John 1:40-42)
4. Absalom (2 Sam. 15-18)
5. Ahaz (2 Kings 16:2; 2 Chron. 28:24)
6. Ahasuerus (Esther 3:10-15)
7. Achan (Josh. 7:20-25)
8. Agrippa (Acts 26:1-3, 28)
9. Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; Philemon 24)

BIBLICAL FEET

1. In the waters of the Jordan (Joshua 3 and 4)
2. His enemies (Ps. 110:1)
3. Zacharias (Luke 1:67, 79)
4. Peter (John 13:8-10)
5. The temple gate called Beautiful (Acts 3:2-8)
6. Abraham (Acts 7:2-5)
7. Preparation of the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:12-15)
8. Shed blood (Rom. 3:10-15)
9. Brass (Rev. 1:13-15)
10. The four corners of the earth (Rev. 7:1)
11. The two witnesses (Old and New Testaments) (Rev. 11:4-12)
12. They did not swell (Neh. 9:21)
13. Blood (Lev. 8:22-23)
14. Seir/Edom (Deut. 2:1-5)
15. Iron and clay (Dan. 2:1, 31-33)
16. A wall (Num. 22:25)



Pure or Polluted?

*Is the
river of your
life polluted
or pure?*

Can it be both? Hindus consider India's 1,568-mile-long Ganges River to be holy, but the government says it is polluted. According to the Hindu people, the Ganges can never be contaminated, no matter how much garbage is dumped into it.

In an article for *The Washington Post*, a Hindu priest is quoted as saying, "A dip [in the Ganges] gets rid of illness and infection, and all sins are washed away." This same person acknowledged that raw sewage and partially cremated corpses are dumped into the river. "But," he said, "the purity and sacredness of the river can never be destroyed or even diminished."

Does someone need a reality check? How can a grossly polluted river that contributes to epidemics that kill thousands of people each year be considered a source of purity?

The people of ancient Israel had a similar problem of self-deception. They did not want to admit that they were polluted by idolatry (Jeremiah 2).

What would the prophet Jeremiah say to us today? What would he say about our commitment to God? Is it pure or polluted? Would he accuse us of worshiping academic success, a career, money, materialism, sex, beauty, power, ourselves? And if he pointed out a problem, would we hit the denial button and play the recording, "I'm not a bad person"? Or would we acknowledge our sin, confess it, and turn in pure-hearted devotion to the Lord?

Are you willing to admit when you are wrong? Are you quick to make corrections when someone points out sin in your life?

We can't afford to keep fooling ourselves. Telling ourselves the stream is pure when it is polluted does nothing to change the facts. The only way to find pure, spiritual refreshment is to go to the one source: the Word of God, the only source of the pure water that gives life everlasting (John 4:13-14).

—Contributed.

You don't fix a sour note by just making it louder.

You have to be little to belittle.

Steel loses its strength when it loses its temper.

If Paul and Silas had complained instead of sung in prison, I wonder if the Philippian jailer would have become a Christian.

It takes honesty to change your mind about something when you know you ought to but would rather not.



If Caleb had asked Joshua for a valley instead of a mountain inhabited by giants, who would be impressed?

IF ALL THAT WE SAY

*If all that we say in a single day,
With never a word left out,
Were printed each night in clear black and white,
'Twould prove queer reading, no doubt.
And then just suppose, ere our eyes we could close,
We must read the whole record through.
Then wouldn't we sigh and wouldn't we try
A great deal less talking to do?
And I more than half think
That many a kink
Would be smoother in life's tangled thread
If half that we say in a single day
were left forever unsaid.*

To know what is right and not do it is cowardice.

To pray about something and not act on it is hypocrisy.

Have the courage to let go the things not worth clinging to.

Considering God's investment in us, what is He getting in return?



Added Value

continued from page 2

uct for quality. We must "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God,...lacking nothing....For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (Col. 4:12; James 1:4; 2:10). Not that such a one has broken every law, but his product does not meet Christ's standard.

What is your product **worth**? Is the **value** you have added to your character of **worth** to God? Will Christ find you **worthy** when you stand before Him on that awesome Day when He comes to inspect? He will give full **worth** (eternal life) only for the product (godly character) that meets His standard (2 Cor. 5:10; Dan. 12:2).

Now is the time to search out and replace any parts that will be the cause of our rejection—now, *before* the Chief Quality Control inspector arrives. ♦

It takes courage to stand up and be counted, but it takes more courage to keep standing.

There is very little blessing or reward in serving the Lord only when it is convenient.

If you don't go to God's house, chances are He won't be at yours.

Leave your mistakes behind you, but remember what they taught you.



Myself

I have to live with myself, and so
I want to be fit for myself to know,
I want to be able, as days go by,
Always to look myself straight in the eye;
I don't want to stand, with the setting sun,
And hate myself for the things I've done.

I don't want to keep on the closet shelf
A lot of secrets about myself,
And fool myself, as I come and go,
Into thinking that nobody else will know
The kind of a man I really am;
I don't want to dress up myself in sham.

I want to go out with my head erect,
I want to deserve all men's respect;
But here in the struggle for fame and pelf
I want to be able to like myself.
I don't want to look at myself and know
That I'm bluster and bluff and empty show.

I can never hide myself from me;
I see what others may never see;
I know what others may never know,
I never can fool myself, and so,
Whatever happens, I want to be
Self-respecting and conscience free.

Author unknown.