

Your Way

It was 12:50 and church had gone over again. Michael pulled into Burger King. He was starving and with church letting out late, he had to throw something down the hatch before he quickly changed into his jeans. He had to get back to church to help. A few of the guys were putting together a wooden Noah's ark for the children's nursery.

"One of these days God ought to do that again with the flooding" Michael said out loud to himself as he pulled into the restaurant's drive through lane. He had just seen a lot of people in casual clothing coming out of the Blockbuster Video store across the street.

"It's clear they never darken a church door" he muttered as he waited in line with the others in the drive through lane. "They live like there is no God and if they ever really knew they're going to be coming up short on judgment day, they'd be shakin' in their boots, dying to get into church – but it'll be too late."

What Michael didn't know, when he was about to place his order, was that the voice coming out of the intercom would be God's. That's right, the Almighty was sitting inside with the earphone and mike, taking orders. God had never done that work before but was giving it a try, . . . actually helping out one of the workers who had gone home ill a little earlier.

"May I take your order" Michael heard through the intercom, surprised that the voice wasn't as crackly and artificial as usual.

"Yes, I'd like a double cheeseburger and an Adventure cappuccino . . . and make it quick. I've got to hurry to get back to church" Michael said, surprised that he told this minimum-wage person why he was in a rush.

"Admirable" said the intercom attendant with some warmth. "Since this is Burger King, we'll



treat you like a king and you'll have it your way, of course."

"Yea, that would be the day"

Michael said with scorn, . . . clueless about what was soon to come. "The day I have it my way," he added, "this whole town would be cleaned up and you'd be able to walk the street and never worry about being attacked by the hoodlums and the

ungodly."

"Sounds like I'm voting for you in the next election" the voice cheerfully and earnestly said through the speaker system.

"You know what I would do if I really had it my way?" Michael continued. "I wouldn't pray for three atheist Supreme Court Justices to die, like Pat Robertson suggested. I'd get the whole job done at once. I'd send everyone, who feels they're too busy to show up at church, right to hell, . . . just like that. If these Godless-liberals want to drive our country to hell in a hand basket, let's ship'em there permanently and save them the work of dragging the rest of us there."

"That's a pretty tall order" God said through the intercom with some seriousness. Is that what you *really* want?"

"Sure," said Michael. I'd send them all there, . . . 'like a thief in the night.' Throw 'em all in the infernal region and flame broil them over the open fire 'my way'" Michael concluded, proud of his tying in the restaurant's advertising rhetoric.

"All right, it's your call" the voice said. "And one thing further, do you want fries with that?"

"No," Michael responded. "I'm trying to stay healthy" he said with a smile on his face. "Your body is a temple, you know!"

"Yes, . . . so it's said" God responded with a touch of sadness. "Please drive around."

When Michael came up to the window, there was only his bag of food and no cashier. He called into the window and no one was in sight. He waited another couple of moments and called again, even beeping his horn.

Finally, in exasperation, he just took his food and drove off.

As he passed by the restaurant, he noticed that no one was in it. The food in the bag felt hot but there wasn't a soul in the entire place. Neither was there anyone on the street or across the way in front of the Blockbuster Video store. He was the only one driving on the street.

Michael felt a bit eerie. Sure it was Sunday but there were a lot of people out and about just minutes before so he turned on his radio.

Nothing was coming out of his radio except the sound of someone humming a tune. He pushed the button to switch to this favorite Christian station but it was the same thing, . . . someone humming a tune.

"What the hell is going on around here?" Michael said half to the radio, half to the deserted street in front of him.

"Well that's just the point, Michael" the voice said to him from his car radio speakers.

Michael slammed on the brakes and came to an abrupt stop in the middle of an intersection. It didn't even matter because there were no cars coming anyway.

The voice he heard was the same one he had just heard at the drive through intercom.

"What's just the point?" Michael nervously said, wondering if he was having a nervous breakdown or a sudden bout of insanity.

"The hell, that is going on, is just what you ordered" God said from the radio. "You've just sent eight hundred million people to hell. They're all gone but you've got a couple of problems with that order."

By now, Michael realized to Whom he had been speaking and took courage.

"You mean You took care of all those unchurched heathens for me, just like that?" he asked with some pride.

"Yes" God answered back through the radio. "But since there isn't a literal place called "Hell" I brought them over into my place, just to get them out of your way.

"And by the way, the only people who are left in your life are the two hundred or so who go to your church. There's nobody left where you work. I've got most of your relatives. Have you noticed that your wife and kids have been bored to death with your church? So enjoy the quiet and the simplicity" God concluded.

Michael's radio made a pop and a sputter sound and was silent.

He saw a car coming toward him from the opposite direction. It was Hal Linden and his wife Brenda from church. He looked as bewildered, as Michael felt, as their two cars slowly stopped so they could talk.

"I can't believe it" Hal said. "It's the rapture or something and everyone's gone. Maybe this is it" he concluded with wide-eyed excitement.

Michael looked at him and responded, "If it is, how come we are left here?"

After a profound period of silence, neither of them could speak.

Michael continued home. His neighborhood was virtually empty. It was as if a bomb had dropped and sucked every living thing away.

Michael's radio snapped on and God asked one more question. "By the way, Michael, what's a hand basket?" 🍷

. . . Philip Siddons