

DESTINY

Back in the nineties, a young man was farming chickens in the American mid-west. One night, there was a fierce electrical storm. A large chicken-shed was struck by lightning, and burst into flames. He fought the fire bravely – spurred on by the desperate cries of thousands of birds - but couldn't prevent it spreading to his other shed. By the time the fire service reached this remote spot it was dawn, and everything was lost. The young man stood – exhausted and dazed - among the charred and smouldering ruins of his hopes and dreams. Though his face was blackened and tear-stained, the firemen could see the utter despair in his eyes.

He started wandering aimlessly through the carnage. There were piles of burnt birds everywhere, though a few individual ones were still recognisable. He idly flipped one over with the toe of his boot, and – from underneath the remains of its wing – *three baby chicks emerged*, blinking in the sunlight. Their mother had protected them.

Somewhere, deep in his soul, there came a tiny flicker of hope. He gently lifted the chicks into his arms, and cradled them. He nursed them, and he nurtured them. These chicks inspired him to rebuild, and they - themselves - grew strong under his tender care. One day, he gathered those chicks together, along with the many others he had accumulated since he had found them under their mother's wing. He carefully wrung their necks and threw them in the back of Colonel Sanders' truck. They were creatures of destiny.... their destiny being to feature in a Kentucky Fried Chicken Bargain Bucket (£9.99, including Coke).

There are a couple of morals to this story: One is, if you want fluffy sentimentality – try Mills and Boone... I don't do that stuff. Moral number two: We have a very real enemy of our souls. He may treat us gently - he may appear to be our friend – but (just like the chicken farmer) he has his own agenda...and it's definitely *not* in our interest to go along with it.

We are creatures of destiny, too. Unlike the chickens, we can have some say in *ours*. The default destiny of the human race may be the bargain bucket, but we don't have to end up there. We have a choice.

Christ spoke frequently about the kingdom of God, or 'the alternative to the bargain bucket', as it's known in theological circles. Some of what he said was alarming: For instance, he said that there would even be people who performed miracles in his name, who wouldn't see that kingdom. But what's the bottom line? Simply this: Those who genuinely live *for* Christ in this life, will live *with* him in the next. Those who don't...*won't*. There'll be no special dispensations, no deals...only the inescapable certainty that Colonel Sanders is coming to collect.

Jesus once said "how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" Those baby chicks in our story may have been a little too trusting, but they're not nearly so silly as the people Christ is talking about. In KFC terms, they're doing the equivalent of rolling *themselves* in breadcrumbs, and *diving* into the deep-fat fryer.

But how can we tell if *we'll* be spending eternity with Christ? Good rule of thumb: if the thought of being judged by him bothers us....*it probably should!*