

Grace and Glory

Declaring unto you the
whole Counsel of GOD

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Fear
not...
we seek Jesus,
which was
crucified.
He is not
here: for
he is

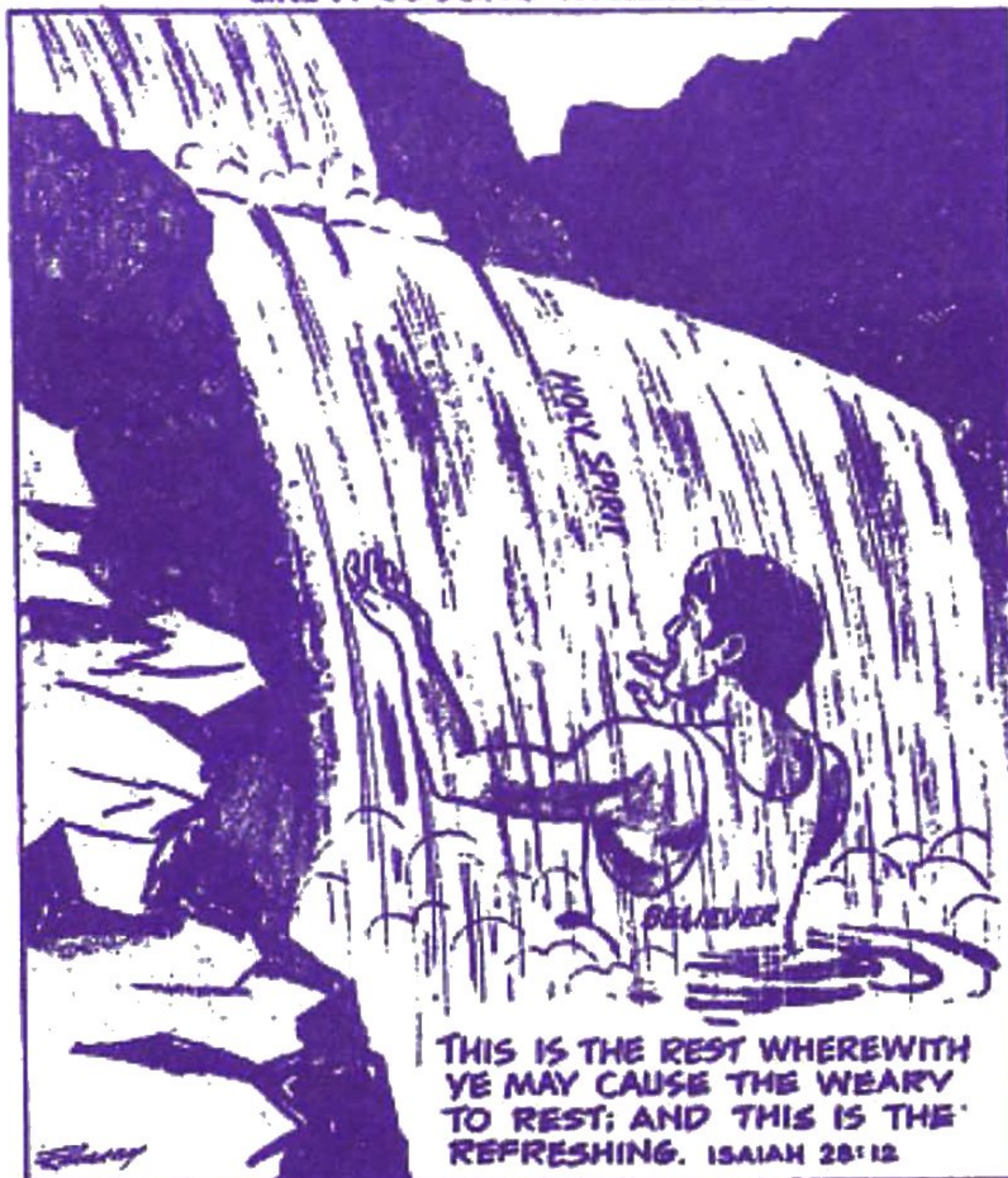
MATTHEW
28:5,6

RISEN.

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LIKE A COOLING WATERFALL



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Editor: Gene Hawkins

Definite Sign Posts Of The End

Gene Hawkins

“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell,...And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes... making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;...The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:” II Pet. 2:4-9

“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” Matt. 24:37-39

The text above declares plainly that Noah was “...a preacher of righteousness...” Scripture does not reveal the exact content of his “righteous sermons” but we are given certain indications of what they may have been. Heb 11:7 clearly asserts that Noah being, “...warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world,...” Noah indeed preached righteousness by his actions. The fact that he built the ark literally “...condemned the world,...” for “...God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me;... I will destroy them with the earth.” Gen. 6:13 The ark carried the message of impending judgment, while at the same time offering a way of deliverance. The fact that men did not heed such a message most assuredly sealed their fate, even as preaching Christ in our day ensures that those who reject such a message are indeed doomed. The Psalmist declared plainly, “Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, (the redemption in Christ Jesus) let it become a trap.”

We are also given other indications as to what Noah’s message of righteousness may have been. Jesus plainly proclaimed in the text above from Matt. 24, that “...as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” God’s

message of judgment had been revealed to Noah and thus we are certain that he was faithful to preach it as indicated by Heb. 11:7. Not only so, but since our day is likened unto that of Noah, it must of necessity mean that this preacher of righteousness witnessed exactly the same evidences of unrighteousness with which we must contend at this present hour. One of those manifestations would be unprecedented violence of which we read twice, "... the earth was filled with violence...." V. 11,13 Verse 11,12 also emphasize that "...the earth was corrupt..." (lit. decay or ruin) That rampant condition would be reflected in these words. "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth,..." Gen.6:5-6 It is surely rather interesting that Paul's preaches this message almost verbatim in his letter to the Romans. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God,... Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,... Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanliness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:...For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another;...And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, (unapproved, rejected, worthless) to do those things which are not convenient;" Rom. 1:21-28 That reprobate mind surely corresponds to the days of Noah when "...every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

We can only wonder if Paul may have had the days of Noah in mind when he penned these words, but historians do indeed tell us that contracts for homosexual marriage prevailed in the days of Noah. Scripture also confirms that this same abominable practice was rampant in Sodom and Gomorrah which days are also likened unto those wherein Jesus will come again in judgment. "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city." Matt. 10:15

The context of this verse lies in the fact that Jesus was sending the disciples unto various cities which had witnessed His mighty works and had rejected both Him and His message. Sodom most assuredly had a “reputation” as seen in Genesis 13:13. “But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.” There were undoubtedly many characteristics and manifestations of wickedness surrounding this city at that time, but one in particular is certainly singled out. Two angels had come to Lot for the purpose of delivering him and his family from eminent destruction, but certain men of Sodom, “...called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.” Their meaning to “...know them” is clear from Lot’s response. “...I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing;...” Gen. 19:5-8 Make no mistake this abominable practice flourishes around the world in our day, and just as it was in the days of Noah and Sodom and Gomorrah, judgment is coming, even as Peter promised that they would be “...an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;...”

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However, men seem to completely disregard such a message, even as they did during Noah’s righteous preaching. Men of our day not only condone such evil practices, but rather promote them under the guise of human rights, whereby some are even punished because they refuse to comply with demands to approve and accommodate the abominable practices.

These days which define the second coming of Jesus also carry with them many other unsavory characteristics, “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.” Matt. 24:7 All of these are very familiar to those who are looking for the signs of Jesus’ second coming. Wars and unrest among the nations have been with us for some time. Erratic weather patterns which in our day are often attributed to “climate change or man-made global warming” have brought forth food shortages and many other interruptions to everyday

life. However, once again, we do not hear the message of a righteous preacher such as Noah, for men refuse to recognize that these difficulties were prophesied those many years ago and simply serve to show that God's Word will come to pass. Men of our day, just as they did in the days of Noah, refuse to believe that God has anything to do with their present dilemma.

The aforementioned "...pestilences..." actually means "plagues or diseases," and the entire world has recently been introduced to one known as the "coronavirus." There have been times when such diseases have been localized, but this has literally proven to be a "global infection," and there are a number of prophetic signs being realized because of it. Paul declared that that the time would come wherein "...evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." II Tim. 3:13 This world has witnessed outward power and force as one nation desperately tried to gain dominance over another, but the current war seems to be more a war of words. This coronavirus emanated from China, but that country has tried desperately to convey they idea that the disease was sent from the U.S. No nation on earth seems to believe that, but wicked men are still shown to be deceivers on multiple levels, as they try desperately to achieve their own objective.

6

There is absolutely no doubt that this new virus must be taken extremely seriously, but it also seems that some have somewhat overreacted to it, thus bringing about some results which could be avoided. So many have acted and reacted purely out of fear, which scripture declares "...hath torment..." I John 4:18 Jesus also informed us that when these signs come to pass it would bring a time of "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Lk. 21:26 Recent news reports seem to indicate that such time has, at least in part, arrived. Store shelves in some places are bare because some, in an endeavor to preserve themselves, surrendered to panic, fearful that there would not be water and other provisions available for them. Leaders of many nations around the world have almost brought their countries to a complete stand-still and we

can but wonder if The Lord prompted them to such actions or if it was based strictly on fear or perhaps political expediency. Some spiritual leaders have long published the glorious reality that fear and faith will not dwell together, but recent reaction to this “plague” has not been the result of faith in God. Though some government officials have urged a sense of calm, others seem to promote a state of panic. We cannot control what the world does, but it is imperative for those who would believe God during times such as these, that we claim Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians, “Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in every thing **by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known unto God.” Phil. 4:6 Jesus likewise exhorted “...that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;” (Lk. 18:1) when they find themselves in circumstances beyond their own control. We have heard statements such as “God bless America,” from high ranking officials, and rejoice that Pres. Trump called for a national day of prayer in regard to this present calamity, but we can only wonder how many have actually called on God for His direction in this matter. Paul specifically instructed us “... 7 that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” I Tim. 2:1-2 We must surely follow the decrees of government, regardless of how they reached their conclusion, or what inconvenience they may bring. However, that must not stop us from seeking The Lord for direction in our own circumstance. David gave us this example. “I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place. The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? The LORD taketh my part...” Psa. 118:5-7

We have heard reports for some time wondering if we are already in the tribulation period. It is imperative for men to understand that we are yet in the time, wherein Jesus defined the tragic events before us by declaring that, “All these (signs) are the **beginning** of sorrows.” Matt. 24:8 Our own vernacular would proclaim “this world ain’t seen nothin’ yet,” meaning that this current crisis is only the beginning of what will happen in the tribulation.

The time will come when all precautions to stop or even control these “plagues” will be futile, for they will be so formidable, both in frequency and intensity, that men cannot keep up with them. Let every believer who has this glorious hope of Jesus’ soon return to take us out of this world BEFORE the tribulation starts, as was promised to the Church at Philadelphia, take heart. There are definite events which have not taken place as yet, and which must surely come to pass before that awful day of temptation arrives.

First, Daniel is very clear that the tribulation period will begin exactly 30 days after the daily sacrifice has been taken away. There has been absolutely no indication that such a sacrifice has even begun, let alone been taken away through the efforts of the false prophet. Dan. 8

Second, the infamous covenant with death between Israel and the antichrist described in Isaiah 28, and affirmed by Dan. 9:27, has not been signed.

8 Third, we are absolutely confident that Jesus has not yet taken His throne in glory as seen by Daniel in Ch. 7:9, and which John beheld in Rev. 4. If that were so, we are sure that the chaos in this world would be even greater among the nations than it is, because when Jesus takes His Rightful Place, every leader around the entire globe will be ruling in usurpation, and the upheaval worldwide will be unprecedented. It is also quite clear, as intimated earlier, that the promise to the Church of Philadelphia has not yet been realized, for Jesus Himself promised: “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from (out of) the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” Thus, we are still waiting for that trumpet to sound which will call us home to glory! Until then, we must continue to actively follow Jesus’ admonition in regard to the signs of these last days. “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” Lk. 21:28

We can only wonder how many of our day are willing to be “preachers of righteousness” as was Noah. Sadly, we have not heard of many who are proclaiming the eminent coming of The Lord. Some are extremely reluctant to indicate

that judgment is in the offing, but according to the text above, Noah would have preached it both in word and deed. Instead we have often heard men quote II Chron. 7:14 “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” This is not the message for the days of “...the coming of the Son of man...” which are likened unto “...the days of Noe...” Scripture is very clear that this passage from II Chronicles held no sway in stopping the prophesied judgment of Judah in the days just prior to the Babylonish captivity. That narrative is found in II Kings 23, wherein King Josiah not only did everything in his power to destroy idolatry, and eliminate “...familiar spirits, and the wizards,...” (V.24) “the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant. Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem.” II Kings 23:21-23 This is simply another story of “too little too late.” This evidence of “revival” did not turn back the captivity of Judah. God’s commendation of Josiah, and His subsequent decision for Judah, is found in the following text. “And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.” II Kings 23:25-27

9

God’s major basis for judgment is attributed to the “...provocations of Manasseh,...” the summation of which is found in the next chapter. “Surely at the commandment of the LORD

came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon.” II Kings 24:3-4 We are provided no specifics of the “...innocent blood...” shed by Manasseh, but we certainly do know of the innocent blood shed by the ungodly practice of abortion which is rampant in our day. Surely if God did not excuse and reverse His assessment and judgment on the sins of Manasseh, the world in these last days is surely not going to escape His wrath for the same offenses. The overall burden of Peter’s opening message is that “...God spared not the angels that sinned,...” nor “...the old world,...” in the days of Noah. Neither did “...the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha...” escape His wrath, and as noted above, Judah fulfilled their sentence of 70 years in captivity to Babylon. His saving grace is found in certain individuals such as Noah, the reason being that, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:” Let us reiterate that this same pattern is found in the promise to the Church at Philadelphia. “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from (out of) the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” Some would try to apply this promise to the entire Church, but such a thing is not possible. If one were to do that, then the content of the letter to the Church at Laodicea must also be a blanket statement to the entire Church, and their messages are entirely contradictory. The conditions found in the Church at Laodicea are nowhere to be found in the Philadelphia assembly and vice versa. Thus, these letters are addressed to two very different types of people. Paul uncovers this mystery when he admonishes: “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” I Thess. 5:6-8

The "...others..." whom Paul describes as being asleep cannot be sinners, for a sinner is "...dead in trespasses and sins;" which was true of all believers. Eph. 2:1 It is only Christians who sleep and we are exhorted NOT to join their ranks but rather to "...watch and be sober." Furthermore, we must take our place in the full light of day as we claim the glorious light of God's Word. Finally, Paul makes the same distinction of separation offered by both Peter and John. "...God hath not appointed us to wrath..." of the tribulation, "...but to obtain salvation,..." that is, deliverance like unto that of the Philadelphia Church, wherein we look and long to be translated out of this world BEFORE the hour of tribulation comes. Those believers who are left at that time will not go to hell as taught by some, but they will endure a portion of the tribulation period. It is so very imperative that we do heed the signs before us, and earnestly look up for His Very Soon Appearing!

STILL!

It has been twenty years since "Y2K"
And still the Bride is not caught away.
So the scoffers still louder sing their tune
That Jesus really isn't coming so soon !

But we remain steadfast in our sure Hope,
Knowing by Faith we are able to cope.
Keeping our focus on God's Living Word
Until that first trumpet sound is heard.

So to answer the unbelief and doubt,
We may boldly stand fast and shout,
Whether at morn or night or noon,
"Yes, Jesus is STILL, coming so soon !"

For YET A LITTLE WHILE,
AND HE THAT SHALL COME WILL COME,
AND WILL NOT TARRY.

(Hebrews 10:37)

One Passover: An Easter Feast of Long Ago

Mary M. Bodie

“**A**nd when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,... they crucified him,..And set up over his head his accusation written, **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**” Matt. 27:33-37

Matthew gives us more details concerning the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ than the other Gospel writers. The history of those days from the day of His crucifixion to that of His resurrection is filled with mighty happenings. Those were the most momentous days of all the ages. Jehovah witnessed to this fact by eight stupendous miracles. More far-reaching purposes were based upon the death and resurrection of Christ than upon any other happenings of all history. God emphasized this fact in the most unusual and vivid manner. He positively marked those days by mighty miracles. He wanted every individual in that little land of Palestine to note the spectaculars of those days. He wants all the people to realize the wonder of those days when Jesus died, was buried, and arose from the dead.

The natural creation came into being with little disturbance. God came on the scene as we read in Scripture (Gen. 1 and 2) and out of the ground formed a man. We are not told of anything strange in that creation except that Jehovah "breathed into his nostrils and man became a living soul." But when God would bring the spiritual Man, the Head of a new creation, upon the scene, He advertised the fact in a most pronounced and emphatic series of phenomena. And each of these signs proved in a special and peculiar manner that Christ was the Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind, which He had declared.

Great men of the world die; but nature is not disturbed in any supernatural manner. Let us think back on some of the famous men of the past both wicked and good; their passing was not noted by nature. Even the very best, the worthies of faith, Abraham, Moses, David, Samuel, Daniel, the prophets, Apostles, and even Paul, all went to their graves in silence as far as the supernatural was concerned. The great rulers, Julius Ceasar, Napoleon, Washington, etc., scientists, musicians, philanthropists

and what have you, of the human race died; and neither heaven nor earth indicated any great miraculous concern in their death in the way of demonstration. There were no convulsions of nature below, or above.

There was only one Man whose death called forth the most stupendous and tremendous signs, that was Jesus Christ. He was accounted by some while He lived on earth a most remarkable character, a Prophet, a Holy Man; and by others, an eccentric fellow, a madman, a deceiver, a falsifier, and many other titles of ignominy and derision. But when He died, every part of nature owned Him Lord and Creator, greater than all men. His death was advertised by God then and has been analyzed by man ever since more than that of any other of the human race. That day God witnessed to the world the Deity of the Man that hung upon a cross upon a little hill outside the city of Jerusalem. Miracle after miracle attested that more than a mortal passed away when Jesus dismissed His Spirit. Eight mighty super-naturals advertized Him as the Son of God. Let us notice these.

One. "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour." Three hours of dense darkness were creation's first witness to the fact of the passing of Jesus out of this world. The Light of the earth hung limp in death upon the cross and the sun, the natural light, which He had placed in the heavens, was hung with crepe. That was not simply the darkness of the night such as we know when the sun sets. That was a miraculous darkness, a little foretaste, or fore-feeling of the outer darkness of the lost. It began as we would say, at twelve o'clock and was removed instantly at three o'clock. Who could do that but God? It was not an accident, or a happen so, but an actual demonstration of the power of nature being not only in sympathy with the Man on the cross, but made to acknowledge the darkness that He felt, and others felt it too. It caused the infidel Sadducee, the self-righteous Pharisee and the worldly-minded Herodian to squirm. It made them tremble in amazement; and panic seized hold of them.

"Who was that Man?" They questioned in their hearts. He had often made them afraid, but now nature agreed with Him, confounding and dumfounding them. What does this phenomena mean? They cannot understand, though a notable miracle has been performed and they cannot deny it. God has answered their rejection of His Son and their Saviour by revealing to them their state—outer darkness forever. They had turned away from the

light; their sun had set, because they had closed their eyes to its brilliancy; therefore for them it was darkness.

Two. "And behold the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Matt. 28 :51 Here is the second witness of God to the Son of His love. He manifested by that rent veil the great result of the death of Christ on the cross. It opened the way to God for mankind. They had been shut out of God's presence because of Adam's sin. There was distance between a holy God and sinful men. God desired to come out to man and be in fellowship with him, but it was impossible. Man was not only a sinner, but an enemy. He did not desire fellowship with God. He was a rebel in God's government; therefore, a way had to be made to bridge the chasm and bring man back to his Creator. And God Himself opened the way. It is infinitely touching to read these words, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son" to the death of the rugged cross that man might be reconciled to Him. And when Jesus died, the curtain between the Most Holy Place and the other part of the Temple WAS RENT FROM THE TOP TO THE BOTTOM. God was propitiated when Jesus cried, "It is finished and bowed His head and died." The sword of justice cut the curtain in answer to that work of atonement. God was satisfied and glorified by the death of His Holy Son on Calvary. Notice, the rent began at the top and came down to the bottom. It was not done by the hand of man. God made the way that man might come back to Him.

There is a legend that tells of the fear that overtook the priests who were attending to the service of the Temple when that great miracle happened. They ran out in a panic as the parting in that veil was made by a sword wielded by a hand from above. No doubt many of them believed when they saw the miracles; but alas the majority closed their eyes and their ears to the witness of God to His Son and His work of atonement.

Three. "And the earth did quake." V. 51 Oh, the supernatural was in evidence that day when Christ died! There was a convulsion of nature and the shaking of the earth was felt in all the land of Palestine. It was known around about that something strange had happened. The people were in anguish; terror gripped them. "What have we done?," many no doubt cried out in fear. Imagine such advertising upon the death of this Man. We say no other man ever had such wide publicity when he died, and this on the part of nature

and God. That was a message which ought to have been heeded. The power of God was felt that day, a little hint of the manner in which He will shake the heavens and the earth at the second coming of Christ. The whole world will feel this latter shaking.

But oh, what sorrow, pain, terror and tears the Jewish people would have escaped if they had heeded those supernatural signs. Today they are suffering even as they have suffered ever since they rejected their Messiah — and they are to suffer greater pangs yet in their own land during the great tribulation. It is so prophesied — and so it shall be. No man or nation can reject the Son of God and expect to escape sorrow. The Scriptures determine everything. Woe and wailing are appointed for Jew and Gentile because of their attitude toward Jesus Christ. God will shake the foundations of everyone who is not in Him. He has appointed Him as Redeemer and Head of the human race. Christ is the Second Man, the Last Adam and has stepped into the shoes of the first Adam who failed and brought humanity to wreckage and ruin. He is the Source of life, incorruptible, eternal life to all those that trust in Him. He is the foundation, the Rock that cannot be moved. No other foundation can be found that will stand the testing time that is due to fall upon the world and all it contains. I Cor. 3:11.

15

Four. "And the rocks did rend." V. 51 Christ the Rock of Ages was dying and nature voiced its disapproval, as it were, when the Creator bowed His Head and died. The rocks which He had made were torn by the sharp convulsion which rent them apart. He could stand the shaking; but those earthly rocks could not take it. The great stones in the mountains were torn asunder. Nature even was aroused in sympathy with its Lord. He is the Rock that the church is built upon which the gates of hell cannot shake. He will stand eternally, the true Stone, Elect and Precious to God and men who believe. The builders rejected Him; but God made Him the Head of the corner. Those that are built upon Him are safe and secure forever and ever.

Five "And the graves were opened." V. 52 Here was another testimony to the worth and work of Christ. The graves wherein the dead had been buried were opened when Jesus died. But notice that the record does not say all the graves; only some of the saints arose. But the power of death and the grave was broken, as this fact witnessed. "O death where is thy sting?" the saved can sing. What a victory! It was God's signal to men that sin

was judged and death annulled by the death of Jesus. The opened graves are God's answer to Satan's envy and malice. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound."

16 Six. "Many bodies of the saints which slept arose." V. 52. Observe the accuracy of the Scriptures, as well as the witness to the work of the Son of God. Those saints (holy ones) who arose from the opened graves came forth after the Lord. He was "the First Fruit of them that slept." No one could come forth except in anticipation of His resurrection. Those risen saints went into the city. What a testimony to Christ and His resurrection. They were an earnest of a great harvest that will rise into newness of life when the Lord comes again. He will raise all of His own people from their graves and give them places of honor and responsibility in His Kingdom. None need fear who has trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. He will lose none of those whom the Father has given Him. The ultimate triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ is assured as all those miraculous happenings prove. He will shake the whole earth when He comes to show Himself to Satan and rebellious men who will be gathered against Him. The graves will burst asunder in far greater number to release everyone of His blood-bought saints. God has announced by these mighty supernaturals that Jesus Christ was His Son. The next two witnesses are further proof of this fact.

Seven. "There was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the sepulchre and sat upon it." Matt. 28:1,2. This was the second earthquake. The first quake was upon the earth when Jesus died. This latter was when He arose three days afterward. That surely was some loud advertising which God gave to His Son. The people were in terror no doubt; for even one little earthquake keeps folk trembling long after the quake has stopped. It drives them wild with fear. But the devil had those Jewish rulers' hearts so seared and hardened and their ears so deafened that they did not hear the loud reverberations of His signals. They passed away without any effect of these signs upon them.

The two Marys had come to the sepulchre to anoint the dear body of the Lord whom they supposed still in the embrace of death; but instead the grave was empty. An angel of the Lord had rolled away the stone and sat upon it, showing the utter defeat of the darkness of death in the case of Jesus. He had

risen. That was the eighth proof that Christ was the Son of God.

Eight. "And the angel answered and said to the women, "Fear not ye; for I know ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here. He is risen, as He said." Ch. 28:5,6

Christ's resurrection was the greatest advertisement of all, the most astounding miracle of the ages, the mightiest witness to the Deity of Christ. The other miracles proved Him more than an ordinary Man; this announced Him very God. It was the answer of God to Satan. He had wielded his greatest power in putting Christ to death, played his trump card, as men would express the case, did his uttermost to defeat God and man, and now the sequel. The Christ and His saints arose and triumphed to the uttermost over the devil and all his power. "He tore the bars of death away," as the poet sang and arose from the grave. A new Man came out of that tomb. He brought into being a new humanity, the proof of which was that those saints came forth from their graves after His resurrection.

We say that was the gala day for Christ. It was the day to which God had looked and for which all creation were longing, the day of their emancipation from Satan's thralldom. It was the day of their loosing, of their independence and deliverance from the effects of the sin of Adam. The Seed of the woman had stepped on the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15) and the victory was in evidence. It was complete. He arose—oh glorious news—and proved He was the Son of God.

But we do not yet see all the results of that victory in manifestation. God has yet some purposes to work out before the glorious perfection of that victory will be seen. Nevertheless, it will come. Death will be gone. The grave will be no more. The corruptibility of man will be a thing of the past. This corruptible will have put on incorruption and this mortal will put on immortality—and death shall be swallowed up of life-1 Cor. 15.

And even the animal creation waits for this glorious consummation when mankind shall come into their own place as the sons of God. "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Oh! What a happy consummation! What a glorious hope and outlook awaits us because of Christ's death and resurrection. Hallelujah! Let us praise Him!

(Reprint 1938)

REFLECTIONS

... From the Editor

“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said...” Matt. 28:6

18 One major proof of true prophecy lies in the fact that it will, without fail, come to pass. God literally challenged the idolaters of old to “Produce your cause, ... shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be,... and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods:...” Isa 41:21-23 God then declared, “Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought:...” Isa. 41:24 The context in these middle chapters of Isaiah reveals in part that God can do all of these things, but men simply cannot. Jesus proves numerous times that He was most assuredly set apart from these false prophets because He was able to “Shew the things that are to come...” He declared plainly that “...Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.” John 11:11 He then proceeded to raise him from the dead. He said to Peter, “...go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.” Matt. 17:27 The Master likewise prophesied to this same apostle, “...this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.” Matt. 26:34

Jesus also foretold His Own resurrection and that first Easter Morning gloriously came to pass, “...as he said...” Jesus’ resurrection holds the key to all of God’s purposes for mankind. Paul declared plainly, “But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” I Cor. 15:13-14 Paul began this chapter with this fervent entreaty. “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.” I Cor. 15:1-2 Some have tried to isolate this last statement and prove that a person

can “believe in vain” and thus lose his salvation. However, Paul’s meaning is very clear for he immediately gives the only reason as to why their faith would be in vain. “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:” I Cor. 15:3-4 This is exactly the same path which Jesus prophesied of Himself. “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” Matt. 16:21 Paul also testifies that Jesus is indeed “...risen as he said,...” and continues this chapter with a number of eyewitness accounts proving that it was so. He also lists a number of grave consequences which prevail “...if there be no resurrection of the dead,....” The first would be “... then is Christ not risen:” Second, “... then is our preaching vain,....” Third “....your faith is also vain.” Number 4 sadly affirms that “...we are found false witnesses of God;...” The apostle then repeats the statement made at the beginning of his discourse, for the 5th consequence asserts that, “... if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain;...” The 6th devastating result is that “.... ye are yet in your sins.” Number 7 destroys all hope in the hereafter, for “...they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” Finally, the 8th point of misery reveals that “If in this life only (with no hope of resurrection) we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” I Cor.15:13-19

Praise God! Paul erased all of these consequences with this one glorious statement of reversal: “**But now is Christ risen from the dead**, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” I Cor. 15:20 Bless God, “...he is risen as he said!...”

GH

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Spiritual Heart Transplant

Dr. Vicky Moots

Do you want a new heart? If you are born again you have a new heart. But how did you get it, and why did you need it?

God offered Israel a new heart, a spiritual heart transplant, in Ezek. 36:26. "A new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Israel's heart had become hardened and turned to stone and away from God. They had spiritual heart failure.

I am going to compare this spiritual heart transplant to a physical heart transplant. Organ transplantation is one of the miracles of modern medicine which allows some people to have a continued life that they wouldn't have otherwise. Keep in mind that in order for a heart transplant to take place, someone must die for that person. Therefore, the gift of a transplant is a true gift of life; likewise it is in the spiritual realm.

20 I am truly amazed at how medically accurate the Bible is. When a person receives a heart transplant it is because their old heart has become so diseased and weak for various reasons that medications or further surgical intervention will no longer benefit. In physical end-stage heart failure, the tissue of the heart becomes fibrosed or hardened such that it is no longer able to pump effectively. The book of Ezekiel accurately describes this as a "stony" heart.

What is end stage heart failure? In end-stage heart failure, the heart is no longer able to keep up with the work load necessary to pump the blood to all the other organs and tissues of the body. Consequently, fluid backs up into the lungs resulting in congestion. Hence the term "congestive heart failure" or "CHF." Early heart failure can be controlled with medications and special pacemakers, but if it progresses these may no longer be effective.

What about in the spiritual? Matt. 11:28 records Jesus' invitation for all who labored and were heavy laden to come unto him and he would give them rest. If we are working under the burden of the law and are not able to keep up with that work load, we will go into spiritual heart failure. We cannot do it; we cannot hold up under the heavy burden of the law. We find ourselves under the sentence of death, since the law says, "The soul that

sinneth it shall die.” Ezek. 18:4 This includes all mankind, for Rom. 3:23 declares, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Our hearts have failed! We are in end-stage heart failure and in need of a new heart.

The physical criteria required to be eligible for a heart transplant is that because of a weak and failing heart you would be expected to die within six months without it. In other words, you must have a diagnosis of impending death. Likewise in the spiritual, you must recognize your need for a new heart and be willing to do something about it.

God has evaluated man’s heart and found it to be incurably diseased, as noted in Jer. 17:9-10. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: (you have a bad heart) who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins.” Only God, the true Heart Specialist, can know the heart. If you have a bad heart, you go to a doctor who is a specialist to see if anything more can be done. You recognize your need and go to the one who can meet that need. Through a series of tests, the doctor is able to come up with the diagnosis and can then offer you a heart transplant. God has already done this for us and is able to meet our need.

21

Again, concerning the medical accuracy of the Bible, Jer. 17:10 says, “I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins”. Do you know what the “reins” are? They are the kidneys! We get the term “renal” from this same root word. The kidneys were used in that day to describe the inner parts of our being, similar to the way in which we use the word heart today. It is no accident that God chose to use the kidney in conjunction with the heart instead of the liver or the bowel, for there is a direct medical association between the two organs. In the natural if a person is being evaluated for a heart transplant, the kidneys must be evaluated also. The first major organ, besides the brain, to which the heart pumps blood, is the kidney. As heart failure progresses, the kidneys also begin to fail due to decreased blood flow. It is possible that you may also need a kidney transplant, as you must have adequate kidney function for a heart transplant. God was fully aware of that when he wrote the Book; it was not coincidental. This was written long before the textbooks were written!

God knows every little part of us. He knows our heart better than we know it. Our heart is “desperately wicked and

deceitful above all things.” No matter how good a person we try to be or how much love we try to show, if we are doing it through our own ability, sooner or later we will break under the load. The anger will come out and we will get tired of doing good works and we will fail. The Scripture says, “Be not weary in well doing,” but we are going to get weary if we are trying to do it out of the goodness of our own heart, for there is no goodness in our own heart. We all have heart failure because we cannot do the things that we want to do.

The apostle Paul acknowledged that in Rom. 7:18-19 when he discovered that in his flesh, he was not able to do the good that he wanted to do. In desperation he cried out in v. 24: “who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” He recognized that the old creation heart was not able to please God so he went to the Heart Specialist to “try his heart and reins.” He knew he was under the sentence of death as in II Cor. 1:9. “But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.” It takes a new creation heart to please God.

22 This same problem applies to all of us. Paul’s physical life was in danger, but spiritually we are all under the sentence of death: “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” None of us would escape death, for “all have sinned.” The wickedness of our heart has nothing to do with our upbringing or whether or not we were raised in a Christian home. It is based simply has on the fact that we are all sinners.

This isn’t intended to be a sermon about salvation or how to get saved. It is a message about how great the gift of God was to us. Sometimes we fail to recognize the magnitude of that gift of life and how great was His grace toward us.

God again admonishes Israel to accept His offer of life, in Ezek. 18:31, instructing them to “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” The Doctor is telling Israel, “You have a bad heart, and you are going to die; but I’m offering you a new heart. Why will you die? All you need to do is take my new heart.” Likewise, we have the same terminal diagnosis, so why will we die?

Now let us assume that you have been evaluated for a heart transplant and placed on a waiting list. What does it mean

to be on a waiting list? It means that you are waiting around for someone who is going to be your donor, that is, one who matches you, to die. Think about that! You are waiting for someone to die in order that you may live.

Before you can receive a new heart, a donor must die at the right place and the right time. Gal. 4:4-5 asserts that, "when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law." So, when the fullness of time had come, the exact right time that God had planned, He sent His Son. What was the purpose of sending his Son? To die! For God so loved the world He sent His Son to die for us. II Cor. 6:2 says, "behold, now is the day of salvation." Now is the time for you to receive your new heart.

The person who is put on a transplant list must carry a pager or a phone and be waiting for the call. When they hear the call that a donor has been found, they must be ready to go immediately. They can't say, "I have something I need to do first; I just can't come today." The donor must die at the right time and place that enables the recipient of the heart to reach that location within a very short period of time, who must go immediately or it will be too late for the transplant to be performed. This is also true spiritually; it has to be now. Now is the accepted time. The Holy Spirit calls us not only for salvation, to receive His new heart, but also to be filled with the Spirit and to be His bride. When we hear the call we must go. God had it all planned out, when to send His Son and when to call us. How do we receive the call? Through the Word. We hear His voice and we must be willing and ready to go. Just as Rebecca, we must be willing to say, "Yes I will go." We can't wait till tomorrow. He may come today.

Who is capable of being your donor? A donor must match, as closely as possible, the recipient's size, and must be the right tissue and blood type. It is not possible to take an adult's heart and transplant it into an infant. Do you understand the correlation? In the natural it must fit and be compatible. Since we cannot change, our donor must match us. We cannot make ourselves match the donor. Jesus had to match us. God's Son had to be born of a woman, to become like us. He had to come down to earth as a baby; He had to become our tissue type. He was the Son of God, but He had to become the Son of Man, to become flesh and blood.

God could not put His heart in us; God's heart would not fit. We cannot be like God. That was one of the lies of Satan in the Garden of Eden. He asked Eve, "what did God say?" She replied that she would die if she ate of or touched that tree. Satan deceived her by saying, "No, you won't die; you will become like God."

No, we can't be like God; we can't have God's heart because the Donor doesn't match! He is the wrong tissue type. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 14 then states that, "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." The Son of God became the Son of man and so the tissue type now matches!

We could not become like God, so he became like us. Jesus said in John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." The Donor had to die to give us life. If we are going to become His sheep, we need a lamb's heart. It has to be a match; it must be the same tissue type. The Word of God became the Good Shepherd, but He is also the Lamb of God. John 1:29 The Good Shepherd became the Lamb and was slain that we could have His heart.

24

The blood type also had to match. Jesus had to take on a body of flesh and blood to give us a new heart that was compatible. Heb. 7:26 reveals the fact that, He was not only the sacrifice (The Lamb) but He was also our High Priest. "For such a high priest became us." He became a Man, not only to have flesh and blood, but to be touched by the feeling of our infirmities. He became the perfect Donor for us. He was now our blood type and tissue type and willingly gave His life for us.

The gift of a transplant should never be taken lightly in the natural or the spiritual, for it requires the death of the donor. It is an incredible gift of love and life. We often quote John 3:16 without fully recognizing the value of the life that was given for us and what He went through when He left His throne in glory to become a man, to become like us. He took upon Himself the form of sinful man, and He who knew no sin became sin for us. We can't even begin to comprehend the emotional suffering that He endured in order to give us a new heart. He looked beyond the suffering of the cross to the joy that was set before Him.

In Psa. 51:10 David pleaded, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." A donor heart must be "clean", free of blocked vessels. In the natural, the arteries are examined to be sure they are clean.

And the size and weight of the heart is checked to see if it is appropriate and that it is not enlarged, hardened or fibrosed. The heart must be healthy with good blood flow. It is also true in the spiritual. Jesus' heart was clean and pure; He was without sin. The Lamb of God was without blemish or spot, perfect, with a perfect heart.

When we accept this heart, we become a lamb with the Lamb's heart, a heart that desires to do the Father's will. This is the same heart that said, "not My will but Thine be done," the same heart that cried, "Father, our hearts by the Holy Ghost, because we now have a new, clean heart. We have the free flow of the blood of the Lamb of God in us to manifest the life of Christ. We cannot with the old creation heart have that kind of love. It is only possible with a new heart. Works could not earn a new heart, but after we receive the new heart, we are able to perform work. Our works will then be His works, for it is Christ in us.

So, as God asked Israel, "Why will ye die?" Why not agree with the Great Physician's diagnosis of heart failure and impending death and submit to the scalpel of God's Word and receive the gift of life --- His new heart? The Donor is waiting; now is the accepted time. The Holy Spirit is calling. Can you hear the call? God has a call on your life. He wants you to have His heart to do His will. Will you say "yes?" And when you awake from surgery after your transplant, this will be your testimony:

25

"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." Psa. 57:7

God Is Faithful

There has not failed us one good thing
Of all the Lord has said.
What He has promised He has done;
And hitherto has led.

Tho' we grow old as years go by,
And hoary is our head;
He will not leave, or e'en forsake
Those for whom He bled.

Then what have we to ask beside?
His love will ne'er grow cold.
Amid the further strain and stress---
His Hand will still uphold.

Mary M. Bodie

Count It All Joy

Anita Clark

"My brethren, Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations. Knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Jas. 1:2-4

"...Count it all joy..." or "Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren..." (Amp. Version). "...when you fall into divers temptations..." The word "temptations" in the original Greek means, "a putting to the proof." A "temptation" is any trial that tempts us to complain or lose faith in Who God is, and is perpetrated by the devil. God allows these trials as tests of faith. Trials are dynamic. They have the ability to work in us and produce growth and greater trust in Christ.

26 "The trying of your faith works patience," means "trying or proving" of our faith, that testing period, when we must wait upon the Lord for Him to work and change the situation we are enduring. God is so very patient toward us and loves this characteristic of patience in His people. He is constantly working tirelessly to produce this beautiful attribute in our lives. We are reminded of Romans 5:2-5, where Paul says, "We glory in tribulations ... knowing that tribulations worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience hope and hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." The word "tribulation" means "pressure, anguish, burdens, persecution, or trouble." Notice that Paul says, "knowing" that these things "work" in us. Through experience with the Lord over time, we learn that trials and tests are doing a work in God's perfect will for us, "changing us from glory to glory." II Cor. 3:17 Romans 8:28 is true, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

There are some things which every believer in Christ can positively know that should give us confidence in all our trials and tests. (1) II Cor. 1:7 - "Knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation." (2) Col. 3:24 - "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance for ye serve the Lord Christ." (3) Heb. 10:34 "Took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in your selves, that

ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." (4) Psa. 118:6 - Knowing that, "The Lord is on our side, what can man do unto me?" And as Paul says, "If God be for us, who can be against us." Rom. 8:31.

James 1:4 asserts, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing." "Let endurance and steadfastness have full play and do a thorough work that you may be fully developed (with no defects), lacking nothing" (Amp. Version).

In II Corinthians 4:16 -18, the Apostle Paul says, "For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." "We faint not" speaks of "failing, being worried and exhausted."

There is no way that we can overcome the trials in our own strength. This is the lesson we must learn. Col. 1:27 says, "Christ in you the hope of glory." "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2:13 The "eternal weight of glory" speaks of a "load beyond all measure, excessively surpassing all comparisons, and all calculations, a vast and transcendent glory and blessedness never to cease." (Amp. Version) Our part is to let God do the work.

Verse 18 of the above text from II Cor.4 declares that, "... we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen..." The word "look" in the Greek means "to take aim." Is our "aim" set on the trial and the suffering, or on the victory and our Lord Jesus Christ? The things of this life, the trials, tests and deaths are just temporary detours. "...the things which are seen,..." are the "temporal" natural things which continue only for a time before relief comes. "...the things which are not seen,..." (meaning not seen with our natural eye) are "...eternal weights of glory." There will come a day very soon when He will come again, and we will stand before our Beloved Lord Jesus and enter into the glory there. Let us press on. The time is short. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" Romans 8:18.

MEDICAL ASPECTS OF JESUS' SUFFERING

Dr. C. Truman Davis

The physical aspects of the passion, or suffering, of Jesus Christ will be discussed in this series. We shall follow Him from Gethsemane, through His trial, His scourging, His path along the Via Dolorosa, and to His last dying hours on the Cross.

I became interested in this several years ago when I read an account of the crucifixion in Jim Bishop's book, "The Day Christ Died."

I suddenly realized that I had taken the crucifixion more or less for granted all these years; that I had grown callous to its horror by a too easy familiarity with the grim details and a too distant friendship with Him.

It finally occurred to me that as a physician I did not even know the actual immediate cause of death.

28 The Gospel writers do not help us very much on this point, because scourging and crucifixion were so common during their lifetime that they undoubtedly considered a detailed description totally superfluous --- so we have the concise words of the evangelists: "Pilate ... when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified ... And they crucified Him." -Matt. 27:26,35.

The infinite psychic and spiritual suffering of the Incarnate God in atonement for the sins of fallen man I have no competence to discuss; however, the physiological and anatomical aspects of our Lord's passion we can examine in some detail. What did the body of Jesus of Nazareth actually endure during those hours of torture?

The physical passion of the Christ begins in Gethsemane. Of the many aspects of this initial suffering, I shall only discuss the one of physiological interest: the bloody sweat. It is interesting that the physician of the group, St. Luke, is the only one to mention this. He says, "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" - Luke 22:44.

Every attempt imaginable has been used by modern scholars to explain away this phase, apparently under the mistaken impression that this just does not happen. A great deal of effort could be saved by consulting the medical literature. Though very rare, the phenomenon of hematidrosis or bloody sweat, is well documented. Under great emotional stress, tiny capillaries in the sweat

glands can break, thus mixing blood with sweat. This process alone could have produced marked weakness and possible shock.

We shall move rapidly through the betrayal and arrest. I must stress again that important portions of the Passion story are missing from this account. This is done to adhere to our purpose of discussing only the purely physical aspects of the Passion. After the arrest in the middle of the night, Jesus is brought before the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas the high priest. It is here that the first physical trauma was inflicted. A soldier struck Jesus across the face for remaining silent when questioned by Caiaphas. The palace guards then blindfolded Him and mockingly taunted Him to identify them as they each passed by, spat on Him, and struck Him in the face.

In the early morning, Jesus, battered and bruised, dehydrated and exhausted from a sleepless night, is taken across Jerusalem to the Praetorium of the Fortress Antonia --- the seat of government of the procurator of Judaea, Pontius Pilate. Pilate passed this responsibility to Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Judaea. Jesus apparently suffered no physical mistreatment at the hands of Herod and was returned to Pilate.

It was then, in response to the cries of the mob, that Pilate ordered Barabbas released and condemned Jesus to scourging and crucifixion. There is much disagreement among authorities about scourging as a prelude to crucifixion. Most Roman writers from this period do not associate the two.

Many scholars believe that Pilate originally ordered Jesus scourged as His full punishment, and that the death sentence by crucifixion came only in response to the taunt by the mob that the procurator was not properly defending Caesar against this pretender who claimed to be the King of the Jews.

Preparations for the scourging are carried out. The prisoner is stripped of His clothing, and His hands tied to a post above His head. It is doubtful whether the Romans made any attempt to follow the Jewish law in this matter of scourging. The Jews had an ancient law prohibiting more than forty lashes. The Pharisees, always making sure that the law was strictly kept, insisted that only thirty-nine lashes be given. (In case of a miscount, they were sure of remaining within the law).

The Roman legionnaire steps forward with the flagrum (or flagellum) in his hand. This is a short whip consisting of several heavy leather thongs, with

two small balls of lead attached near the ends of each.

The heavy whip is brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back, and legs. At first, the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first an oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and finally spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles.

The small balls of lead first produce large deep bruises which are broken open by subsequent blows. Finally, the skin of the back is hanging in long ribbons, and the entire area is an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue. When it is determined by the centurion in charge that the prisoner is near death, the beating is finally stopped.

The half-fainting Jesus is then untied and allowed to slump to the stone pavement, wet with His own blood. The Roman soldiers see a great joke in this provincial Jew claiming to be a King. They throw a robe across His shoulders, and place a stick in His hand for a scepter. They still need a crown to make their travesty complete. A small bundle of flexible branches covered with long thorns (commonly used for firewood) are plaited into the shape of a crown and this is pressed into His scalp.

30

Again, there is copious bleeding (the scalp being one of the most vascular areas of the body). After mocking Him and striking Him across the face, the soldiers take the stick from His hand and strike Him across the head, driving the thorns deeper into His scalp. Finally, they tire of their sadistic sport and the robe is torn from His back.

This had already become adherent to the clots of blood and serum in the wounds; and its removal, just as in the careless removal of a surgical bandage, causes excruciating pain --- almost as though He were again being whipped --- and the wounds again begin to bleed. In deference to Jewish custom, the Romans return His garments.

The heavy wooden beam of the cross is tied across Jesus' shoulders; and the procession of the condemned Christ, two thieves and the execution detail of Roman soldiers headed by a centurion, begins its slow journey along the Via Dolorosa.

As we study the Passion of Christ, let us first look at the practice of the crucifixion --- the torture and execution of a person by fixation to a cross. Apparently, the first known practice of crucifixion was by

the Persians. Alexander and his generals brought it back to the Mediterranean world to Egypt and to Carthage. The Romans apparently learned the practice from the Carthaginians and (as with almost everything the Romans did, rapidly developed a very high degree of efficiency and skill in carrying it out.

A number of Roman authors (Livy, Cicero, Tacitus) comment on it. Several innovations and modifications are described in the ancient literature. I will mention only a few which may have some bearing here.

The upright portion of the cross (or stipes) could have the crossarm (or patibulum) attached two or three feet below its top --- this is what we commonly think of today as the classical form of the cross (the one which we have later named the Latin cross.) However, the common form used in our Lord's day was the tau cross (shaped like the Greek letter "tau" or like our "T"). In this form, the crossarm was placed in a notch at the top of the stipes. There is fairly overwhelming archaeological evidence that it was on this type of cross that Jesus was crucified.

The upright post, or stipes, was generally permanently fixed in the ground at the site of execution; and the condemned man was forced to carry the crossarm, apparently weighing about one hundred and ten pounds, from the prison to the place of execution. Without any historical or Biblical proof, medieval and Renaissance painters have given us our picture of Christ carrying the entire cross. 31

Many of these painters, and most of the sculptors of crucifixes today, also depict the nails through the palms. Roman historical accounts and experimental work have shown that the nails were driven between the small bones of the wrists and not through the palms. Nails driven through the palms will strip out between the fingers when they support the weight of a human body. The misconception may have come through a misunderstanding of Jesus' words to Thomas, "Behold My hands." Anatomists, both modern and ancient, have always considered the wrists as part of the hand.

A titulus, or small sign, stating the victim's crime was usually carried at the front of the procession and later nailed to the cross above the head. This sign, with its staff nailed to the top of the cross, would have given it somewhat the characteristic form of the Latin cross.

The procession along the Via Dolorosa moves slowly, as

Jesus stumbles and falls frequently. In spite of His efforts to walk erect, the weight of the heavy wooden beam, together with the shock produced by copious blood loss, is too much. The rough wood beam gouges into the lacerated skin and muscles of the shoulders. He tries to rise, but human muscles have been pushed beyond endurance. The centurion, anxious to get on with the crucifixion, selects a stalwart North African onlooker, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross.

Jesus follows, still bleeding and sweating the cold clammy sweat of shock. The six hundred fifty yard journey from the fortress Antonia to Golgotha is finally completed. The Prisoner is again stripped of His clothes --- except for a loincloth, which is allowed the Jews.

The crucifixion begins. Jesus is offered wine mixed with myrrh, a mild analgesic mixture. He refuses to drink. Simon is ordered to place the crossarm on the ground, and Jesus is quickly thrown backward with His shoulders against the wood.

32 The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy square wrought iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood.

Quickly, he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flexion and movement. The crossarm is then lifted in place at the top of the stipes; and the titulus, reading "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews," is nailed in place. The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through both arches, leaving the knees moderately flexed. The victim is now crucified.

As He slowly sags, putting more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain --- the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves.

As He pushes Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He places His full weight on the nail through His feet. Again, there is the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the metatarsal bones of the feet.

At this point, another phenomenon occurs. As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles, knotting them in deep relentless throbbing pain. With these cramps come the inability to push Himself upward. As He

hangs by His arms, the large chest muscles are paralyzed and the small muscles between the ribs are unable to act.

Air can be drawn into the lungs, but cannot be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself in order to get even one short breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream, and the cramps partially subside. Spasmodically, He is able to push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the life-giving oxygen. It was undoubtedly during these periods that He uttered the seven short sentences which are recorded:

The first, looking down at the Roman soldiers throwing dice for His seamless garment, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Lk. 23:34

The second, to the penitent thief, "To day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Lk. 23:43

The third, looking down at the terrified, grief-stricken, adolescent John (the beloved apostle), He said, "Behold thy mother!" And looking to Mary, His mother, He said, "Woman, behold thy son!" John 19:26,27

The fourth cry is from the beginning of the twenty-second Psalm --- "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Psa. 22:1

Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber --- then another agony begins: A deep crushing pain deep in the chest develops, as the sac surrounding the heart slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.

Let us remember again the twenty-second Psalm --- "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." Psa. 22:14. It is now almost over --- the loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level --- the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues --- the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. The markedly dehydrated tissues send their flood of stimuli to the brain.

Jesus gasps His fifth cry, "I thirst."

Let us remember another verse from the prophetic twenty-second Psalm: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaveth to My jaws; and Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death."

A sponge soaked in posca, the cheap sour wine which is the staple drink of the Roman legionnaires, is lifted to His lips. He apparently does not take any of the liquid.

The body of Jesus is now dying, and He can feel the chill of death creeping through His tissues. This realization brings out His sixth words --- possibly little more than a tortured whisper: "It is finished." His mission of atonement has been completed. Finally, He can allow His body to die.

With one last surge of strength, He once again presses His torn feet against the nail, straightens His legs, takes a deeper breath, and utters His seventh and last cry, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

34 The rest you know. In order that the Sabbath not be profaned, the Jews asked that condemned men be dispatched and removed from the crosses. The common method of ending a crucifixion was by crurafracture, the breaking of the bones of the legs. This prevented the victim from pushing himself upward; the tension could not be relieved from the muscles of the chest, and rapid suffocation occurred. The legs of the two thieves were broken, but when they came to Jesus they saw that this was unnecessary.

Apparently to make double sure of death, the legionnaire drove his lance through the fifth interspace between the ribs, upward through the sac around the heart and into the heart itself. "And forthwith came there out blood and water." John 19:34 Thus, there was an escape of watery fluid from the sac surrounding the heart, and blood from the interior of the heart.

We, therefore, have rather conclusive post-mortem evidence that our Lord died --- not the usual crucifixion of death by suffocation, but of heart failure due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid in the sac around the heart.

Thus, we have seen a glimpse of the epitome of evil which man can exhibit toward man --- and toward God. This is not a pretty sight, and is apt to leave us despondent and depressed. How grateful we can be that we have a sequel: A glimpse of the infinite mercy of God toward man --- the miracle of the atonement and the expectation of Easter morning!

He Lives Forevermore

(Reprint 1974)



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