

Prophecy is like a lamp shining in a dark place. 2 Peter 1:19

MAR/APR 2025

LAMPLIGHTER

A LAMB & LION PUBLICATION



THE PASSION OF
CHRIST
IN PROPHECY



LAMB & LION MINISTRIES

MARCH/APRIL 2025

A bi-monthly publication produced
by Lamb & Lion Ministries

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OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EDITOR

What are you passionate about?

Sure, we all are excited about certain things and loving toward certain people. But if you ask someone about their favorite sports team or express interest in their grandchildren, you're likely to unleash a torrent of enthusiastic adoration. Clearly, we are not equally passionate about all our likes and loves.

Even within a marriage, passion can wax and wane. The flame that once burned hot and full of desire often subsides into a steady and reliable warmth. That is the nature of our human emotions and feelings. Our feeling of love ebbs and flows over time.

God's love for us does not rise and fall based on fickle human emotion. It is steadfast and true, not to mention patient and kind—bearing, believing, hoping, and enduring all things in its never-failing constancy (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Speaking of His chosen people, the Jews, the LORD told Jeremiah, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness" (Jeremiah 31:3). His love for us was settled before the foundation of the world and has never wavered.

We could (and will) spend eternity recounting the ways God has loved us. But the most marvelous testimony of His love is what we can see in the Passion of Jesus Christ. In that unfathomable act of divine self-sacrifice, Paul tells us "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Amazingly, the Lord God foretold His great act of selfless, ceaseless, unfailing love. While human understanding tends to operate best in hindsight, He offered numerous signs pointing not only to the incarnation, birth, and ministry of Jesus Christ but also to His great Passion.

This edition of the *Lamplighter* will highlight the prophetic Word of God that was fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ and through His atoning death. Get ready to be awed anew by the breadth, length, height, and depth of His love that passes human knowledge (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Prepare your heart to praise our great God and Savior with fresh zeal.



Tim Moore

Executive Editor

Director | Sr. Evangelist

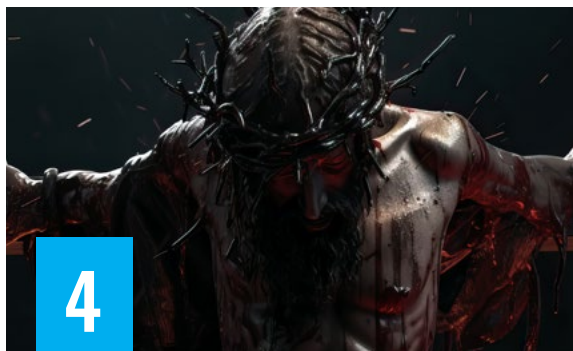
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THE PASSION OF CHRIST IN PROPHECY

Tim Moore

Passion – intense, driving, or overmastering feeling or conviction; ardent affection; the sufferings of Christ between the night of the Last Supper and His death (*Merriam-Webster.com*)

Certain feelings and images come to mind when we envision “passion.” That simple word evokes a sense of overwhelming desire and fiery emotion. It conveys a drive that becomes single-minded and consuming, as well as a romantic intensity rightfully expressed between a husband and wife. Those are the definitions offered by Merriam-Webster. But to Christians, the word carries a much higher and sublime meaning.

As the famous dictionary recognizes, “passion” also refers to the intense sufferings of Christ—specifically those He endured the night after the Last Supper through to His death at Golgotha. The horrors of that

span of hours are described in all the Gospels and have been documented in shocking and graphic detail in movies like *The Passion of the Christ*. Still, there is an indelible link between all the definitions listed above.

Certainly, Jesus Christ exhibited a single-minded determination to “do the will of His Father.” He came to Earth to testify to the Truth—and offer Himself as a perfect sacrificial Lamb for the sins of the world. Very God of very God, He is the Great I AM who became the manifestation of the Father’s love for the world. What makes His love so amazing is that it was demonstrated “while we were yet sinners” (Romans 5:8).

When Isaac Watts contemplated the wondrous Cross, he was overwhelmed by “love so amazing, so divine.” Christians know the power of such love, because those of us who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and are enveloped in His loving arms have experienced the Good News that the Gospel represents. He is ours and we are His—now and forever. Nothing can separate us from God’s unfailing love.

But God’s love was evident long before the Gospel writers recorded the events surrounding Jesus’ birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Amazingly, God revealed the greatest story ever told to His prophets—offering glimpses and foreshadows of the eternal love that would be demonstrated in Jesus’ suffering and death.

From the Foundation of the Earth

Many people think that Adam and Eve’s fall in the Garden messed up God’s original plan. They believe that if Eve had rebuked the serpent or Adam had declined his wife’s invitation and led her to repent, humanity would still be living in Edenic perfection. Such thinking surmises that God had to develop a Plan B to deal with human sin. That is not what the Bible reveals.



...but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but appeared in these last times for the sake of you

1 Peter 1:19-20

John records in Revelation 13:8 that there is a great dichotomy of humanity—separating those who will worship the Lord only grudgingly from those whose names are written “in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.” This same verse also conveys the realization that the names of the saved were written from the foundation of the world—or that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was slain from the foundation of the world. Although different translations render this passage differently, the semantics do not change the bottom line: God’s plan from the beginning was that Christ would be slain and that He would bestow everlasting life on all who believe in Him.

Peter makes the same point. Jesus, as a “lamb unblemished and spotless” whose precious blood was shed, was foreknown before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:19-20). Referring to Jesus, the Holy Spirit revealed to John that “the Word was with God and was God; He was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2).

Jesus coming to Earth as an incarnate Man and laying down His life on a cross was not God’s Plan B; it was God’s eternal intention to demonstrate His unfathomable, unquenchable, unfailing love.

The First Hint

The account of Adam and Eve in the Garden offers several indications that foreshadow God’s plan for salvation and everlasting relationship with those who are His.

Genesis records that the LORD God walked in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day (3:8). Within the triune God, Jesus is the physical manifestation of Almighty God, so we can presume this was the pre-incarnate Christ. Following the pronouncement of the curse upon hearing Adam and Eve’s excuses for their sin, the LORD God made this declaration to the serpent: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel (3:15). Bible scholars have long understood that since

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.

Genesis 3:15

...and Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.

Genesis 22:8



women do not have “seed” in the same way that men do, this reference is to a specific offspring that would come from a woman without the involvement of a man. The grievous wound inflicted on that singular offspring would be devastating, but the wound He would inflict on the serpent of old would be final. Indeed, Jesus Christ fulfilled that prophecy when He was born of a virgin overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. As the Only Begotten and sinless Son of God the Father, He was wounded grievously at Calvary, yet in the fullness of time He will crush the head of Satan.

The horrible penalty for sin—and the life-ending cost for covering man’s wretched sinfulness—was demonstrated when God fashioned garments of skin for Adam and Eve. Foreshadowing the ultimate Sacrifice, God Himself shed the blood of innocent animals to provide a temporary cover for man’s shame.

In just the next chapter of Genesis, the burden of sin is clearly demonstrated. Acting on his pride, jealousy, and anger, Cain slew his own brother Abel. Confronted and cursed by the LORD, Cain rightfully understood, “My punishment is too great to bear!” (Genesis 4:13).

Indeed, the stain of sin and the curse unto death is too great for anyone to overcome. None can free themselves of this burden of sin. Even our ostensibly righteous deeds are little more than filthy disgusting rags in light of the holiness of God (Isaiah 64:6).

In the midst of a test to demonstrate his own obedience and faith, Abraham grasped a prophetic truth that captures the heart of the Gospel. He told his son Isaac, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the [sacrifice]” (Genesis 22:8). Down through the long centuries that followed, every sacrifice offered to the Lord for the temporary covering of sin pointed to the One

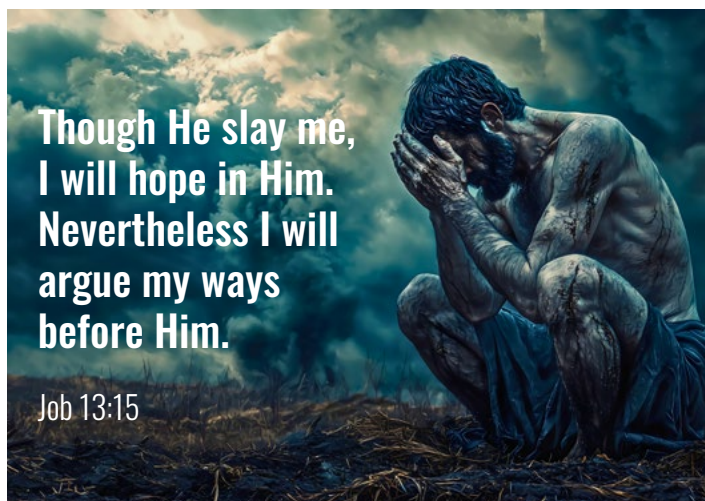
who would take on the sin of the world and provide complete justification to all who believe in Him.

Even Joseph, rejected by his brothers and delivered to slavery and death, offers a powerful foreshadow of the coming Messiah. Revealing himself to his now-repentant brothers in Genesis 45, he said, “God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant...and to keep you alive by a great deliverance” (Genesis 45:7). Once again, that is a nutshell description of Jesus’ incarnation and mission: God sent Him to preserve a remnant—offering life everlasting by a great deliverance.



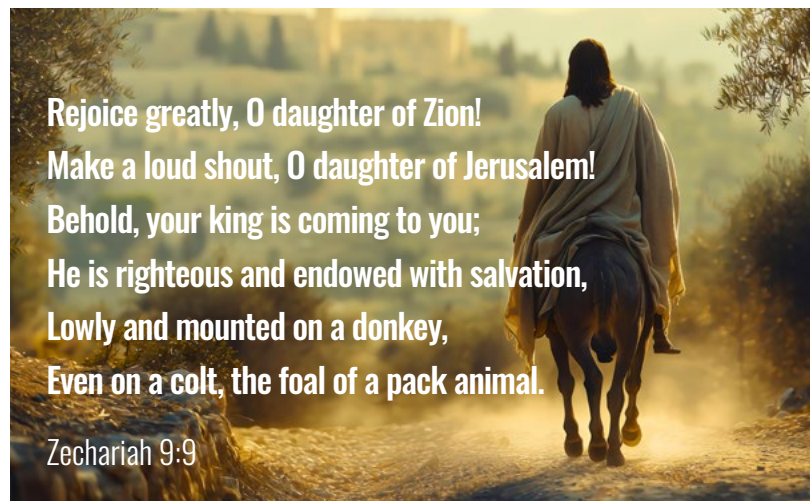
Prophetic Previews of Passion

Passages pointing to the coming Messiah as One “acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3) are scattered throughout the Old Testament. Job declared his determination to trust the LORD God, even if He slayed him—probably not realizing that the Messiah would live and die that very proclamation (Job 13:15). King David poetically expressed the truth contained in Leviticus: that only one with clean hands and a pure heart can “ascend the hill of the Lord [and] stand in His holy place” (Psalm 24:3-4). Certainly, the king after God’s own heart fell far short of such a description, which is why he pointed to the One who he called “My Lord,” exalted by the LORD Himself (Psalm 110:1).



But the king who longed to dwell in the house of the Lord forever knew that he would have to be washed from iniquity, cleansed of sin, and delivered from bloodguiltiness (Psalm 23:6, 51:1-15). And even his broken and contrite heart, although not despised by God, would not accomplish that urgent need. Such a cleansing would require God’s own salvation; it would require a Savior. And David prophetically foretold the devastating forsaking of the coming Savior in Psalm 22, going so far as to prophesy Jesus’ death by crucifixion and the casting of lots for His clothing. Fulfilling this prophetic Psalm, Jesus recited it as He hung on the cross, finishing with Psalm 22:31 as He proclaimed, “It is finished,” and breathed His last.

Zechariah also foretold many details about the events surrounding Jesus’ Passion. He said the Messiah would enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey (9:9), and Jesus did just that on Palm Sunday. He said the Messiah would be betrayed by a friend and suffer wounds in His hands (13:6), that the price for His be-



trayal would be 30 pieces of silver (11:12), and that the betrayal money would be used to buy a potter’s field (11:13). Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled every one of those prophecies and the rest of the 108 distinct prophecies related to His birth, life, ministry, and death.



But the most significant chapter foretelling the suffering the Messiah would endure is Isaiah 53. Isaiah’s prophecy is so graphic and so unmistakably fulfilled by Jesus that Jewish rabbis discourage their followers from even reading the text. I’ve spoken with numerous Jews who are conversant about most of the Old Testament but subsequently confess that they’ve never read Isaiah 53. What is it about this passage that opponents of Christ want to deny?



Isaiah foretold that the Messiah would:

- **Grow up like a shoot from parched ground**
- **Have no stately form or attractive appearance**
- **Be despised and forsaken**
- **Be a man acquainted with grief and unesteemed by men**
- **Bear our griefs and sorrows Himself**
- **Be deemed stricken and smitten of God**
- **Be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities**
- **Offer healing and ultimate well-being because of His chastening and scourging**
- **Willingly bear the iniquity of the world according to the will of the LORD**
- **Stand silent in the face of accusations and oppression**
- **Serve as a guilt offering to bear the iniquity of many and justify them before God**
- **Pour Himself out unto death and be cut off from the land of the living**
- **Be assigned a grave with wicked men (with specific allusion to a rich man's grave)**

What to call such a suffering Messiah? Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Isaiah calls Him “the Righteous One, My Servant” (53:11). In the eyes of God, this despised, rejected, pierced, and crushed Man of sorrows would be “high and lifted up and greatly exalted” (Isaiah 52:13).

Our Suffering Servant entered the world as a baby born in a stable. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. He grew up in a backwater region of Israel and had no majestic appearance or stately form. He even washed the feet of His own disciples and was patient with their slow-witted understanding of all He revealed to them. He was despised and rejected by many of the people He came to save. And like a Good Shepherd, He lay down His life for His sheep (John 10:11).

Love So Amazing

How should we respond to such amazing love?

Lest you consider that question as an academic contemplation, let me rephrase it: Have you responded to His amazing love?

When Isaac Watts grasped the incredible, wonderful, infinite dimensions of Jesus Christ’s amazing love, he was left with only one response:

Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all. †

WHEN I SURVEY THE **WONDROUS CROSS**



When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts, 1707



THE PASSION, THE PAIN, AND *the Promise*

Max Lucado

An End or a Beginning?

It's the end of the most significant week in the history of the world. A week of final moments. Jesus and the apostles' last meal together. The last time Jesus prays in the Garden. The concluding confrontation with enemies. The final encounter with pain.

And the last event. . . a daring display of unleashed divine power. The entombed Savior unbound by a holy explosion. What was a sepulcher is now a symbol... landmarking the greatest victory in the most crucial battle.

A week of final moments. A week of endings.

Or is it the beginning. . . .?



The Jesus before Pilate in church Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Miracoli by artist with the initials G.D.L (1929) as artistic copy of Ecce Homo by Antonio Ciseri (1871)



At the Trial

The most famous trial in history is about to begin. The judge is short and patrician with darting eyes and expensive clothes. His graying hair trimmed and face beardless. He is apprehensive and nervous about being thrust into a decision he can't avoid. Two soldiers lead him down the stone stairs of the fortress into the broad courtyard. Shafts of morning sunlight stretch across the stone floor. As he enters, Syrian soldiers dressed in short togas yank themselves and their spears erect and stare straight ahead. The floor on which they stand is a mosaic of broad, brown, smooth rocks. On the floor are carved the games the soldiers play while awaiting the sentencing of the prisoner. But in the presence of the procurator, they don't play.

A regal chair is placed on a landing five steps up from the floor. The magistrate ascends and takes his seat. The accused is brought into the room and placed below him. A covey of robed religious leaders follow, walk over to one side of the room, and stand. Pilate looks at the lone figure.

"Doesn't look like a Christ," he mutters. Feet swollen and muddy.

Hands tan. Knuckles lumpy. Looks more like a laborer than a teacher. Looks even less like a troublemaker. One eye is black and swollen shut. The other looks at the floor. Lower lip split and scabbed. Hair blood-matted to forehead. Arms and thighs streaked with crimson.

"Shall we remove the garment?" a soldier asks.

"No. It's not necessary." It's obvious what the beating has done.

"Are you the king of the Jews?"

For the first time, Jesus lifts His eyes. He doesn't raise His head, but he lifts His eyes. He peers at the procurator from beneath His brow. Pilate is surprised at the tone of Jesus' voice.

"Those are your words."

Before Pilate can respond, the knot of Jewish leaders mock the accused from the side of the courtroom. "See, he has no respect." "He stirs the people!" "He claims to be king!"

Pilate doesn't hear them. "Those are your words." No defense. No explanation. No panic. The Galilean is looking at the floor again.

Pilate looks at the Jewish leaders huddled in the corner across the court. Their insistence angers him. The lashes aren't enough. The mockery inadequate. "Jealous!" he wants to say to their faces but doesn't. "Jealous buzzards, the whole obstinate lot of you. Killing your own prophets!" Pilate wants to let Jesus go. "Just give me a reason," he thinks, almost aloud. "I'll set you free."

His thoughts are interrupted by a tap on the shoulder. A messenger leans and whispers. Strange. Pilate's wife has sent word not to get involved in the case. Something about a dream she had. Pilate walks back to his chair, sits, and stares at Jesus. "Even the gods are on your side?" he states with no explanation. He has sat in this chair before. It's a curule seat: cobalt blue with thick, ornate legs. The traditional seat of decision. By sitting on it, Pilate transforms any room or street into a courtroom. It is from here he renders his decisions.



"Those are your words."



“Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”

- Pontious Pilate

Matthew 27:22

How many times has he sat here? How many stories has he heard? How many pleas has he received? How many wide eyes have stared at him, pleading for mercy, begging for acquittal? But the eyes of this Nazarene are calm, silent. They don't scream. They don't dart. Pilate searches them for anxiety. . . for anger. He doesn't find it. What he finds makes him shift again. “He's not angry with me. He's not afraid . . .he seems to understand.”

Pilate is correct in his observation. Jesus is not afraid. He is not angry. He is not on the verge of panic. For he is not surprised. Jesus knows His hour, and the hour has come. Pilate is correct in his curiosity. Where, if Jesus is a leader, are His followers? What, if he is the Messiah, does he intend to do? Why, if he is a teacher, are the religious leaders so angry at him?

Pilate is also correct in his question. “What should I do with Jesus, the one called Christ?”

The Treasure of the Tomb

“So what should I do with Jesus?” Pilate asked it first, but we've all asked it since. It's a fair question.

A necessary question. What do you do with such a Man? He called Himself God but wore the clothes of a man. He called Himself the Messiah but never marshaled an army. He was regarded as King, but His only crown was of thorns. People revered Him as regal, yet His only robe was stitched with mockery. Small wonder, Pilate was puzzled. How do you explain such a Man?

One way is to take a walk. His walk. His final walk. Follow His steps. Stand in His shadow. From Jericho to Jerusalem. From the temple to the garden. From the garden to the trial. From Pilate's palace to Golgotha's cross. Watch Him walk — angrily to the temple, wearily into Gethsemane, painfully up the Via Dolorosa. And powerfully out of the vacated tomb. As you witness His walk, reflect on your own, for all of us have our own walk to Jerusalem. Our own path through hollow religion. Our own journey down the narrow path of rejection. And each of us, like Pilate, must cast a verdict on Jesus.

Pilate heard the voice of the people and left Jesus to walk the road alone. Will we?

I hope that permanently planted in your soul is the moment the

Father stirred you in the darkness and led you down the path to freedom. It's a memory like no other. For when He sets you free, you are free indeed.

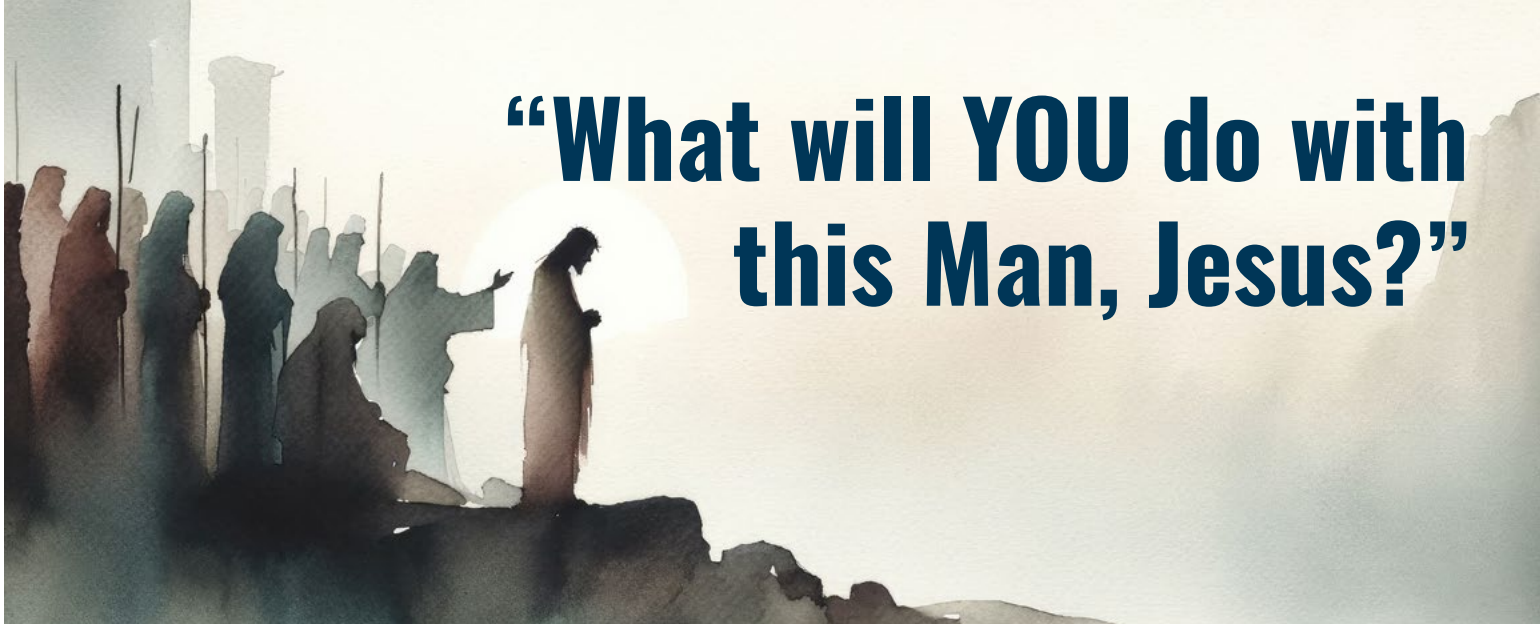
What About you?

Perhaps you, like Pilate, are curious about this one called Jesus. You, like Pilate, are puzzled by His claims and stirred by His passions. You have heard the stories: God descending the stars, cocooning in flesh, placing a stake of truth in the globe. You, like Pilate, have heard the others speak; now you would like for him to speak. What do you do with a man who claims to be God, yet hates religion? What do you do with a man who calls himself the Savior, yet condemns systems? What do you do with a man who knows the place and time of His death, yet goes there anyway? Pilate's question is yours. “What will I do with this man, Jesus?”

You have two choices. You can reject Him. That is an option. You can, as have many, decide that the idea of God becoming a carpenter is too bizarre—and walk away.

But in not making a choice, Pilate made a choice. Rather than ask for God's grace, he asked for a

“What will YOU do with this Man, Jesus?”



howl. Rather than invite Jesus to stay, he sent Him away. Rather than hear Christ’s voice, he heard the voice of the people. Legend has it that Pilate’s wife became a believer. And legend has it that Pilate’s eternal home is a mountain lake where he daily surfaces, still plunging his hands into the water seeking forgiveness. Forever trying to wash away his guilt . . . not for the evil he did, but for the kindness he didn’t do.

A Personal Testimony

Can I tell you my story?

A Bible class in a small West Texas town. I don’t know what was more remarkable, that a teacher was trying to teach the book of Romans to a group of ten-year-olds or that I remember what he said. The classroom was mid-sized, one of a dozen or so in a small church. My desk had carving on it and gum under it. Twenty or so others were in the room, though only four or five were taken.

We all sat at the back, too sophisticated to appear interested. Starved jeans. High-topped tennis shoes. It was summer, and the slow-setting sun cast the window in gold.

The teacher was an earnest man. I can still see his flattop, his belly bulging from beneath his coat that he doesn’t even try to button. His tie stops midway down his chest. He has a black mole on his forehead, a soft voice, and a kind smile. Though he is hopelessly out of touch with the kids of 1965, he doesn’t know it. His notes are stacked on a podium underneath a heavy black Bible. His back is turned to us, and his jacket goes up and down his beltline as he writes on the board. He speaks with genuine passion. He is not a dramatic man, but tonight, he is fervent. God only knows why I heard him that night. His text was Romans chapter six. The blackboard was littered with long words and diagrams. Somewhere in the process of describing how Jesus went into the tomb and came back out, it happened. The jewel of grace was

lifted and turned so I could see it from a new angle... and it stole my breath. I didn’t see a moral code. I didn’t see a church. I didn’t see the Ten Commandments or hellish demons. I saw my Father enter my dark night, awaken me from my slumber, and gently guide me—no, carry me—to freedom.

I said nothing to my teacher. I said nothing to my friends. I’m not sure I even said anything to God. I didn’t know what to say. I didn’t know what to do. But for all I didn’t know, there was one fact of which I was absolutely sure: I wanted to be with Him. I told my father I was ready to give my life to God. He thought I was too young to make the decision. He asked what I knew. I told him Jesus was in Heaven, and I wanted to be with Him. And for my dad, that was enough.



To this day I wonder if my love has ever been as pure as it was that first hour. I long for the certainty of my adorning faith. Had you told me that Jesus was in hell, I would have agreed to go. Public confession and baptism came naturally for me.

You see, when your Father comes to deliver you from bondage, you don't ask questions; you obey instructions. You take His hand. You walk the path. You leave bondage behind. And you never, never forget.

I pray you never forget your walk or His: Jesus' final walk from Jericho to Jerusalem. For it was this walk that promised you freedom. His final walk through the temple of Jerusalem. For it was on this walk that He denounced hollow religion. His final walk to the Mount of Olives. For it was there, He promised to return and take you home.

And His final walk from Pilate's palace to Golgotha's cross. Bare, bloody feet struggling up a stony, narrow path. But just as vivid as the pain of the beam across His raw back is His vision of you and Him walking together. He could see the hour He would come into your life, into your dark cabin, to stir you out of your sleep and guide you to freedom. But the walk isn't over. The journey isn't complete. There is one more walk that must be made.

"I will come back," He promised. And to prove it, He ripped in two the temple curtain and split open the doors of death. He will come back.

"The one who has redeemed us has returned!" we will cry.

And the journey will end, and we will take our seats at His feast. . . forever. See you at the table! †



Max Lucado has been called "America's Pastor." He serves at Oak Hills Church in San Antonio and is a best-selling author. Well-known as a gifted storyteller, Max says he "writes books for people who don't read books." Over the past 40 years, he has written almost 100 books for those non-readers, and they have bought more than 150 million copies.

Max and his wife Denalyn have three grown daughters, three sons-in-law, and four grandchildren.

This authorized excerpt was taken from an article at [MaxLucado.com](https://maxlucado.com). The full article can be found at: <https://maxlucado.com/the-passion-the-pain-and-the-promise/>

THE THREE SUFFERINGS AND VICTORIES OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

Nathan Jones & David Reagan

Nathan Jones, Lamb & Lion Ministries' gifted Internet Evangelist, has compiled a wonderful article based on a *Christ in Prophecy* episode with David Reagan. Entitled "The Three Sufferings and Victories of Jesus on the Cross," it reflects on the spiritual, emotional, and physical suffering of our Lord as He was crucified for your sins and mine. This insightful essay also extolls the victories that are ours in Christ: salvation, exaltation, and proclamation. This deep dive into the teaching from David's cry of anguish and song of praise in Psalm 22 can be found on the Lamb & Lion Ministries website.

CLICK HERE to read the full article.

Remembering Dr. Paul Lee Tan

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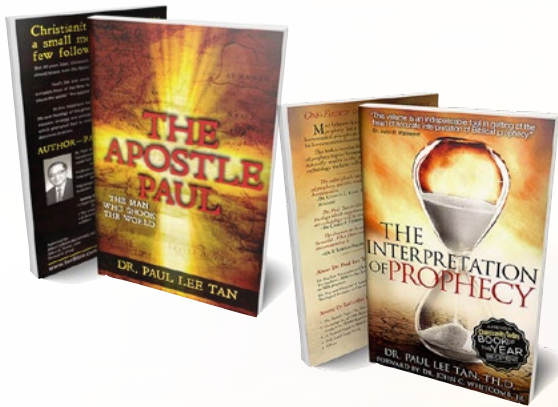
November 1, 1937 - October 28, 2024

Pastor | Author | Bible Scholar | Theologian

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10)

The Apostle Paul - 346 pages

The Interpretation of Prophecy - 444 pages



Paul Lee Tan, a longtime friend of Lamb & Lion Ministries, was called home this past October—just shy of his 87th birthday. A living testimony that the Gospel has penetrated China, Dr. Tan was the Director of Asian Studies and Adjunct Professor at Dallas Theological Seminary as well as a beloved pastor for many years in both the United States and the Philippines.

Dr. Tan wrote many books urging the literal interpretation of Scripture—including prophecy. His contributions to our understanding of eschatology—and our anticipation of the imminent Rapture of the Church—continue to resonate.

Lamb & Lion Ministries is pleased to offer this bundle as a sampler of Paul Lee Tan's powerful and insightful writing.

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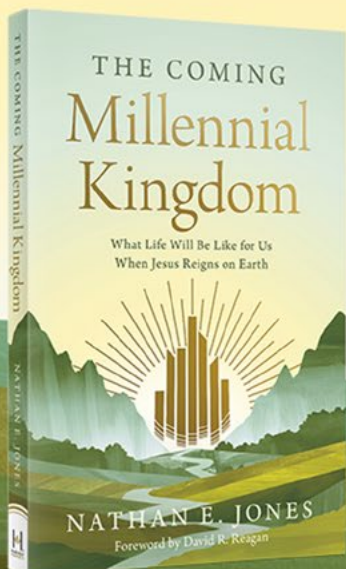
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“Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?” (Isaiah 66:8)

Ask any conversant agnostic or engaging skeptic and they will likely tell you that there are several supposed miracles surrounding the life of Jesus Christ that they simply cannot accept. They unceremoniously reject His immaculate conception and virgin birth, deny the supernatural aspects of His various miracles, and refuse to accept His claim to be Immanuel—God with us.

But while they will accept that a man named Jesus of Nazareth lived and died—and specifically that He was crucified and buried—they scoff at the idea of His bodily resurrection. Simply put: the audacity of such

a declaration far exceeds their willingness to politely acquiesce, given that they have never met someone raised from the dead.

Jesus understood the human psyche far better than cadres of trained psychologists and psychiatrists because He is the Creator who formed Man out of the dust of the ground. His Holy Spirit breathed life into Adam and He continues to uphold and sustain Mankind, ensuring that the miracle of life is transferred down to each new generation.

Jesus intentionally made claims He knew would be audacious—and sound downright impossible to men.

A WHALE OF A TALE

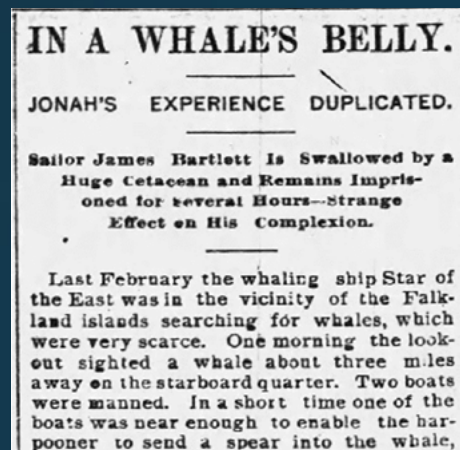
Tim Moore

Three Days in the Belly of a Whale

Foretelling His death, Jesus cited a surprising prophetic encounter to preview what He would endure. When the Pharisees demanded further proof that He was the Messiah—ignoring the plethora of signs testifying to that obvious fact—Jesus called them a wicked and adulterous (or perverse) generation. He then declared, “But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:39-40).

Ironically, these zealously religious men did not doubt the testimony of Jonah’s prophecy: that he was indeed swallowed by a great fish and spent three days and three nights in the belly of the fish before being unceremoniously vomited up onto dry land (Jonah 1:17-2:10). The

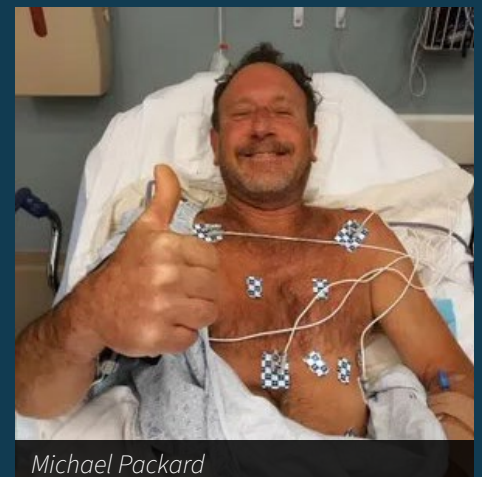
modern mind extrapolates immediate objections to this portion of Jonah’s account, but ironically it is easy to verify.



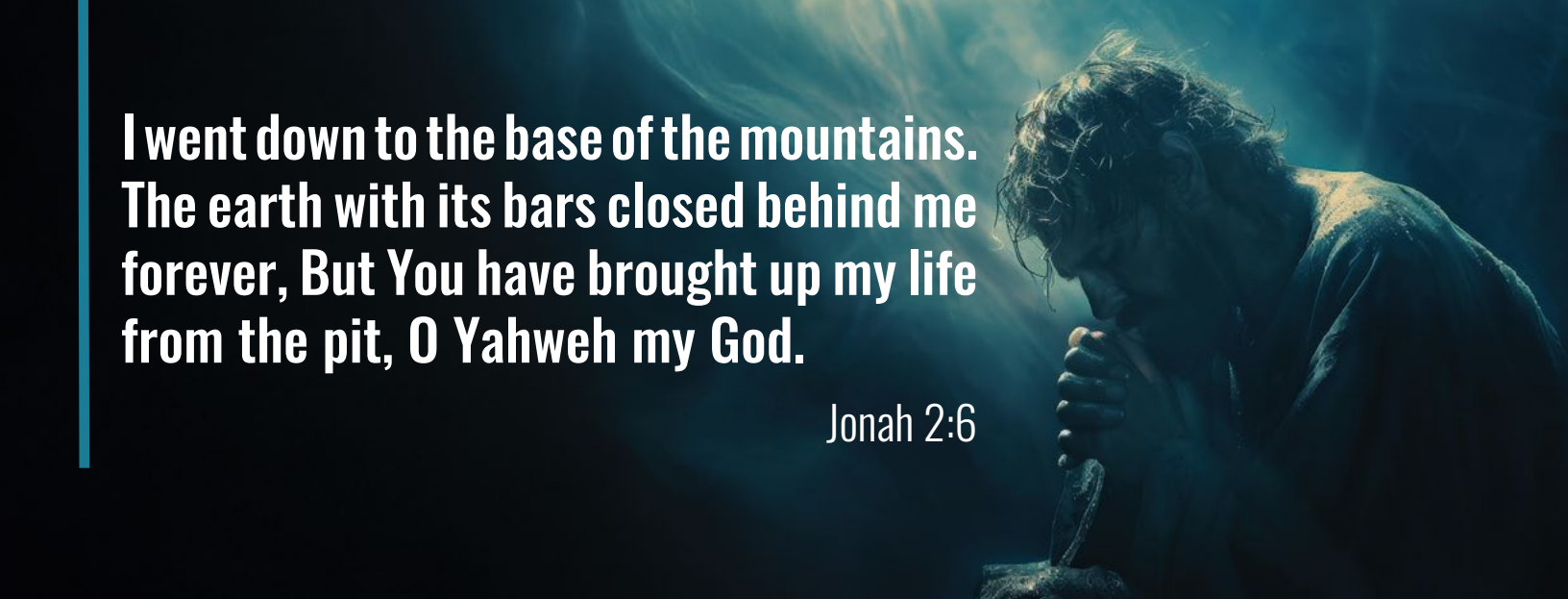
In 1891, newspapers throughout the English-speaking world ran the story of James Bartley. The account told how the sailor from a whaling ship named *The Star of the East* was swallowed by a whale in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands, only to be freed from his marine tomb when the beast was being butchered several hours later (reported to be between 15 and 36 hours). Bartley was hailed as a “modern-day Jonah” at the time, but further investigation

revealed many inconsistencies in the account. Still, Bartley was not the only person documented to have been swallowed.

Lobster-diver, Michael Packard of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, was swallowed whole by a humpback whale in June 2021. His experience did not last for hours—and did not result in the skin bleaching that Bartley supposedly sustained. But his testimony of a momentary sense of distress echoes Jonah’s hopelessness as recorded in Jonah 2. He, too, was vomited out to live and tell his tale.



Michael Packard



**I went down to the base of the mountains.
The earth with its bars closed behind me
forever, But You have brought up my life
from the pit, O Yahweh my God.**

Jonah 2:6

Scripture never actually refers to the creature that swallowed Jonah as a whale. That was an assumption made by English translators as they tried to convey the immensity of a creature that might have swallowed Jonah. Marine biologists say that the largest Mediterranean Sea creature capable of swallowing a human would be the 80-ton sperm whale. They lack the ability to “chew” and, therefore, gulp their food whole. They also store air in their nasal cavity—theoretically providing enough oxygen for a human to survive for several days. They are famous for vomiting up large masses of ambergris, a solid waxy substance collected for use in medicines, potions, and fine perfumes.

All these anecdotal potentialities ignore two other facts regarding the creature and circumstance cited in Jonah. It could have been a creature that has become extinct with the passage of time. Jonah himself recognized his dire situation and the inevitable natural death that would result. That is why Jonah credited God alone for bringing his life up from the pit (Jonah 2:6). Yet he was unequivocal about being in the stomach of the great fish for three days and three nights.

One more fascinating angle to Jonah’s account. Pagan peoples around the Mediterranean Sea worshipped the fish god, Dagon (Judges 16:23–24; 1 Samuel 5:1–7; 1 Chronicles 10:8–12). Images of Dagon were found in the ruins of Nineveh. What better calling card for the prophet of God to arrive in Nineveh bearing the visual scars of his encounter with the great fish (and likely preceded by eye-witness accounts from people who saw him vomited up)? The prophet of the true and living God had encountered a manifestation of the false god and had miraculously prevailed.

This realization brings us full circle to the skeptics of today. It is not beyond belief that a man could be swallowed by a sea creature (whale or fish). The miracle is that Jonah was kept alive, “resurrected” from death to life by the power of God. That is what Jesus was conveying in Matthew 12:40, which affirms again His point: “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

How Long in the Bowels of the Earth?

One of the subtle accommodations many Christians make regarding the account of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection is the timing of these earth-shattering events. The Catholic interpretation of the Gospel’s description of Jesus’ crucifixion on the “day of preparation” reflects a Gentile understanding of the phrase. The assumption is that the Jews were preparing for the Sabbath—which must fall on a Saturday, thus placing the crucifixion on a Friday. The substitutionary death and atonement that were finished at Calvary makes the unspeakable tragedy of that day good news for those who believe upon Him—thus “Good Friday.”

There are two problems with this interpretation: 1) Jews commemorated other holy days that were referred to as Sabbaths even if they did not fall on Saturday, and 2) placing Jesus’ death and burial on Friday only results in two nights in the tomb since we know that He was resurrected prior to Sunday morning.

With this realization, faithful Christians have asserted three possible days for His crucifixion, death, and burial: Friday, Thursday, and Wednesday. Let’s consider each very briefly.

Friday

Friday is clearly the traditional view ascribed to by Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and many mainline denominations. Mark 15:42 says that Jesus was crucified on “the day before the Sabbath,” and adherents to this position take that as a straightforward reference to the weekly Sabbath. They assert that this would have been in the year AD 30, when the Passover would have taken place on Friday, Nisan 14. This position seems to fit with 1 Corinthians 5:7, where Paul refers to Jesus as “our Passover lamb.”

The obvious challenge to this position is the length of time Jesus would have been in the tomb: a small portion of Friday, the night and day of Saturday (Jewish days begin at sundown), and the night and possibly the earliest daytime portion of Sunday. It is impossible to describe this as “three days and three nights,” so advocates of Friday claim that any portion of a day counts as a full day. They ascribe Jesus’ arrest during the nighttime hours of Friday morning as part of His Jonah-esque darkness and confinement. They point to Matthew 16:21 and Luke 9:22, which prophesy that Jesus will arise on the third day.

While most Christians have adopted the language of Good Friday, increasing numbers find the arguments for a Friday crucifixion lacking.

Thursday

Departing from the Friday tradition, Thursday has emerged as a strong contender for the day of crucifixion.

This position asserts that there were two Sabbaths the week of Jesus’ death—a “high Sabbath” marking the Feast of Unleavened Bread (the day after the Passover Seder) and the regular Saturday Sabbath (Luke 22:1). John 19:31 even documents that the Sabbath immediately following Jesus’ crucifixion was a special Sabbath. As described in Leviticus (16:29-31; 23:7, 24-32, and 39), a Sabbath was simply a day ordained by God as a day of rest and worship. This was prescribed for the seventh day of the week and for other special days.

In the Berean Literal Bible (think, “Bereans” who tested every claim against the Word of God), Matthew 28:1 describes the resurrection as taking place “after the Sabbaths”—affirming that there were at least two Sabbaths surrounding the Crucifixion.

A Thursday crucifixion and death seem to be supported by Jesus’ prophecy in John 2:19, where He said, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” Also, in the text of Luke 24:21, the two disciples on their way to Emmaus tell Jesus, “It is the third day since all this took place.” Both would indicate a Thursday to Sunday passage of time (three days).

Finally, Thursday advocates point to the reality that the day prior to the high Sabbath was the “preparation day”—meaning the day when the Passover lamb would have been slain. Jesus’ death on the same afternoon when lambs throughout the land were being slain fulfilled His role as our perfect Passover Lamb.

Even today, Jews observe the Passover Seder meal the day prior to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jesus and His disciples simply did so on the first day of the Passover week (Matthew 26:17-19).

Wednesday

Over time, advocates for a Wednesday crucifixion have grown. They agree with the Thursday viewpoint that there were two Sabbaths surrounding Jesus’ death—one a “high

...for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Matthew 12:40



urrected sometime after dark on Saturday night and prior to dawn on Sunday morning. The tomb was then discovered to be empty when the women arrived “very early” on Sunday morning. Matthew records that while they were interacting with the risen Jesus, some of the guards rushed into the city to report to the chief priests what had happened. To be clear, Roman soldiers would not have merely fallen asleep on duty—on pain of death. Their appeal to the chief priests testifies to their desperation and to the miraculous nature of what had happened at the tomb.

Sabbath” (Passover) and the other the regular weekly Sabbath (Saturday). But instead of compressing those Sabbaths into consecutive days, placing the crucifixion on Wednesday separates them by a single day—Friday. There is good Biblical support for doing so.

Mark 16:1 documents that the women purchased spices to anoint Jesus’ body after the Sabbath was over. Luke 23:56 says that after they had seen the tomb and how His body was laid, they returned and prepared the spices and then rested before the Sabbath. How could they have purchased spices after the Sabbath but prepared them before the Sabbath? Only if there were two Sabbaths. Accordingly, they purchased spices on Friday morning after the Passover Sabbath and prepared them on Friday afternoon before the Saturday Sabbath. Then, they returned to the tomb early Sunday morning to anoint Jesus’ body, hoping someone would roll the heavy stone away (Mark 16:2-3).

Placing Jesus’ death on Wednesday accepts as literal His prophecy regarding “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). We know that He died at about 3 in the afternoon and was being laid in the tomb around sunset (Matthew 27:45-46). He was then in the tomb:

Wednesday nighttime – **Night 1**

Thursday daytime – **Day 1**

Thursday nighttime – **Night 2**

Friday daytime – **Day 2**

Friday nighttime – **Night 3**

Saturday daytime – **Day 3**

We do not know what portion of Saturday night Jesus was in the tomb, but we do know that He res-

To Western readers, the only challenge with this timing is the disciples’ testimony en route to Emmaus. They described Jesus’ crucifixion and death and said, “It is the third day since these things happened” (Luke 24:20-21). But, again, to a Jewish mind, Thursday would have begun at sunset on Wednesday. As such, three days would have passed (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday) since the events that consumed their conversation.

What It All Means

Our Western minds think in very chronological terms. Whether recounting an episode or recording a biography, we tend to recount events sequentially and in linear order. The Eastern mind thinks more thematically and is not as concerned with specific times or sequences (as Westerners often learn when endeavoring to engage in business).

A Wednesday timeframe for Jesus’ death fulfills the Lord’s own prophecy—connecting His death to Jonah’s experience in the belly of the great fish. And, just as God miraculously delivered His anointed one from a watery grave in the depths of the sea, it demonstrates the power of God to miraculously resurrect His Anointed One from the bowels of the earth.



There is one other aspect to the three days and nights of Jesus' time in the grave. Jewish tradition held that a person's spirit lingered near their body for three days. Jesus delayed His own resurrection for the same reason He delayed going to Bethany for four days after Lazarus died—because He did not want anyone to deny the miraculous nature of Lazarus' resurrection or His own resurrection. But, just as scoffers scoff, deniers will inevitably deny.

Religious leaders denied and denounced Lazarus' resurrection, then bribed the soldiers who guarded Jesus' tomb to offer false testimony about His resurrection. This is why Jesus closed the parable of the rich man and Lazarus with an observation about skeptical human nature. From his comfortable position in Paradise, the Lazarus of the parable responded to the rich man's plea to send someone to warn his brothers with this discerning insight: "If they do not listen to

Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

As important as the timing of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection is to fulfill all prophecy, the fact of His resurrection is even more critical. For, as Paul said, if He is not risen from the dead then our preaching, our faith, and our hope is in vain and "we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:13-19).

But He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Luke 16:31

Wayward men and women have been denying Jesus' miraculous resurrection for almost 2,000 years. Instead of repenting in the face of the manifest power of God as the men of Nineveh did, they denigrate the One who is far greater than Jonah (Matthew 12:38-41).

But for those of us who are saved, the testimony of the Cross—validated by the fulfilled promise of the resurrection—is the power of God for salvation. And that is a true tale that never grows stale. †

WHEN DID JESUS DIE?

James Hugg

An insightful academic analysis of the timing of Jesus' death by Dr. James Hugg, a Lamb & Lion Ministries Trustee, was submitted too late to be incorporated into this edition of the *Lamplighter*. "When Did Jesus Die?" can be found on the Lamb & Lion Ministries website.

CLICK HERE to read the full article.



Why Have You *Forsaken* Me?

Tim Moore

“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”

(My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?)

- Matthew 27:46

Jesus’ poignant outcry as He hung on the cross has troubled many Gospel readers for generations. Why would the Father abandon His only begotten Son at the moment of His greatest need—leaving Him feeling absolutely forsaken?

The depths of despair Jesus communicated in this heartbreaking plea can only be rightly understood in light of a prophetic passage written by King David almost 1,000 years before. The great Jewish king and forebear of Christ certainly fell short of the sinless life Jesus would exhibit, and yet he represents a prefigure of His anointed descendant, his Lord who communed with his LORD (Psalm 110:1).

David as a Type

David was the least of Jesse’s sons and would have been rejected by anyone looking for a potential king with human eyes. However, as Samuel came to understand, God looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Jesus was also undistinguished in His appearance and rejected by most of His Jewish brothers. Yet, this stone which the builders rejected was chosen by God to become the chief Cornerstone.

Once anointed by Samuel, David had to wait several years to ascend to his rightful place as God’s chosen king. Likewise, Jesus was hailed by an angelic host as the King of kings, and yet He is still waiting to be



But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

1 Samuel 16:7

exalted on Earth when every knee bows and tongue confesses that He is Lord.

Finally, David was hunted down by his enemies—both Jewish and Gentile. He repeatedly had to hide away to preserve his own life. At one point, he even had to flee from the murderous aspirations of his own son. In those moments of discouragement, David wrote songs where he poured out his heart before the Lord, confessing his own encroaching despair but always turning back to affirm his trust in God. Calling on God to preserve him in a moment of crisis, David confidently asserted, “You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay” (Psalm 16:1, 10). Yet obviously, after his eventual death, David was laid to rest with his fathers and his body has returned to dust. So, David’s affirmation of his unshakable faith in God in Psalm 16 is best understood as a Messianic prophecy.

The Greater David

As mentioned before, Psalm 110 stands as a testimony to David’s anticipation of his coming Lord who would reign from Zion. With a “strong scepter” He will rule in the midst of God’s enemies, “shattering kings in the day of His wrath.” This Anointed One will also serve as a priest forever according to the

order of Melchizedek and judge the nations.

The prophetic picture painted by Psalm 110 is of a majestic and mighty Messiah. This is the Messiah most Jews were eager to welcome: a Son of David who would rule with a rod of iron and restore the primacy of the Jewish people. This is the kind of redemption for Jerusalem that Anna’s friends were excited to anticipate (Luke 2:38).

Jews and Gentiles respect or fear a ruler who appears with regal grandeur and imposes His authority on the willing and the unwilling, weak and strong alike. But neither the Jews nor the Gentiles could understand that God’s eternal plan was to send His Son as a suffering servant who would offer salvation from sin before He returned to reign in glory.

Some Jewish writings allude to a “Messiah ben Joseph”—a suffering king who would cry out to God as “Father” before dying ignobly. In Psalm 89, Ethan the Ezrahite recorded a maskil foreshadowing the son of David. This suffering king would “crush his adversaries before him, and strike those who hate him” (Psalm 89:23). But, for a time, this anointed one would also be cast off and rejected by God, suffering His wrath as his crown is “profaned in the dust” (Psalm 89:38-39). At the culmination of this ignominy, his

adversaries will be exalted and his enemies will rejoice as his days are shortened and he is covered with shame (Psalm 89:41-45).

Despite the foreshadowing of such treatment David’s life represented, most Jews could not conceive of a Messiah who would suffer and die. But David had penned a psalm conveying his own desperation before the Lord.

Psalm 22

The editors of most Bibles describe Psalm 22 as David’s “cry of anguish and song of praise.” Jesus recited David’s own opening words as He hung on the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1).

David interweaves affirmation of his faith in God (verses 3-5, 9-10, 22-24) with heart-wrenching appeals for deliverance. His first complaint is, “I cry by day, but You do not answer; and by night, but I have no rest” (v. 2). In his desperation, David has become “a worm and not a man, a reproach of men and despised by the people; all who see me sneer at me...saying, ‘Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; let Him rescue him, because He delights in him’ ” (v. 6-8).

The parallels to the scene at Golgotha are obvious. As Jesus suffered and died, His accusers scoffed and



mocked, saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God, let God remove Him now, if He delights in Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God’ ” (Matthew 27:41-43). The robbers who were crucified alongside Him heaped the same scorn on Him.

The details contained in Psalm 22 demonstrate the miraculous nature of this prophetic psalm. David writes,

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them; and for my clothing they cast lots (vv. 14-18).

David’s ordeals did not lead to his death. He may have felt undone by his physical and psychological sufferings, but there is no biblical record to indicate that his hands and feet were literally pierced or

that his garments were ever divided and distributed by lot. What was poetically written to describe the anguish in David’s heart as he fled from mortal enemies became literally fulfilled by the Greater David as He suffered and died.

Jesus’ Anguished Cry

We can begin to comprehend Jesus’ physical suffering—even if few people alive today have experienced a Romanesque flogging or been subjected to the intentional agony of crucifixion. Some can also identify with the heartbreak of betrayal by friends and family and the sense of isolation and despair that ensues. Certainly, in His humanity Jesus felt every blow. Many who were flogged as He had been died from the trauma and loss of blood. By the time Jesus was crucified, every nerve in His beaten and weakened body would have been screaming. Crucifixion added insult to injury.

The Romans perfected a means of execution that was designed to heighten suffering while inflicting maximum shame. Contrary to artist’s renditions of Jesus’ crucifixion, it is likely that He would have been stripped naked and exposed to unrelenting humiliation. The placement of the nails in His hands and feet was intended to cause intense pain—while sadisti-

cally prolonging suffering before the mercy of death. Yet Jesus refused wine mixed with myrrh that might have assuaged His physical suffering. It has been documented that some people lingered for days during crucifixion, their anguished screams fading over time.

Shortly after Herod’s death, Rome put down a rebellion centered in Sepphoris—a Galilean city next to Nazareth. The Roman governor of Syria burned the city and crucified 2,000 rebels along the surrounding roadways. It is quite possible that as a boy, Jesus would have heard the cries of those hapless Jews as they suffered and died. Their execution—like every challenger to Roman authority—was meant to send a clear and unmistakable signal: Don’t mess with Rome lest you suffer a fate worse than mere death!

From the Jewish perspective, death on a cross also represented a devastating spiritual condition: the curse of God. Citing the Law of Moses from Deuteronomy 21:22-23, Paul reminded the Galatians, “cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (Galatians 3:13). Moses was even more emphatic: everyone who is hanged on a tree “is accursed of God.”

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.”

Galatians 3:13

Even that admonition becomes prophetic in light of the Cross. That is because, at Calvary Jesus took on the sins of the world. Hanging between heaven and earth, every sin you and I and every person who ever lived has committed (or will commit) was borne by Him. In that tragic earth-shattering moment, I believe the Father could not even look upon the Son—a spiritual crisis conveyed in the darkness that fell over the whole land for three hours (Mark 15:33). For the first time in eternity, the Son was rejected by the Father. The communion Jesus had with His Father (“I and the Father are one,” John 10:30 and 17:21) was broken.

Jesus was abandoned and alone.

Forsaken—for you and for me.

It is Finished

David’s Psalm 22 alternates between despair and tough faith. It ends with an affirmation of God’s faithfulness and the king’s determination to praise the Lord. The last two verses sound this hopeful note:

Posterity will serve Him; it will be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They will come and will declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has performed it (vv. 30-31).

The Gospel writers do not record the full extent of Jesus’ words on the cross, perhaps because, in His weakened state, His voice trailed off and was simply hard to hear. We know that when He began to recite David’s Psalm, some of those standing nearby thought He was calling for Elijah (Matthew 27:47). But His last words are also drawn directly from Psalm 22. Whereas David’s testimony turned to an affirmation

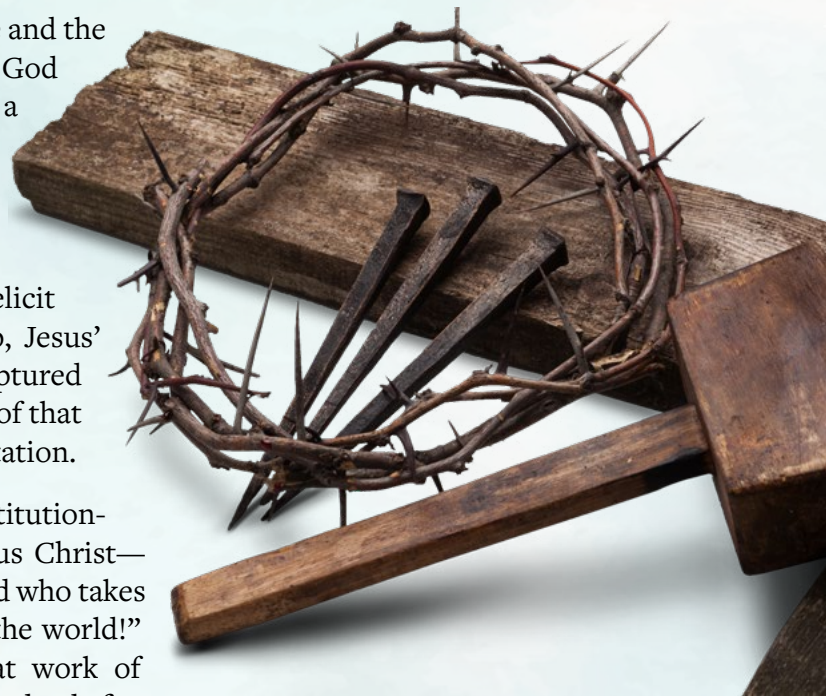
of faith and hope and the assurance that God would perform a great work of salvation that would be told to coming generations and elicit ongoing worship, Jesus’ recitation captured the culmination of that prophetic expectation.

With the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ—“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)—that work of salvation was indeed finished.

He Loved You This Much

When we read about the crucifixion, Jesus’ words focus our attention where His own was always oriented: on His Father in heaven. We ponder the horror of the Son being forsaken by the Father and immediately think of John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

It was obviously the will of the Father to send His Son—and for the Son to suffer and die. Jesus’ own prayers in the garden of Gethsemane demonstrate that despite grief to the point of death, He was determined to always yield to the will of the Father (“Not My will, but Yours be done” – Luke 22:42). But it is a mischaracterization to say that Pilate or the Jews or even God the Father took Jesus’ life from Him. Regarding His approaching death, Jesus testified, “No one has



taken [My life] from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father” (John 10:18).

Why did Jesus lay down His life? Why was it the Father’s will to send His only begotten Son and subject Him to a horrible cup of suffering and death? Because He loves us. More pointedly, He loves *you*.

The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to recognize, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). To the Galatians, he wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Do you know His amazing love? As the song “Amazing Love” says:

I’m forgiven, because You were forsaken... †

THE VALUE OF A PARDON



Gary Varvel

Pardons were forefront in the news in mid-January—with both Joe Biden and Donald Trump exercising that Presidential prerogative in a flurry. Gary Varvel, our friend who usually communicates complex ideas through witty and humorous editorial cartoons, provides a much deeper insight to a pardon offered to us all. We often feature Gary’s art in the *Lamplighter*, and in late February we featured him on an episode of *Christ in Prophecy*.

There has been plenty of commentary about pardons lately. But I was reminded of a true story I heard years ago in church that is both puzzling and illustrative of a spiritual truth.

On December 6, 1829, George Wilson and James Porter, robbed a United States mail carrier in Pennsylvania.

Both men were arrested, tried and convicted. On May 1, 1830 both men were found guilty of six indictments which included robbery of the mail “and putting the life of the driver in jeopardy.” On May 27th both men were sentenced to death by hanging.

On July 2nd, Porter was hanged but Wilson was not. He had some influential friends who pleaded for mercy to the President Andrew Jackson and Wilson received

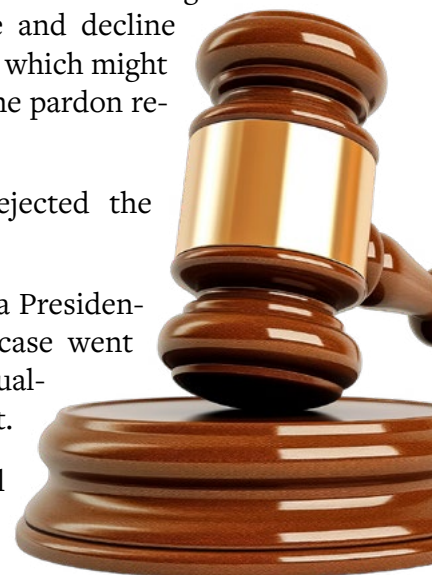
a formal Pardon commuting his sentence to 20 years in prison for his crimes.

According to court documents George Wilson chose to: “... waive and decline any advantage or protection which might be supposed to arise from the pardon referred to.”

Unexplainably, Wilson rejected the pardon.

No one had ever rejected a Presidential pardon before so the case went back to the courts and eventually to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Attorney-General made the argument: “The



court cannot give the prisoner the benefit of the pardon, unless he claims the benefit of it.”

The Court concurred. Chief Justice John Marshall wrote, “A pardon is an act of grace, proceeding from the power entrusted with the execution of the laws . . . (But) delivery is not completed without acceptance. It may then be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered, and . . . we have no power in a court to force it on him.”

In other words, a pardon is a piece of paper, the value of it is determined by the recipient. George Wilson was given a choice: life or death and he chose death.



For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Like Wilson, every person is facing a death sentence because of sin. But John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Because Jesus took the form of sinful man in order to physically die in our place and 3 days later rose to life again, he offers a pardon from our death sentence and the gift of

eternal life. But this pardon is only appropriated to the person who repents of their sin and receives the pardon by faith.

Who in their right mind would reject eternal life? Sadly, most people will do what George Wilson did and decline the offer.

Don't be George Wilson. Pray and accept God's pardon today. †



Art by Gary Varvel

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WHAT HAPPENS NEXT



David Reagan's Review of Max Lucado's Latest Book

There is a very important new Bible prophecy book I would urge you to read. It is titled, *What Happens Next: A Traveler's Guide Through the End of This Age*. Its author is one of Christendom's most beloved writers — Max Lucado.

Those of you who are familiar with Max's writings know full well that he is a very gifted storyteller. This book is non-fiction about what the Bible says about the End Times, and it displays his marvelous writing talents from beginning to end.

I personally found this book to be astounding! The reason is that Max reveals that he has a Pre-Millennial viewpoint of End Time prophecy. Why is that so astounding? Because both Max and I grew up in the same Christian denomination — the Non-Instrumental Churches of Christ, and that group of churches is militantly Amillennial. In other words, they teach that we are living in the Millennium now — that it began at the Cross and will continue to the Second Coming. Thus, these churches do not believe in any future literal reign of Jesus on this earth.

By "militant," I mean that when I was growing up in these churches in

the 1940s and 50s, they would dis-fellowship you if you held any other view of End Time prophecy except the Amillennial one. Many of the people in the Churches of Christ I attended in Waco, Texas, believed that Pre-Millennialists were headed straight to Hell!

Lucado's Background

Max graduated from the leading school of his denomination — Abilene Christian College in Abilene, Texas (now a university). After a brief stint as an associate minister of a church in Miami, he and his wife decided to move to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to become missionaries. They returned to the States in 1987, and the following year, Max became the pulpit minister of the Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas.

Max ultimately became turned off by the legalism of the Churches of Christ, and after a while, he boldly decided to renounce his denomination's teaching that baptism is required for salvation.

That was followed by an equally shocking decision to start using instruments of music in his church's worship services. In 2003, it was decided that the church would drop its

affiliation with the Churches of Christ, and the church's name was changed to simply Oak Hills Church. In 2007, Max stepped down from his position due to health concerns. He is still a member of the church, but he focuses his time today on freelance evangelism and writing.

Max is the author of over 100 books, with over 150 million copies in print. Three times, he has won the Gold Medallion Christian Book of the Year Award. He has been named "America's Pastor" by Christianity Today magazine, and in 2005, he was named by Reader's Digest as "The Best Preacher in America."

A Stunning Departure

To put it mildly, this new book of Max's represents a ground-breaking, all-new viewpoint of his. Needless to say, the writing throughout is enthralling, including his imaginative use of illustrations to make his points.

He begins the book by confessing that he never had a Premillennial pastor or professor and that the seminary he attended taught

that the Millennial Kingdom is the current Church Age. He then explains that the reason for his shift to a Premillennial viewpoint can be summed up in the acrostic, P.O.W.E.R.:

- Promises yet unfulfilled
- Overthrow of Satan
- Word-for-word interpretation
- Early church fathers
- Resurrections in Revelation

The Meaning of the Acrostic

Regarding “Promises yet unfulfilled,” Max states that “God has decreed a future reign of Christ on earth in which we [believers] will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years” Revelation 20:6). He also points out many other promises that are yet to be fulfilled, such as the land promise to Israel and the renewal of nature.

The “Overthrow of Satan” refers to the fact that he still roams the earth as “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31). He will not be dethroned until Jesus returns and begins to reign.

The “Word-for-word interpretation” is based upon the fact that all the First Coming prophecies concerning the Messiah meant what they said, and therefore, the Second Coming prophecies should be interpreted for their plain sense meaning and should not be spiritualized.

His reference to the “Early church fathers” points to the fact that “for the first three hundred years of church history, almost all its leaders were Premillennial.” He provides a detailed list of these leaders and then concludes by saying, “The evidence of history is compelling.”

His fifth point, “Resurrections in Revelation,” relates to the fact that the Bible teaches “two resurrections: one

for the redeemed and one for the rebels. One at the beginning of the Millennium, one at the end. If there is no Millennium, how can there be two resurrections?”

The Sequence of End-Time Events

The book contains a simplified chart of end-time events, and they are presented in the exact order as they are portrayed happening in the Scriptures: the Rapture, the Tribulation, Heavenly Rewards, the Marriage Feast of the Lamb, the Second Coming, the Millennium and Heaven.

In speaking of the Eternal State, Max emphasizes that God is going to redeem all of His creation and not destroy it, as some teach. Here’s how he puts it:

God will redeem every atom, insect, animal, and galaxy to its original glory. To do any less would be the admission of defeat. To destroy the universe is to admit it cannot be reclaimed and renewed. To rescue and redeem it, however, is yet another display of our Maker’s ultimate authority. It will be time for a new start.

An Illustration

Max brings this remarkable book to a close with a reference to a movie in which actor Jack Nicholson “portrays a curmudgeonly New York City author who snaps at anything that moves.” Over and over, he bemoans about life, asking: “Is this as good as it gets?”

Max responds to the question by observing that many people assume it is. But Max says, “No!”

They mistakenly think their fondest moment, deepest joy, and most profound experience happens sometime

between birth and hearse. Someone needs to tell them the good news, “As good as it gets? In no way and by no means. If you are in Christ, this life is as bad as it gets.”

I can say, “Hallelujah!” to that.

Conclusion

I praise God for this book. The Signs of the Times are shouting from the heavens that we are the terminal generation that is living on borrowed time. Jesus is at the very gates of Heaven, waiting for His Father’s command to step out on a cloud and return for His Church.

Yet, the average church in America today is blinded to the signs and has no interest in preaching Bible prophecy to prepare its people for the Rapture. In short, today’s Church is yawning and not yearning for the return of Jesus.

Hopefully, this book, with its author’s great host of admirers, will impact the hearts of many — including pastors — to wake up to Bible prophecy and what it has to say about the End Times.

Maranatha! (1 Corinthians 16:22). †

*P.S.: The book contains 31 pages of suggestions about how to conduct discussions of each chapter.

Max Lucado will be featured on an episode of *Christ in Prophecy* in March. The focus will be on his book, ***What Happens Next***.

You won’t want to miss that episode. But if you do, click the link below to search and watch any episode in the 25-year run of *Christ in Prophecy* TV.



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Tim Moore

NATURE

Devastating fires consumed homes and businesses around Los Angeles and Hollywood. Many who have flaunted their rejection of God now wonder aloud if this is a form of judgment on a region of the country largely given over to godlessness.



Despite ominous warnings that winter would be a forgotten thing of the past due to global warming, frigid temperatures along with snow and ice descended into much of the lower 48 in January. The climate does seem to change—seasonally at least.



SOCIETY

A young woman named Amber Glenn won the women's singles competition at figure skating's Grand Prix Final, the first major win for an American in 14 years. She immediately used her platform to promote her self-proclaiming "pansexualism"—an attraction to people "of all genders."



Teaching has been a trusted and honored profession, and Christian teachers continue to offer salt and light in academic settings. But teachers unions throughout the United States are corrupting public schools into incubators for Leftist and anti-Christian ideology.



SPIRITUAL

On a positive note, the ability for any preacher or evangelist to broadcast the Gospel via the World Wide Web means that a sermon delivered in a small, remote church can reach more people than the Apostle Paul preached to in all of his travels—an awesome and humbling realization.



Due to birthrate disparity and aggressive/militant proselytizing, Islam is expected to grow twice as fast as Christianity throughout the 21st Century—and become the dominant religion in the world by 2070. Many nations in the traditionally Christian West will be majority Muslim soon thereafter.



Peter said “mockers will come with their mocking” with regard to the Signs of the Times and our anticipation of Jesus’ promise to come again (2 Peter 3:3-4). But for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, the Signs foretold in Scripture herald the imminence of Jesus coming for us. The Signs are multiplying so fast that incredible new examples inevitably occur before we can publish and distribute each Lamplighter edition. Are you watching and listening?

WORLD POLITICS

In early December, the Assad regime fell in Syria under the onslaught of Islamist rebels. Hafez and then Bashar Assad ruled as despots since 1971, until Syria descended into a destructive civil war beginning in 2011. It remains to be seen if the new overlords will pose a greater threat to Israel.



In just the past few months, governments fell in France, Germany, and Canada; a despot declared himself the victor of a rigged election in Venezuela; and North Korean troops were deployed to fight in Ukraine. Political fissures are manifesting around the world—multiplying risks at every turn.



TECHNOLOGY

AI technology has advanced so quickly that many traditional professions feel threatened by the immediate creativity of the new computer-generated capabilities. It is expected that writing, art, and even music will soon be dominated by AI-generated content.



President Donald Trump has announced plans to shield the United States with a continent-wide “Iron Dome”—expanding on the technology that has defended Israel from missile attacks launched by its many nearby enemies.



ISRAEL

In spite of declining membership and shrinking budgets, the PCUSA Church found adequate resources to fund virulent anti-Israel protests on American college campuses. It frequently rails against Israel as an “Apartheid” state. Again, it sees no irony in its decline amidst such activism.



At long last, Israeli hostages held in Gaza for over 15 months have begun to be released—exchanged for up to 61 Palestinian terrorists each. As of February, Hamas still held close to 80 innocent men, women, and children. Many question whether it will ever relinquish its best bargaining chip.



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