



# ZWTF

Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

Volume 7, Issue 8

## ROMANS Part 143

Chapter 16:10-11

### Aristobulus, Herodion, Narcissus.

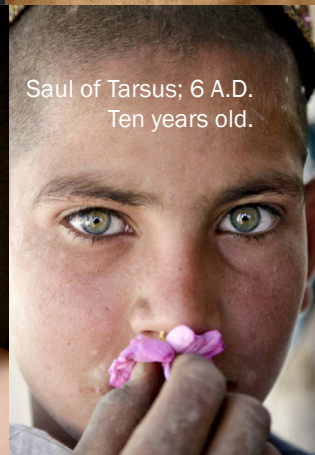
Aristobulus; AD 35



Herodion; A.D. 50



Narcissus; A.D. 33

Saul of Tarsus; 6 A.D.  
Ten years old.

**Greet those who are of Aristobulus. 11 Greet Herodion, my relative. Greet those of Narcissus who are in the Lord.**

Note that it is not Aristobulus who is greeted, but rather “those who are *of* Aristobulus.” This probably means that Aristobulus was dead; I’m going to treat him that way; as far as I am concerned, the man has assumed room temperature. Some commentators think that Herodion was of the Herod family. With a name like that, one would tend to think so. It is possible, say the commentators, that, if this guy wasn’t a direct relation, then he was connected somehow with the Herodian dynasty. As this is the common thinking, I tend to resist it. Paul calls him, “my relative,” and that’s what I’m sticking with. I’m sticking with Scripture. The Herods were infamous. I think that this guy was simply saddled with a bum name. For instance, there are many more people than you would imagine, today, who bear the last name “Hitler.” Says a guy named Matt Ogens at the website [www.vice.com](http://www.vice.com)—

I have a friend from college who married a guy by the last name of Hitler. I remember visiting them and seeing the name on the buzzer. I would get Christmas cards saying, “Happy Holidays from the Hitlers!”, and there was something quirky about it.

I think the same thing happened to poor Herodian. Why shouldn’t it have? The body of Christ is loaded with quirky people with quirky names who do quirky things. Narcissus, too, is probably dead because only his household is greeted, but not him. Judging from his name, he probably died while admiring himself in the mirror. But then again, let’s do the unexpected God thing. I think he was lowly and depressed and that he was graced by God with the name “Narcissus” as a kind of divine irony. The meaning is still there and still applicable, it’s just ironic. The guy was the furthest thing from a narcissist on planet Earth; this is what I think. He hated himself, Narcissus did—until that particular day in Rome when he first heard Paul’s message. Names

in Scripture do mean something, and the meaning is deep, but in this case it is irony. We all know that God has a sense of humor. For instance, I remember that, when I worked for the Postal Service, one of the crappiest, poorest, and meanest streets I carried mail on (it was on City Route 2) was called “Pleasant Street.”

As much as I love the names and the people here in the sixteenth chapter of Romans, I’m struggling with dead believers (who were dead even at the time Paul wrote) and some guy whose name might as well have been “Satanion.” Therefore, I will break the mold and remake these fine gentlemen after my own image. In other words, I will fictionalize everything about them except for two things, which are the main things anyway: they were all members of the body of Christ, and they all knew Paul.

My first order of business is to resurrect Aristobulus and Narcissus. I don’t really care about their households, but only them. I will gladly *greet* their respective households (per Paul’s instruction), but it doesn’t mean that I must necessarily like them. I can also love them without

“What they did *before* they died interests me; they were both much too stagnant after their funerals to matter much.”

liking them—and I do love them. But Aristobulus and Narcissus are the ones whom Paul thought worthy of mention. I’m not *really* going to resurrect them, so let me correct that; I’m going to write about them before they died. What they did *before* they died interests me; they were both much too stagnant after their funerals to matter much. I think that they were brothers in the fraternal sense as well as the spiritual. Why had they both died by the time Paul wrote? If they were brothers, it could have been a congenital condition. Perhaps their parents both smoked two packs of cigarettes a day and therefore Aristobulus and Narcissus eventually succumbed to the poisonous powers of second-hand smoke. I am going to treat them as fraternal brothers because it will make my life easier. Treating them as twins will double my enjoyment.

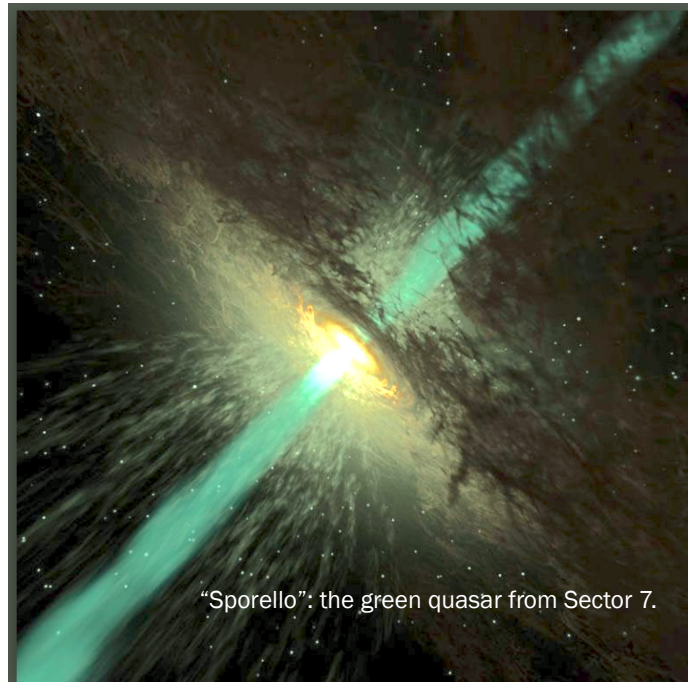
Herodian interests me only because he is a relative of Paul’s. Herodian could be a relative merely in the sense

that he was a Jew, but I believe that he was a closer relative, perhaps a first or second cousin. I believe that Herodian mingled with Paul at family picnics, even when Paul was still little Saul and had yet to absorb the finer points of tentmaking.

\* \* \*

**B**efore the disruption of the world, God bantered with His Son and a handful of celestial messengers near a moon of Saturn. God said, “What do you think of the names ‘Aristobulus,’ ‘Herodian,’ and ‘Narcissus’? But here’s a simpler name of only four letters: ‘Saul.’ What do you think of those names?”

One of the angels standing nearby said, “Are those the names of stars? We know of Orion and Pleiades and Betelgeuse, but these that You have just mentioned are new. It is a strange arrangement of consonants and vowels that You have put before us this day, and none of us are quite sure what to think of it. Might ‘Saul’ be the green quasar from sector seven? I think it starts with an ‘s.’”



“Sporello”: the green quasar from Sector 7.

God said, “You may say that they are stars, yes, that is not entirely wrong. But they are not *currently* stars.”

This went completely over the angel’s head—and this particular angel, Virgo, had a very high head. Virgo said, “So You are saying that these will *be* stars?”

“Yes” said God.

“Oh, *I* see,” Virgo lied.

“What do the names *mean*?” asked another angel known as Stratosphere.

The Son of God piped up and said, “Better to ask what the names *represent*. Better to ask how something that is not a star *becomes* a star.”

“Right You are,” said God.

Stratosphere was now completely lost and could be seen nervously picking at a nebula.

God said, “It’s two Greeks and a Jew.”

This pronouncement was followed by thirty-nine years of complete and utter silence. “The silence was very awkward,” said Stratosphere later in an interview with *The Andromeda Times*. Finally, one of the bolder and wiser angels, Magellan, asked, “What is a Greek? What is a Jew?”

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, looked down toward Earth. He did not look particularly happy then. Many would later recall Him in that moment as melancholy. The Son of God wished that someone would change the subject. Knowing this (or course), God took a deep breath, looked far away and said, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ, according as He chooses us in Him before the disruption of the world, we to be holy and flawless in His sight, in love designating us beforehand for the place of a son for Him through Christ Jesus; in accord with the delight of His will, for the laud of the glory of His grace, which graces us in the Beloved.”

God said all of this in one breath, barely pausing to acknowledge marks of punctuation. The countenance of the Son of God immediately brightened, but the attending celestial beings who heard this pronouncement looked as though the Dwarf Elliptical Galaxy had just been pulled out from under them. Magellan unwittingly matted and framed the wholesale celestial ignorance when he said, “Isn’t that the comet out in Q23?”



“Nrakanshamblevodrock”: the comet in Q23

There then came a very deep and loud rumble, voluminous and stupendous enough to capture everyone’s attention. “What in the world is *that*?” said Virgo.

“Cripes,” Magellan joked. “It sounds like the disruption of the world.”

\* \* \*

About four-thousand years after this, on the planet Earth, a woman named Amaltheia (this is a Greek name meaning “to soothe”; in mythology, it’s the name of a goat who was the foster mother of Zeus)—one of the descendants of Adam and Eve—pushed a son into the world. (This occurred in the land of Sparta of Laconian, just inland from the Gulf of Argolis.) Her husband Aither (this is also a Greek name meaning “bright, upper air”; in mythology, it is the name of one of the first gods, the son of Erebus and Nyx; he is the god of the pure, upper air that only the gods breathe, as opposed to the gloomy, lower “aer” breathed by mortals)—her husband Aither had been out plucking olives for that day’s lunch and martinis. When he returned to find three people in his family instead of the usual two, he asked Amaltheia what would be the name of this newest addition. Amaltheia immediately

“Aither’s eyes widened to the size of summer figs, but the spirit of God caused him to say, ‘Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy.’”

said, “Aristobulus,” for she had been thinking about it for some time. She was just about to tell Aither what “Aristobulus” meant (it meant “best-counseling”), when there was a rumbling in her belly. “Oh, my goodness,” she said, “there appears to be another one.” Then out popped another son. Aither’s eyes widened to the size of summer figs, but the spirit of God caused him to say, “Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, for ‘Narcissus’ has just entered the world.”

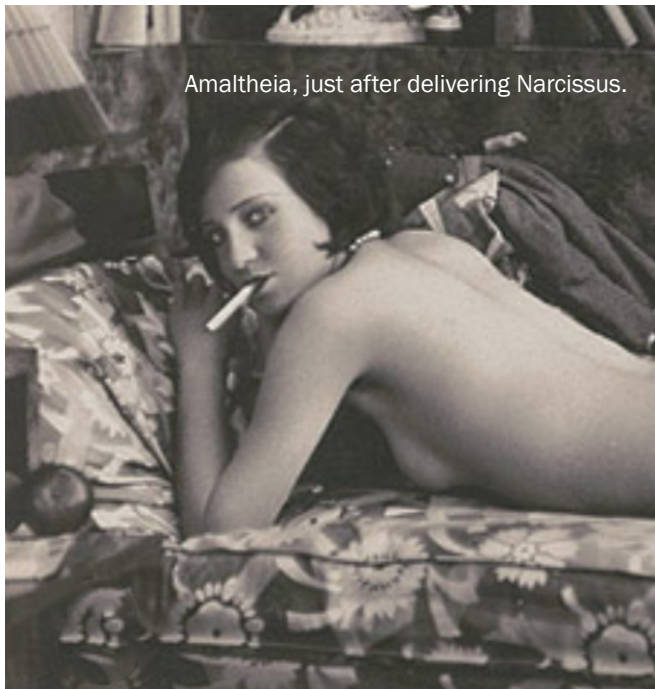
Amaltheia could hardly believe that her husband had come up with the name so quickly, having no idea that the spirit of God had overcome him. Aither would never tell her that it was the spirit of God, for it was the first time he had done anything that had so immediately

impressed his wife. Knowing that the name “Narcissus” was derived from the root word *narke*, meaning “numbness; sleep,” Amaltheia furrowed a brow. In mythology, however, this was the name of a vain youth who fell in love with his own reflection and eventually was turned into a kind of lily or daffodil flower known as the *narkissos*. This thought quieted Amaltheia’s heart, and she asked Aither for another cigarette.

“My love,” said Aither, “this will be your twenty-second tube of tobacco today. Can I make you a martini instead?”

“Oh, I know that I smoke a lot,” said Amaltheia, “but what harm will it do?”

“Very well,” said Aither, and he lit up his thirty-first cigarette since breakfast.



Amaltheia, just after delivering Narcissus.

\* \* \*

God looked at Magellan who still, after all these years, could barely grasp even the edges of The Plan. But he was much further along than some—but we will speak no more of Virgo at this time. The Son of God had gone to Earth the year before, and was now a weanling in a nothing-burg on Earth called “Nazareth.” In Tarsus, another of Adam’s race (though of an earthly father) had entered the eon, in April, a boy whom his parents had named “Saul,” meaning “asked-for.”

“So let me get this straight, Your Majesty,” said Magel-

lan. “The Son went down to Earth to become as Adam...”

“Check.”

“...In order to redeem that race down there from sin and death.”

“Check.”

“There are rumors among us that, in order to carry out this plan, He must enter death Himself. This cannot be true. Please say it is not.”

“We will discuss this some other time,” said God.

“There was much excitement in the throne room last April,” continued Magellan, “at the coming of this Saul. I sense that this one is important.”

“Correctly do you feel it,” said God.

“But these two—Aristobulus and Narcissus. Really? We all believe that they are nothings. My instincts tell me that they will eventually die of second-hand smoke from their parents’ incessant suckage upon those strange-looking sticks. And why is the second one named ‘Narcissus,’ for it is clear to us all, based on the arrangement of the chromosomes, that he will grow up to fairly despise himself.”

“You shall see, my little one. In the meantime, note carefully what happens today in the province of Galatia, a ten-day journey by foot south of Tarsus, in the city that has been deemed ‘Antioch,’—as it must be deemed—for it is of great importance to the eventual reconciliation of the evil ones now opposing Us.”

“Really? Can anything good come out of Antioch?”

\* \* \*

In Antioch, of the Galatian province, a ten-day journey by foot from Tarsus, a Jewish couple with the surname of Abramowitz brought a son into the world by the usual means, and yet, being generally uneducated, they could not decide what to call him. Jacob and Gellah argued about just about everything. Gellah’s chromosomal arrangement had lent her a wicked sense of humor, and so she said, “We shall name him Herodian.” She giggled into her hands as she said this. As for Jacob, he looked as though an ox had just trampled his wheat crop.

“How can you even joke about something like that, Gellah? We hate the Herodians. We must give him a noble name. I vote for Abraham.”

“Abraham *Abramowitz*? My husband, what are you trying to do to the boy?”

“Me? What are *you* trying to do to him?”

“He shall always have attention brought to him.”

“Yes, but not the admirable variety.”

Neither Jacob nor Gellah knew that God had decided eons ago, before the disruption of the world, that their son

would be called “Herodian,” and that this same boy would one day become a glorified one and would assist God, at His right hand, in first desolating and then reconciling a malevolent spiritual universe to Himself. The couple’s arguing about the name was essential, however, as this was also pre-planned before there was even a humanity upon the earth. It was so pre-planned, in fact, that some of the angels yawned when they finally saw it happening.

“We have known for millennia that the name would be ‘Herodian,” said Virgo to Magellan. He sounded bored.

“Of course we did,” said Magellan. “We’ve known that for certain. It *has* to be ‘Herodian,’ to fit The Plan.”

“But isn’t it interesting that the parents don’t know that yet, and that they’re talking heatedly about it?”

“I would call it ‘amusing,’ perhaps. *We* know the outcome, but they do not. His Majesty requires that they muddle through this awkward process. What do they call it? *Arguing?*”



Sector 9, close-up.

“I was sprucing up Sector 9 out in Sagittarius.”

—*Virgo*

“I wish we could go down and just tell them.”

“We mustn’t, Virgo. As you should know, there must be struggle. Say, do you know *how* they eventually decided upon ‘Herodian?’”

“No, I do not! Did you find out? Please tell me!”

“I *did* find out. Two-thousand and fourteen years ago at the Triangulum Convention. You were not in attendance—for some reason.”

“I was sprucing up Sector 9, out in Sagittarius. But surely you can tell me.”

“And yet I cannot.”

“Oh, come. Why?”

“You must see for yourself. So watch. It is happening now and it is a tragic laugh. ‘Pathos,’ we call it.”

\* \* \*

“If his name is *not* ‘Herodian,” said Gellah, “then you can just forget about trying to make another one of these for at least a year. And don’t put it past me, mister; I’ve had just about enough of this business.”

Jacob cradled his newborn, then, and said, “Welcome to the eon, dear Herodian.”

\* \* \*

**I**t was at one of the Spring family picnics in Tarsus that Herodian first met Saul.

“I’ve heard about you,” said Herodian. My mother tells me that you pull the legs off of ants.”

“It isn’t true,” said Saul. “I stomp them. I eliminate them quickly.”

“But what have you against them?” asked his cousin.

“God has given us jurisdiction over the creature world, and such creatures as this are a nuisance at events such as these, where there is food.”

“Ants need to eat, too.”

“No they don’t,” snapped Saul. “Not on *my* watch.”

Later, as the two popped olives on the banks of the Berdan River, Herodian looked deeply into the eyes of his cousin. This is not something that ten year-olds generally did, but a certain compulsion came upon the soul of the boy named after the hated dynasty.

“There is something about you,” said Herodian. “I have never met you before, so forgive me. But today I meet you for the first time, and even though I see that you are a sour and arrogant person—because of the ants, primarily—I sense that the stars align for you. And even for me, if you can believe that.” Saul met his gaze, but said nothing. “It is as though you and I will someday do meaningful work together. I can’t even believe I’m telling you this. It sounds crazy, I know. I’m talking from the top of my head, cousin. I say...is any of this registering with you?”

“No,” said Saul. “None of it.”

\* \* \*

**T**wenty-three years later, Jesus Christ had died on a Roman cross, despoiling principalities and powers while ensuring the eternal happiness of every son and daughter of Adam—at the same

time laying the groundwork for the eventual reconciliation of the universe. He had lain in a borrowed tomb for three days, but then the spirit of God roused Him, vivifying His spirit and raising His body. The crucified Man then exited the tomb to begin proclaiming, to His friends and anyone else who would listen, His victory over sin and death.

In the meantime, Saul had become a Pharisee who no longer stomped ants, but people. He hated the sect of Jesus-followers, for he considered them stupid, unenlightened, miseducated. He thought nothing of persecuting, beating, jailing and then killing them. In fact, one of Jesus' followers, Stephen, had publicly blasphemed Saul's forefathers, accusing them of killing the prophets, and then—blasphemy upon blasphemy!—seizing upon his terrible opportunity to rail against the very priesthood employing Saul, laying upon them the impossible crime of crucifying their own Messiah. Unable to bear another syllable of the sacrilege, the temple leaders led Stephen to the stoning pit, laying their coats at the feet of Saul, who not only approved of the murder but wished he could throw a rock himself.



Stephen.

\* \* \*

In the meantime, Herodian, living now in Antioch, heard from some of the persecuted yet enlightened dispersion out of Jerusalem that Jesus really was the Christ. His spirit, instantly, knew that it was true. Later that summer (the summer of '37), he moved his family to Rome, for his uncle had a business there selling bath fixtures.

\* \* \*

“Watch now how His Majesty moves people,” said Magellan to Virgo. “See how not only the stars align, but the people of Earth. Watch!”

\* \* \*

While in Rome, during the first month of his stay, Herodian met two men in an adjacent shop who fashioned and sold dining pottery. They were Greeks and—oddly enough—twins. They had strange names that it took him a long time to remember.

\* \* \*

In Jerusalem, Saul received papers from the priests to persecute the followers of Jesus as far as Damascus. En route, something that was planned long, long before then in celestial councils—before the disruption of the world—occurred. Something occurred on that road that would change the lives of Herodian, of Aristobulus, of Narcissus and their families—as well as the trajectory of every spiritual force of wickedness that then wreaked havoc among the celestial hierarchy.

It would even change the lives of people living in the year of 2018 A.D.

\* \* \*

**“Greet those who are of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my relative. Greet those of Narcissus who are in the Lord.”**

—Saul of Tarsus, *from Corinth to Rome*, '57 A.D.

—MZ

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