

## “Are You at this time restoring the kingdom?”

### CAN'T BLAME THEM FOR ASKING

One of my favorite lines in the book of Acts is the disciples' question to the soon-to-be-ascending Lord in 1:6: "Are you at this time restoring the kingdom to Israel?" Such practical thinkers! "Um, we know You're about to go back up to



heaven and everything, but, should we, like, make any long-term plans? I mean, can You give us a hint so that we can know for sure whether or not we should worry about our mortgage next month?"

Stupid disciples. Didn't they realize that the 1000 year kingdom was a figure of speech? I guess not. ■

## Fact!

When Jesus said in Luke 17:21 that "the kingdom of God is inside of you," he was not dismissing a political reality. He was speaking to the Pharisees, (vs. 20) who thought humans could only be reformed by outside laws. Yet Christ would give Israel a new *heart*. Thus, the kingdom would come from inside out, not outside in. And yet: IT WOULD STILL COME.

# Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

"If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love, I am a clanging gong" --1 Cor. 13:1-2



Two out of three isn't bad.

## The book of Acts is transitional

From the beginning of time, God had in mind to bring two gospels to this planet. Why? He had two very different things to teach us about Himself. The first lesson was that He was so perfect and righteous that no flesh at all could ever please Him, let alone boast in His sight. The second lesson was: "I am so full of love and grace that not only will morally bankrupt losers be with Me forever, but I will put several of them in charge of the universe." Obviously, there would need to be a significant adjustment period between these two radically different themes. You and I would need ten volumes to jump that chasm, but God did the job in one: the book of Acts. Well? He created Earth in six days, did He not?

Picture the book of Acts as an X, and you will know more about Acts than most seminary graduates. In the first few chapters, Israel is flying high at the door of the Kingdom and the nations are nowhere. But by chapter 12, Israel's fortunes have deteriorated: Stephen has been stoned, the disciples scattered, and James

killed. In chapter 9, however, God calls Saul, and by chapter 13, the nations are rejoicing in unprecedented grace. By the end of the book, Paul is in Rome writing Ephesians, and Israel is set aside (Acts 28:25-28), until the complement of the nations may be entering.

Could you have said as much in so few words? ■



## Jesus was the Christ; we, too, are anointed

God planned from long ago to appoint many christ. Don't get nervous. "Christ" is a title. It means, *anointed*, which itself means, "an official consecration by means of oil." When a priest

or a prophet was anointed, he was consecrated (declared sacred, set apart) for a God-appointed task. It was symbolic. The priest or prophet was literally *christed*. Thus, anointed ones are *christ*s.

Jesus Christ was anointed by God to be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29). We are no longer slaves, but sons (Gal. 4:7). To us, then, God is "Abba; Father" (Gal. 4:6). We do not hesitate to call ourselves sons of God, yet to think that we are christ's terrifies us. Let it rather bless. A son rests his head upon his Father's bosom; a christ goes forth with a task. We are sons *and* christ's, anointed to bring the celestial world in subjection to God's familial feet. ■



## Clouds: practical as all get-out

In the presence of His disciples, Jesus departed Earth from Olivet. "While they are looking, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him up from their eyes" (Acts 1:9). Why the cloud? It hid Him; He did not want His disciples witnessing the rest of His startling ascent. When we are changed, we will be snatched away together with the dead "in clouds" (1 Thess. 4:17). Why clouds? Same reason as above: to keep the world out. Some things are just too spiritual for the unsanctified gaze of earthlings. ■



## Paul gradually replaces flesh with spirit

We cannot imagine how oddly Paul's pronouncement in 2 Cor. 5:16 would have struck contemporary ears:

**"We, from now on, are acquainted with no one according to flesh. Yet even if we have known Christ according to flesh, nevertheless now we know Him so no longer."**

Up until this time, the only way to God was through flesh: Israel. People of the flesh need signs of the flesh. Don't condemn Israel for this; it aligns with their calling,

and God "signed" them big-time.

Paul's gospel, however, weans us from flesh to spirit. This sounds hard, but it's actually easier than flesh. Flesh changes with the weather. The folks who saw Lazarus walk from the tomb had to re-entomb him and cry all over again. When we're in full realization of the spirit that makes its home in us, we enjoy a continual source of power and light. In other words, it's the opposite of the weather.

We are now blessed with "every spiritual blessing among the celestials" (Eph. 1:3).

Tap into *that*, and live. ■



### ANTIOCH : NEW SPIRITUAL CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

In the beginning of Acts, Jerusalem is God's headquarters. Later, Paul operates out of Antioch (11:25). The Greek elements of "Antioch" are IN-STEAD-UPHOLD. God's truth is now upheld *here*, among heathen, instead of in Jerusalem, where apostasy reigns. ■

### Q&A

**I have heard you say that we are supposed to be subject to the superior authorities. And yet in Acts chapter 4, Peter tells the Sanhedrin that he must obey God rather than man.**

Paul is the one—in Romans 13:1—who says we are to be subject to superior authorities. Peter ignores this for the simple reason that, as he stands before the Sanhedrin, Romans 13:1 has yet to be written. Peter behaved in accord with a then-applicable kingdom truth (the gospel of the Circumcision—Gal. 2:7-8), namely, that true religion trumps human politics. By the end of Acts, however, the kingdom is postponed (Acts 28:28) while God does His grace thing (Acts 20:24) among the nations (Rom.



11:25). Grace presently requires us to bake cookies for our political enemies, rather than, say, egg their houses (Rom. 12:20).

Later, Peter himself recognizes the new era, writing in 1 Peter 2:13-14—

**"You may be subject to every human creation because of the Lord, whether to the king, as a superior, or to governors, as being sent by Him ..."**

I know this is not nearly as fun and satisfying as civil disobedience, but it sure beats prison. ■

## Acts and Counter-Acts

THE DOOR/WINDOW PRINCIPLE: ANCIENT BUT GLORIOUS TRUTH



Talk about "Good News/Bad News." Later, bad things happen to Paul. And yet God counters these trials not only with evangelism opportunities, but new truths. These truths come, not in spite of Paul's woes, but because of them. In other words, Paul's trials inform rather than hinder his new revelations:

**14:19-20—Paul stoned at Lystra**  
**2 Cor. 5:16—Paul repudiates flesh**

**21:31—Paul about to be killed**  
**9:15-16—Prophecy fulfilled: Paul testifies before kings**

**28:11-31—Paul imprisoned in Rome**  
**Eph. 3:8-11—Paul reveals the secret of celestial glory**

Isn't this how God works in your own life? He locks a door only to open a window. Just when you think you have reached bottom, God unveils a treasure that you surely would have missed had you not been face-down in the dirt.

*O, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God!*  
(Rom. 11:33) ■

The book of Acts could be nicknamed: "Counter-Acts." For every evil that befalls Israel, God counters with something good for the nations:

**7:59—Stephen stoned**  
**8:1—Saul introduced**

**8:1—Disciples scattered**  
**9:3-6—Saul called**

**12:2—James killed**  
**13:2—Saul separated by spirit**

# Rants & Stuff

The Apostle Paul says we should not murmur (Philippians 2:14). Therefore, I shall rant.

## From the crucible: 2008-2010

You walked to Pittsburgh two summers ago because the energy you applied to your marriage somehow dissipated. It rose into the atmosphere and vanished like daytime heat, at night, when the clouds shimmer and there is nothing to bounce shimmers back. The shimmers keep rising until nothing remains of them. Only the stars shine then, but the stars are far too distant to warm a single soul down yonder, where the people live.

It occurs to you 25 miles into your first day of walking that you are simply not interested in walking to Pittsburgh. (*Only 130 miles to go*, you say to a raven.) You ignore the wise advice of Ralph Waldo Emerson (“Foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds”) and continue your course. A miraculous thought might occur to you, you think, on a back road en route to Pittsburgh.

After a 34-mile first-day effort, the legs churn daily in twenty-mile increments, making Pittsburgh attainable in seven more days.

Besides the Quick Shop clerks selling Gatorade and Luna Bars, fellowship evades you on the way to Pittsburgh. The solo venture does this; how could you have forgotten that? Luna Bars are specifically female in character (“created by and for women”), but the body of a man walking alone to Pittsburgh takes feminine vitamins through the cell walls until membranes smell like pomegranates.

At times, time is incurable except to stare at the legs and admire the motion and the lay of anatomy. If the legs are tan, it facilitates gazing. The great front muscles striate with a step, then push the foot forward toward another acceleration. This happens 40,000 times in a day—you checked.

Some people wave. Most of the necks crane because of your backpack and a determined gait. If they stopped, you would tell them. But none of them stop, so the marvel goes unsaid. None of them love you, so stopping is not in them. If any of them loved you, then surely they would stop. But since none of them love you, they continue southeast on Highway 51, and will arrive in Pittsburgh at noon, three days ahead of you.

Most of the waitresses are pleasant. They ask your destination, and you yield the



information. You would rather ascertain *their* state of happiness, so you inquire, and they smile; not many people care. You extol their coffee, then tip them exorbitantly. Off then. Again. Go.

Darkness looms, and the Motel 6 leaves the light on. The advertising is honored, but the door to your new home reveals vacancy. There is no reason to cry, for a vacancy is what you paid for.

It is raining on a Friday when you walk into Pittsburgh. There is a street fest downtown, so that some tents are making shelter. Artists expose their souls here, and a particular one captures you. The rain disappears and the city goes silent as “Twenty Views From My Sofa” unveils portraits of lights and walls, so beautiful, capturing artwork, with candles yet unlit behind brown leather comforts, the shelter meaning hope, happiness, and a soul behind the lens so apparently warm that it rises through the matting, falling back to where you stand, happily spent. At last, you smile.

It is not good for a man to be alone. ■

## MY APOLOGIES

For the first time in 17 years, I am significantly behind in my correspondence. Thank you so much for your patience. To those who have sent support to keep this ministry

going: it would *not* keep going without you. THANK YOU from the bottom of my heart. You'll be hearing from me. ■

## NEW BOOK FROM DANNY RUSSINO

My friend Danny Russino has written a wonderful book called *God's Truths Recovered*. This book is packed with information, touching upon every major spiritual truth we hold dear.

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