

Scriptural Truths

E-Mail Meditations

The Lord Will Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

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John and Mr On

Introduction

From that which can be found from research, October 26th 1967 was a hot humid day in Hanoi. US jets flew over the city seeking to hone in on their intended target. Suddenly, one of them was hit by an anti-aircraft missile and as the aircraft was plunging to the ground, the pilot bailed out landing in Truc Bach Lake on the outskirts of the city. Because of the heavy gear he was wearing he sank to the bottom of approximately sixteen feet of water and to his horror, discovered his arm and leg were broken. Due to his life preserver he rose to the surface of the lake but was entangled with his parachute which was floating on the top of the water. He was strapped to his parachute with a broken leg and arm in the midst of enemy territory. Death from the enemy or drowning seemed inevitable.

The Bible informs its readers that “God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not” (Job 33:14). This was the second time within a few months God had made John aware of the uncertainty of life. On July 26 1967, on the USS Forestal, a Zuni rocket accidentally fired and jetted across the aircraft carrier hitting John’s aircraft which burst into flames. While seeking to escape, the bomb exploded and the result of the fire was 134 sailors were killed and 161 injured. John had escaped death as God’s loud speaker (death) surrounded him. It is most unlikely that any of those who died that day just after 10:30 AM thought they had had their last natural sleep or worked their last shift. The question posed is, “Where were they at 10:32 AM?” In a moment they passed from time to eternity, from carefree living to stark reality. There was no time for preparation for death is the quickest one way journey man can take and they were about to take it. Life on this side of eternity was all over before they even knew it.

Now God spoke to John again, reminding him that this life was very uncertain. Like John, there are individuals and by near death experiences or accident, or death of a loved one, God has reminded them that time can end without warning, and for an instant there were thoughts concerning eternity. They may have been concerned for a time and then the concern fades away. In time another incident happens and again the thought of eternity comes to mind, and again the anxious thought recedes in time.

The Rescuing of John

Unaware of that which was happening some 200 meters away, a man was getting ready not only to bring him help (if John wanted it) but was ready to do all he could to save his very life. On the road round the lake Colonel Mai Van was driving his car to the bomb shelter. He saw the aircraft hit and fall into the lake and also saw the pilot fall into the water. A decision was to be made. Should he seek to rescue this man who before was intent on destroying his city’s buildings and killing its citizens, his fellow Vietnamese, or should he just let him drown and save himself while the bombs dropped around him?

Despite much understandable opposition from others, Mr On jumped into the water and bringing a large stick with him got to where John was floating unconscious, approximately 200 yards from the shore. When Mr On got to him, he cut the cords of the parachute with a knife and swam, pulling John who was barely conscious back to shore. He was in a dreadful state medically. John survived the near death experience and in time returned to his homeland.

The Greater Amazing Story

After the rescue Mr On was asked, “Why did you save an enemy putting your own life at risk?” Mr On, who owed this American nothing, said “Compassion”. The American had done nothing for him and a matter of minutes before would have killed him, but Mr On saved his life. John was in danger of dying at that moment. Death was not a distant someday but a present reality. Helplessly he struggled to get loose from the cords of the parachute, he was frantic for he had already sunk twice. That which was needed was someone to free him from the tangled cords, able to untangle them and not only be able but willing to seek to save John. Then a sight gave John hope, a man he knew nothing about had swam some 200 meters to where John was. He had a branch of a tree and when he arrived to where John was he cut the ropes, and with John weakly hanging onto the tree he pulled him to safety. He saved his life.

It causes me to think of a greater rescuing. John, who was unable to save himself and about to die, helpless and unable to do nothing for himself. All his education in the Navel Academy could not help him, neither his father or grandfather, both Admirals in the US Navy, could help him, his fellow pilots could not help but watch in horror as his plane crashed into the lake. What a picture of every single human being,

What a picture of everyone who is in the sea of hopelessness and in danger of dying physically under the wrath of God. Those who have never accepted the sacrificial substitutionary offering of Christ for themselves, depending on Him alone for salvation are in danger of eternal damnation. This world has untold billions of individuals who are struggling with the dominating power of sin and a guilty conscience. They know they are in danger of being banished from God for all eternity but are honestly trying to get free, but no matter how they try they still have lingering questions: “have I done enough?; perhaps if I just try harder; maybe if I read the Bible more and try to follow the law and the beatitudes”. Like John, they are trying to get loose from the power of sin. Sadly and to their frustration and despair, they inevitably find they are more enslaved and have more feelings of guilt because they could not do as they desired.

The clear fact illustrated by John is he was helpless to save himself, he was doomed, he was no match for the tangled cords nor the sinking in the water. Then Mr On came, how foolish had John said, “I do not need your help”; I’ll do it my way”, but totally weak he completely depended on the help of Mr On. That is the only way of salvation, complete dependence on Christ. Not Christ and works or church going, or penance, or any thing an individual can do to get free from the bogging down of sin. The words of the old hymn still ring true:

Christ is the only Saviour mighty to save,
He who suffered once for sins, and sank neath the wave;
Sing how the wrath of God on Calvary's cross He bore;
How by death He conquered death and lives evermore.

Christ is the Saviour, He never will fail;
All hope to save oneself could nothing avail;
Man is a total wreck, can never reach the shore.
All who trust in Jesus Christ are saved evermore.

Christ in that hour of darkness, lost ones to save,
Braved Himself the ocean depths, and battled the wave;
Though all Jehovah's billows rolled o'er His head,
Son of Man and Son of God, He rose from the dead.

On the cross of Calvary for 180 minutes, the Son of God endured the full penalty for the sins of the whole world. As John the apostle wrote, “And not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:2). There is not an individual who has, is or will ever live who is beyond the reach of God’s salvation. Wise, very wise is the individual who stops struggling to save themselves and puts their trust in the Mighty Saviour who alone can save.

Conclusion

In time Mr. On and John met as friends. In time the John whose life was saved became John McCain, the US Senator in the United States government.



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