

46-60

46-As long as we are thinking about His timing. Consider the methodical nature of how Jesus approached His death. For the early part of His ministry He short-circuited things that would have hastened His death. But, when the time was appropriate He announced to His entourage that, "I go to Jerusalem to die" and everything He did from that point on almost guaranteed that the collision was going to happen, just in His timing. Fascinating.

47-God having a checklist of accounting is actually a very comforting thing. It may not at all be the threat that I considered it to be when I was younger. The book of Joel teaches that. If you start the book it tells you of the specific critters that are decimating the land. Locusts and cankerworm and caterpillar and palmerworms are said to be the threat. Then you turn to chapter 2 and God runs that same specific litany when He says, "I've been paying attention and I'm going to give you back what the locust (check) and cankerworm (check) and caterpillar (check) and palmerworm (check) have taken from you." That's awfully comforting. It's a whole new view of God "looking down from above taking accounting..."

48-The Bible people held the secular position of a person to be a loss less value in considering their "spirituality" than many of us do. Today we often assume that some Doctor or Professor or accomplished professional should make a better teacher than a janitor. That wasn't at all true in the Bible world. The secular vocation of a person seemed to have very little linkage to the respect they received as a student of the Word. Paul? A tentmaker. The father of the Pharisees and a massively respected Bible voice was a man named Hillel... a wood cutter by occupation. Do you get it? A rail-splitter was the most honored commentator of the spiritual life of his age!

49-"The Elijah Message" does not at all represent a harsh, dividing, exclusionary concept at all in the Bible. Maybe you were raised (as I was) in a system that made you feel that way, but that posture just doesn't have a leg to stand on in the Text. Go back and read it. "The Elijah Message" as predicted in the last verses of Malachi is actually a message of inclusion and embrace and acceptance. When Malachi wrote that he never proposed anything like that at all. What a breath of fresh air!

50-The priests were the only ones in the nation that were not supposed to "rent their kids back from God." The Hebrew phrase is PIDYON HA-BEN- "the

redemption of the firstborn." It was a ritual that parents were to enact in order to remind them that their children were only on loan from God. He claimed them all. But, the Levites were never to enact that for they were different in the land. They couldn't be "rented back" for God had unique claim on each of them for life already.

51-We can look at things and never see what's there. The sky is one of the easiest to consider in this truth. Psalm 8 says that if we go out and really "look" at the sky we will, inevitably, be driven toward God. In 1595 the famed astronomer, Johann Kepler, explained why he had turned away from theological studies when he wrote his professor, Michael Maestlin. "Through my effort God is being celebrated in astronomy." We can look at the sky or we can really look at the sky and see God.

52-Dr. John R. Platt said we have over 100 billion brain cells and each of them have thousands of interconnections to others. And his claim is that each individual cell has the capacity to store the memory equal to 30 times the letters held in the volume of an encyclopedia set. About 3,000 years ago Psalm 139 tried to tell us that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." I guess!

53-If you only have a "nickel's worth" or a "penny's worth" of faith that is enough! God can get it done with a tiny bit of faith because of the "reciprocal nature of faith." It comes from the Greek word for "faith" that is called PISTAS. *Pistas* implies reciprocity. You give God a penny and He'll respond with a nickel of His faithfulness. At that exchange rate you can risk, perhaps, two cents the next time and God comes back with a dime. When you step up to risk a nickel at the next opportunity He comes through with a quarter... and that frees you up to try a dime's worth... That's the *Pistas* pattern.

54-We are only "created equal" in one way. That is the equality of our need. There was some un-named kid who grew up next to Michael Jordan who didn't have the muscle structure or height or DNA... They weren't equal. The man born in the middle of the jungle of Borneo in the year 1317 wasn't at all equal to someone in the famed Kennedy family of Massachusetts who were given so many privileges just by being born in the right family line. It's just a reality that in many ways we are not equal. But Matthew 20 shows us our equality in God. Our ultimate reality is that He knows our deficit and the distance of our deficit is really irrelevant to Him. Amazing.

55-The flood of Genesis is actually not only disaster and catastrophe. It is an evidence of the goodness of God in at least three ways... 1) It shows that God

is, ultimately, in charge. 2) It was a tool of salvation. (I Peter 3 changes our focus from all that was lost to the fact that "eight were saved by the flood." That's powerful.) 3) The flood reminds us that God will, ultimately, rid this universe of disease. He can, and will, eradicate evil.

56-The "rich young ruler" in the Bible lost all of his dignity and ran to catch up to Jesus because he was jealous. I really believe that, but you might be surprised at who he was jealous of... children. Really! I believe that all three gospels that report the story try to tell us that. Matthew 19, Mark 10 and Luke 18 all share the that the story evolves right on the heels of Jesus blessing children. There was something about how Jesus so easily accepted the children that triggered a sense that something was missing in his well-ordered life. He'd worked so hard to "earn" the approval of Heaven and here these kids (who had earned nothing!) seemed to get it for free. That is a marvelous insight into the famous story.

57-There are several stories in the gospels where Jesus "forced" confession out of people... and the fact that He went "digging" proves that He already knew what was going to be uncovered. (One story like that is in Mark 5 where He turns to say, "Who touched Me?") If He already knew the truth, why did He need them to confess? What did it benefit Jesus? Nothing. Confession isn't for God to gain information. I need to confess so I can open up my side of the pathway to dialogue and friendship. Confession is for me, not for God.

58-As hard as it was, in Luke 2 Mary needed to know that, in the end, her heart would be pierced because of Jesus. It was a truth she needed to hear so that the ultimate out-play of the story wouldn't be completely unexpected. It was as though the doctor was giving her the full picture of the diagnosis. No one wants to hear it, but you can live the remainder of your life more proactively if you know the whole truth.

59-A miracle, in itself, really doesn't prove anything. Pharoah's buzzards did them. Acts 19 says the "seven sons of Sceva" did them and God was not at all impressed... and we shouldn't be, either. The Bible says that God will, at times, work miraculously in this world. But, it also tells us that we should be careful in evaluating miracles and find better and clearer ways to "try the prophets" and test out anything that claims to be representing God.

60-There are only six miracles of Jesus reported to have been "Sabbath miracles." The very fact that the gospel writers made sure that you would

know that it was a miracle performed on the Sabbath must be significant. You never find a day of the week assigned to any other healing miracle, there are no designated "Tuesday" miracles or "third day of the week" miracles. Now for the bomb- we can't be sure about the full condition of Peter's mother-in-law in Matthew 8, Mark 1 and Luke 4, but we do know that other five were absolutely not miracles of immediate need. Not one of them was a crisis situation, they were all chronic conditions that could have waited until Sunday or Monday... no one was going to die. So, why did He "cross the lines" and set Himself up for criticism? I believe it's because He truly wanted to. He wanted to challenge and confront the narrow expectations of the conservatives!