

ALL EXPENSES PAID

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Almost 100 years ago, a poor Russian farmer dreamed that someday, he and his family would immigrate to the United States and start a brand new life. For years, he saved what little he could from his meager income, reasoning that if he could just get ONE ticket, he could earn enough in America to send for the rest of his family after a little while. However, as much as he saved and sacrificed, he still did not have the price of that boat ticket.

One day a man he never met, learned of his predicament, and sent our Russian farmer a letter. It said simply:

“Dear Michael, I have heard of your desire to go to America. Enclosed is an open-dated ticket for passage on the Doria Queen, leaving Moscow for New York. Have a safe voyage”.

The letter wasn't signed, and there was no return address, and curiously, not even a postmark. At first, Michael thought that it might be a practical joke, but when he checked it out, he found it was for real. He celebrated with his family, packed some clothes, and took with him a few loaves of bread and a few pounds of goat cheese to eat on the way.

When he got to the dock, he couldn't believe how huge this ship was! - It was a floating city! “How could such a thing float?”, he wondered to himself. However, obviously, it did float, and so he boarded on the verge of unbelief; it was a dream that materialized under his feet. He scarcely could take it in!

Once the ship was under way, Michael would often walk along the rail on the top deck and look out over the ocean, which stretched from horizon to horizon in all directions. He often passed by the dance hall, the three swimming pools, and the tennis courts, the four movie theatres... This WAS a city on water! He took a few bites of cheese, and tore a bit off the loaf of bread he had, and gave thanks to God for the anonymous benefactor who sent him the ticket that made his dream of going to America come true.

On the last night of the voyage, Michael went topside to get a view of the New York skyline as soon as it came over the horizon. Already the glow from the lights of the city could be seen reflecting off the atmosphere. He ate the last bit of goat cheese as the ship's steward walked by. Having never seen this man in the dining hall, the steward was puzzled, because he always made it a point to personally greet every guest, and he usually got to know everybody on board, during these long voyages. Thinking that he may have just forgotten this man's face, the steward asked him, “How did you enjoy the voyage?” Michael said, “It was very interesting and exciting; it will be good to be in America”. “And did you enjoy the food, sir?”, the steward asked. Michael replied, “Oh, I could not afford to eat in such an expensive restaurant, or go to those extravagant shows... You see, the ticket was given to me; I ate bread and Feta cheese I brought with me from home”. Shocked at the man's reply, the steward said, “But sir, didn't anybody tell you that all your meals, admission to the dances and the shows - that everything was included in the price of the ticket?”

That Russian farmer is like most of us Christians. He has the ticket in his hand, and he's going to get to his destination, all right, but he fails to realize the true value of that ticket. Jesus Christ is our benefactor - only he's not anonymous; his name and all of his “aliases” are written in blood - in red ink - all over that ticket (the Bible). Have you read it? How many of us really understand? If we have the “ticket”, and it is paid for, why is it that we do not claim the gifts, the peace, the joy, the prosperity, and the healing that is promised?

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;... He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed”. - Isaiah 53:4a-5 (KJV)

And why is it that we try to fill a spiritual void; to satisfy the hunger of our souls with stale bread, goat cheese, and sawdust burgers?

“It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”.-Luke 4:4b (KJV)

“This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die, I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give thee is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”. - John 6:50, 51 (KJV)

And how is it that we fail to ask for what will freely be given by our Father, God?

“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?”
- Matthew 7:9 Luke 11:11

Some of us lay hands on a brother and hope, instead of claiming what is rightfully ours to ask for under the covenant:

“And when he called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease”.
- Matthew 10:1, Mark 3:15, 16:18, 1 Corinthians 12:9 (KJV)

“Let us therefore come boldly before the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”. - Hebrews 4:16 (KJV)

And why do we hesitate to do the right thing, when the odds are against us, or the situation seems to be impossible? The “ticket” clearly states:

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”. - Philippians 4:13 (KJV)

“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the father may be glorified in the son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it”. - John 14:13, 14 (KJV)

We serve an all-powerful and all-mighty God, who created the entire universe with his Word. He is sovereign over nature, and he is in the business of casually performing miracles. Remember Joshua?

“Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.... So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day”. - Joshua 10:12, 13 (KJV)

Therefore, we see that God will LITERALLY move heaven and earth for his people who lay claim to

the covenant promise. And just in case the reader is a bit skeptical, the “long day of Joshua” is confirmed by legend stories from civilizations on the other side of the planet that claim they had “a long night” around-about the same time, In fact, the rotation of the earth WAS affected on October 25, 1404 BC, according to computer models analyzing the orbits of Earth and Mars - Mars having come very close to the earth in ancient times - the closest being in 701BC, when the interaction was apparently great enough to pull (or boost) the Earth into a wider orbit, and thereafter requiring an adjustment in the calendar from 360 days to 365-1/4 days. For years and years, scoffers said that “the long day of Joshua is impossible”. Was it really? NASA astronomers are re-evaluating their uniformitarian assumptions.

While some things in the Bible might be symbolic:

“I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets”. - Hosea 12:10 (KJV)

A careful exegesis (analysis) of the Hosea passage reveals that it is NOT symbolic; it is NOT a “type”, NOT a “shadow”, and NOT a parable; and if it is not any of those, then what is it?

“... Let God be true, but every man [including scientists and secular historians] a liar”.
- Romans 3:4a (KJV) (brackets mine).

I believe that Joshua had a long day - literally! I believe *“... There were giants [Nephilim] in the Earth in those [Noah's] days”*. - Genesis 6:4a (KJV) (brackets mine). I believe that Grand Canyon was carved out of soft mud by a lot of water in a short amount of time (during the flood 4,400 years ago), and the Colorado River just flows through the crack. I believe that there are the remains of a big boat up on the mountains of Ararat in Turkey - The Turkish government thinks so; they built a highway up to it, and a visitor's center. Turkish archaeologists have found human skeletons in the area 15 feet tall. There WERE giants in the earth in those days; “men of renown” it says in the KJV.

And so I am persuaded that every jot (pronounced: “yott”) and tittle in the Bible is true, and my faith needs a lot of help.

“... Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief”. - Mark 9:24b (KJV)

We all say “I believe”, and we are told:

“... God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith”. - Romans 12:3b (KJV)

“And the Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith”. - Luke 17:5 (KJV)

When we read God's Word, are we afraid to believe that it is REALLY meant for “me, personally”? Are we like the Russian farmer on a big boat, eating Feta cheese, and stale bread, when the voyage includes the glorious meals? Are we so ignorant of God's love, or doubtful of his ability to bless us that we think he can't or won't:

“... Restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the palmerworm... [all the time wasted, time spent in prison, time away from God]”. - Joel 2:25a (KJV) (brackets mine throughout).

We are good stewards of the “talents” the Lord gives us, when we seek his face and do his will, and this is our “tithe”; our *“reasonable service”* (Romans 12:1). God says “Test me!”:

“... Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David John Todeschini". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.