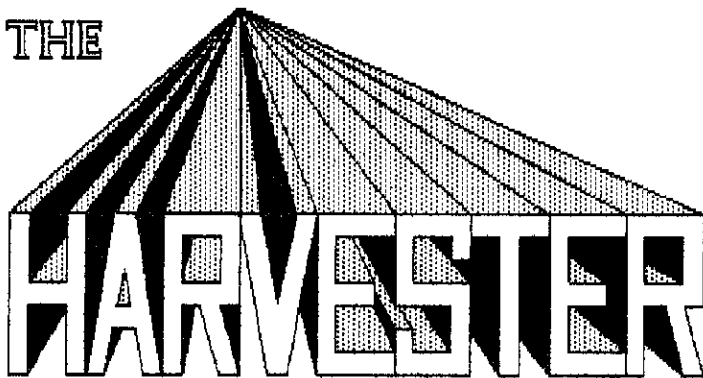


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*"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)*

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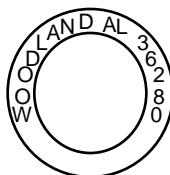
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## WAS LIFE FAIR TO JESUS?

How many times have you heard the phrase, "Life isn't fair"? When we think about our own situations, we tend to dwell upon our misfortunes and how we have been mistreated. We have suffered injustice, haven't we? Many of us probably feel that "life" in general has dealt us an unkind and a somewhat unfair hand. But before we begin to feel sorry for ourselves, let us consider our Savior. Was "life" fair to Jesus? Did He ever suffer any injustice or maltreatment?

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I suppose if any episode of Jesus' life here on earth demonstrates whether "life" was fair to Him or not, it would have to be the story of the crucifixion. Herein we can witness some of the most critical points in the life of our Lord. So, let us now consider the following events:

1. Jesus was betrayed by Judas, one of His apostles (Matt. 26:47-50). That was not right, was it? It was deceit of the worst kind. We want to think we live in a world of trust and that a close associate would never double-cross or sell-out another. Yet, it happened to our Messiah! In our minds, we are saying, "That was not fair!"

2. Peter denied his Lord three times (Matt. 26:69-75). This was perhaps the most cowardly act committed by one of Christ's disciples. How could Peter, of all people, deny any knowledge or awareness of the man from Galilee? Was he afraid of suffering for his Lord's sake? Did he already forget what Jesus said in Matt. 10:33, "*But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven*"? Whatever his reason, Peter was not being fair to his Master.

3. On the basis of false witnesses, Jesus was found guilty by the Jewish leaders (Matt. 26:59-66). No matter what evidence was presented, the Jewish council was going to find Jesus worthy of death. Oh, to what extent men will go to prove the innocent guilty! They will fabricate lies and back it up with more tales. In our judicial system today, this is obviously unjust and unfair.

4. A notable prisoner was released in place of God's Son (Matt. 27:15-21). Does that seem fair to you? To let the evil one get away and punish the innocent one? Of course not! But only mankind would demand something bad for something good and then feel satisfied about the exchange. This certainly speaks volumes about man's perspective on life and his character in general.

5. Pilate refused to let Jesus go free (Matt. 27:22-25). After much questioning, the governor determined that Jesus was very innocent, at least to the point of not requiring the death sentence. However, in order to please the masses, Pilate agreed to the crucifying of the prisoner. Who would claim this treatment of Jesus was fair? But when authority is more concerned about what the public thinks instead of doing what is right in the eyes of all, then foolishness will prevail.

6. The Roman soldiers mistreated their prisoner (Matt. 27:27-31). Note carefully to what they did and decide whether it was justified. They stripped Jesus. They mocked Him. They spit upon Him. They also smote Him on the head. All of this was done in jest. Was this fair? What if guards of today treated their prisoners that same way?

7. Jesus was crucified between two thieves (Matt. 27:38). That was not fair at all, was it? It was made to appear that Jesus was on the same level as the common thieves that hung on either side of Him. Yet one thief recognized the absurdity of the situation when he

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proclaimed, "*This man <Jesus> hath done nothing amiss*" (Lk. 23:41). It was not right that our Lord should have been treated like a common criminal.

8. Finally, think about the moment when God forsook His Son in His darkest hour (Matt. 27:46). Was this fair? In our human mind, most of us would say no. We would never forsake our own child in his time of need, would we? So, from our standpoint, it does not seem fair that the Heavenly Father should abandon His only begotten Son.

But, before we decide whether "life" was fair to Jesus at His time of death, let us remember that there are two perspectives or two ways: God's and man's. Both are very different. God told us, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*" (Isa. 55:8,9). Thus, when God forsook his Son on the cross, it may seem unjust to us but it really was fair.

Please read carefully the fifth chapter of the book of Romans. In that passage

you will find that it was God's way (and will) for Jesus Christ to be sacrificed for our sins. What could be any fairer than for God's perfect Son (2 Cor. 5:21) to be exchanged for our imperfect lives? Who else but Jesus could have paid the ransom for our numerous and dreadful sins (Matt. 20:28)? How else could God atone for our iniquities than by sending our Savior down to earth and then have Him lifted up on the cross (John 3:14) as our Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7)? In all fairness, God forsook his Son only long enough for Jesus to taste death for every man (Heb. 2:9) and then he raised Him on the third day (1 Cor. 15:4) to bring salvation to mankind!

Was life fair to Jesus? Well, if we are talking about how mankind treated the Messiah during the time of the crucifixion, then no, life was not fair. But if we look at how each incident was part of our Father's way, our answer is different. God's way is always fair and right. *"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he"* (Deut. 32:4). We should all be blessed that God decided it was fair for Jesus Christ to offer the free gift of life to all men (Rom. 5:18).

RAY McMANUS

**A college education seldom hurts a man if he is willing to learn a little something after he graduates.**

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who gave Daniel a word of encouragement after the king gave orders for him to be thrown in the lion's den?
2. How long did the Israelites grieve for Moses?
3. Why would no one speak openly against Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles?
4. What is the shield in the armor of God?
5. What did the writer of Ecclesiastes hate about the efforts of his labor?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. What relation was Methuselah to Noah?  
GRANDFATHER (Gen. 5:25-28)
2. How many sons did David have by the time he was crowned in Hebron? NONE (2 Sam. 3:2)
3. Jesus said it was not what went into a man's mouth that made him unclean. What did He say made a man unclean? WHAT COMES OUT OF HIS MOUTH (Matt. 15:11)
4. What belongs to those who are persecuted because of righteousness? THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (Matt. 5:10)
5. In Zechariah's prophecy, what would the Lord send into the house of every thief to destroy it? A FLYING ROLL (Zech. 5:1-4)

## ONE LOST SHEEP

*"How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray."* (Matt. 18:12-13)

We have heard this passage time after time, and understand its meaning well. My Dad presented an idea from these verses that was new to me in one of his recent sermons (1999) -- I pass it along to you now.

His thoughts centered around 1 Peter 2:26 - 3:7, which speak of the interactions between husbands and wives. He said that Jesus' example of "one lost sheep" fit into the marriage relationship in this way: if everything in your marriage was perfect, except one thing, one gripe, one perpetual problem, then you should not accept that "there will always be problems", but go after that "lost sheep".

I had never thought of this parable having any other meaning besides just saving lost souls. The marriage relationship is not the only thing it could fit. Really, it would fit anything in our lives that could qualify as a "lost sheep" -- a secret sin, a need for more patience, more control of the tongue. If there are things in our lives

(continued on page 8)

