

“The Three Thimbles”

March 10, 2019

Job 9:1-12

Photography began in the late early 1800's. And the first photograph was taken by a Frenchman Joseph Nicéphore Niépce (pronounced Joseph Nisafour Neipse), who took this picture from his upstairs window looking out onto his estate. The picture is 193 years old. And why do we take pictures anyway? Isn't it because you want to preserve a memory? Oh, by the way, this picture took eight hours to create.

Well, I discovered a number of photographs in the Bible. And photographs in the Bible have a unique aspect to them. They are all taken beforehand; oftentimes long before it happens. It's like we have a memory made before the event ever occurs. And here's an example. This is Zechariah 8:23 *“Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt (hem) of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”*

You see, this isn't really a photograph. Instead, it's what God saw or God sees. It's the future. And it will happen one day. So Bible photographs are unique because they are all taken beforehand.

The Bible is the most up-to-date Book ever written. It's so up-to-date, in fact, things like this were recorded five hundred years before Jesus was even born. And it won't take place; it won't be fulfilled until sometime after today. It won't be fulfilled until after the Rapture of the Church. And it won't be fulfilled until after the Tribulation. So, the Bible, the most-sold Book in the entire world, continues to be the most up-to-date Book ever written.

From God's viewpoint, Zechariah 8:23 is a fact. He *sees* it. From our viewpoint, we also see it. But, to you and me, it's a picture of things to come.

Now, what does the LORD say about the future of Israel? Zechariah eight is actually a list. It contains eight promises. And these eight are among the most astounding promises God ever made to the Jews; all of which have yet to come to pass. This one in verse twenty-three, is the eighth. It comes right after the promise that, one day, everyone will dwell in perfect safety in Jerusalem, which will then be called “the City of Truth.”

People from all Gentile countries around the Gentile world will arrive in Jerusalem, having these words on their lips *“We will go with **you** because we've heard that God is with **you**.”* Emmanuel, God is with us, will be most prominent expression of the day. All over Israel you'll hear the words “God is with us; Emmanuel.” You see, there's coming a day when Jesus rules as King of Israel with His throne will be set up in Jerusalem. That's a picture of the future. And it's a fact. And the LORD, in His grace, has given hope to the Jews; hope to the Gentiles; hope for the future. And all He asks is faith.

Someone once wrote (Oswald Chambers) *“Never ignore the things which cannot be explained ...”* (Baffled to Fight Better – Job 28). Nobody knows how. Nobody know when. But this *will* come to pass. You see, it's all true. It's a promise. It's a written promise. And, like all of God's promises, the one thing He commands from you and me is that we exercise faith. In Jewish communities all of the world, optimism reign should supreme. It's all over the Bible because God cannot lie. He can't go back on His word. And He can't renege on His promises. So, faith and optimism; that's what the Bible contends for. Here you see the LORD's heart for Israel.

Now, with Zechariah 8:23 as a background, open with me to Romans chapter eleven and verse thirty-two. I've titled today's message "The Three Thimbles." What are they? And why are they important? Shall we pray?

Now, it's likely that you won't be able to locate the three thimbles as quickly as you'd like, so please follow with me at verse thirty-two. Romans 11:32 *"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. (33) O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed [paid back] unto him again? (36) For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."*

Romans, as you know, is a letter to First Century Roman Christians. It's the most Christian and the most Christ-centered Book in existence. Now, a whole lot of it covers the doctrine of salvation. And, if you've been with us for the past year, you know that *this* is what it looks like.

Romans 1 says all Gentiles are sinners.

Romans 2 says all Jews are sinners.

Romans 3 teaches that we've all fallen short of the glory of God.

Chapters 4 and 5 teach salvation by grace through faith in the blood of Christ.

Chapter 6 says all Christians are perfectly united to Jesus Christ.

Romans 7 describes the life and behavior of a self-reliant Christian.

Romans 8 explains the work of the Holy Spirit.

Then, three chapters, Romans nine through eleven present God's olive tree, Israel, along with an explanation as to why the Jews, generally speaking, continue to reject Jesus as their Messiah.

Chapter 9 tells us that salvation is only possible because of God's sovereign grace.

Romans 10 tells us that God is not through with the Nation of Israel.

And Romans 11 reminds the Gentile Christians that they've been grafted in. We, Gentiles; we've been joined to the LORD's olive tree, Israel. [Adapted from <https://bible.org> "God Is Great; You are Not" by Pastor Steven J. Cole July 17, 2013].

Now, if you would, go back with me to verse twenty-six and see again the LORD's heart for Israel. Romans 11:26 *"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written (in Isaiah 59:20), There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: ..."*

There is nothing more important than being saved. And, it's the LORD's solemn promise that one day, the entire nation of Israel will receive Jesus as their Messiah and be saved.

Now, verse thirty-two. Romans 11:32 *"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."* What is Romans 11:32? It's Paul's final comment on everything he's said since the beginning of the letter; including the LORD's olive tree. And his conclusion is quite revealing. The entire world stands in unbelief; which means, then, that the only way to be saved is through God's mercy; verse thirty-two. Romans 11:32 *"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."*

There is nothing more necessary than the mercy of God. Mercy means a judge is showing favor to a guilty person. The secret to finding forgiveness with God is to throw yourself on His mercy. One man puts it this way *"Wrath is God's righteous response to evil, but it is not his heart. His justice is the stem; but His mercy is the flower."* [<https://www.desiringgod.org> "Have Mercy On Me" by Pastor John Piper].

And what do you think might be the one thing that displeases the LORD above almost every other sin? It's the sin of unbelief. Your sins carry you to Hell. But at the top of the sin list is unbelief.

And at the same time, the one thing that pleases the LORD is when you exercise faith; when you believe what *He* says. All Unbelievers, Jews and Gentiles; we are all alike; we're all in the very same condition. We've all got the same problem. We are all equal in unbelief. So, we all need the exact same thing: mercy; God's mercy. And your only mercy seat is the Man Christ Jesus. He and He alone has paid for your sins. You see, God concludes that, because we're all in unbelief, we all need His mercy.

Have you found it? Are you a recipient of the mercy of Heaven in the Person of Christ? Because, without it, you're still in a state of unbelief. It's that simple.

So, the thimbles.

My wife collects thimbles. She's got them from around the world. And she keeps them out, just above our kitchen stove, so they can be viewed constantly. Now, I'm presuming you all know what a thimble is used for. It's for pushing a needle through a fabric with your thumb. I have another use for them today.

The final verses of Romans eleven are these last four verses. They form what we call a doxology. All of life was designed by the LORD to produce a doxology. And, as Paul comes to the close of these wonderfully inspired words on the doctrine of salvation, he feels something so deeply that he can hardly contain himself. That's what a doxology really is. When you are so impressed with something about God that you have a hard time expressing it; then your words become a doxology. And so he writes this doxology; verse thirty-three.

Romans 11:33 "*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? (36) For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.*"

The story of the history of mankind will end in a doxology. The purpose for your life is doxology. And when you come to the end of your life, Christian, your tongue will sing a doxology.

Think, for just a minute, about how much of your day today is being spent in worry or fear or doubt or anxiety; even agony over problems that you're facing. And suppose you leave this world in the next 24 hours. And, suppose you enter into the joy of the LORD in Heaven. What will you wish you'd done during those times of trouble and grief? Will you wish you'd spent more time worrying, more time doubting; more time agonizing over your troubles? Or, will you wish you'd spent your days appreciating the LORD? A doxology is your personal expression of appreciation to God.

Something like this.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise him, all creatures here below;

Praise him above, ye heavenly host:

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Folks, if there's no heart in your singing, it's not a doxology. You see, a doxology requires an audience. And *He* is your constant audience. All of life, all of your life, is like a grand orchestra that's being conducted by Him and played for Him.

It comes from two Greek words: δόξα, meaning glory; and λόγος, meaning word. A doxology is a word to the LORD in light of something you are thinking regarding Him. And there are about 25 doxologies in the Bible. And one of

them is right here. And it's made up of two exclamations, three questions, and one conclusion.

Two exclamations:

- a) *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*
- b) *How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

Three questions.

- a) *Who hath known the mind of the Lord?*
- b) *Who's been his counsellor?*
- c) *And who hath first gave to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?*

And one conclusion.

"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

Here are three thimbles. I intend to fill them up for you.

The first one I'm going to fill with Kahn Academy. Any idea how many subjects Kahn Academy teaches? 25 Math classes plus Math for every school grade; 12 Engineering courses; 8 History classes; English Grammar; 5 courses in Economics and quizzes and tests for every one of them.

Then, alongside Kahn Academy inside the same thimble I'm putting 190 universities that have free online courses for you to take. As well, all the Encyclopedias of the world. By the way, there are 25 more websites similar to Kahn Academy.

In the second thimble, I'm filling this one with all the combined knowledge of the Great Literary classics of the world. And I'm putting alongside them all the Classical and modern musicians, artists, composers, arrangers, and all their music and art. I'm also filling this second one with all the Medical knowledge from Hippocrates until today.

In the third thimble, I'm putting in computers, phones, touch-pad technology, eye-tracker technology, along with all

the radio signals in the world and all the accumulated knowledge of NASA and the space program.

And here's why? Because you can put *all* the knowledge and all the wisdom of mankind into three little thimbles compared to the wisdom and knowledge of the LORD. Look again at Paul's doxology. Romans 11:33 *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"*

God's wisdom and God's knowledge has so much depth that we can't even begin to mine it out. His judgments are incomprehensible. No one knows the mind of the LORD. And His ways are past finding out.

Put all the knowledge there is with all the wisdom of mankind into three thimbles because that's how small it really is when we compare it to the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

Please find with me your bulletin insert and follow it with me. This is titled "Symphony of Praise" by Steve Green

The composer and conductor of the universe

Steps before the orchestra of God

Creation lifts their finely crafted instruments

As all in heaven wildly applaud

The seasons well-rehearsed begin with His downbeat

And on his cue the sun trumpets the dawn

The whirling winds swell in a mighty crescendo

With each commanding sweep of His baton

The oceans pound the shore in march to His cadence

The galaxies all revolve in cosmic rhyme

The fall of raindrops all in wild syncopation

As lightning strikes and thunder claps in time

*The symphony of praise
Conducted by the Ancient of Days
May each creation great or small
Lift their voices one and all
In the symphony of praise
Heaven waits in hushed anticipation
The great I AM then turns to mortal men
A massive chorus robed in spotless garments
Offer up their song of praise to Him
The glories of God explode in full orchestration
As all creation joins the thunderous refrain
“Worthy, Worthy
WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN”*

Video -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ih8mnBCVHpA>

That’s a doxology! All of God’s creation is playing as one cosmic orchestra while He conducts and He watches and he listens and He enjoys it.

Now, last, Romans 11:36 *“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.”*

Does anything exist apart from Him? Can anything exist without Him? James 1:17 *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness [no change], neither shadow of turning.”*

I Corinthians 8:6 *“But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”*

“For of him, and through him...” We are alive through His power. He holds you together. He sustains your breath and your thoughts and your strength. It’s all by Him. And it’s all through His enablement.

I Corinthians 4:7 *“...what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”*

Revelation 4:11 *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”*

Now why? Here’s why. Jeremiah 32:26 *“Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, (27) Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?”*

No, nothing is too hard for God. He’s actually the God of the impossible.

Folks, He’s a wonderful, loyal, trustworthy, all-powerful God. And, if you’ve experienced His merciful forgiveness, then you have a huge reason to sing; to sing a doxology. And sing it to Him because He’s worthy of your worship.

“God is in control. Nothing else really matters. God's ways cannot be fully known to mortals; and in the degree that they are known they are not fully comprehended; but true faith receives all that God does in full trust and confidence. He who gave his Son to die for people will grant eternal happiness to every possible recipient of it, provided only that people believe and obey him.” (Coffman)

Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, was crucified, died, was buried and rose again the third day so that anyone, Jew or Gentile, who will believe that His death was for their sins, that soul will be saved, forgiven, and enter into a right relationship with God.

Today is the Day of Salvation. If you haven’t repented and believed on Christ, why not believe on Him today. His mercy is everlasting. He will save you if you call upon Him for His mercy.

And for every Christian, here is a word of reminder that the key element of your life is a complete surrender to the LORD. *“I submit to One Whose character I know but Whose ways are obscured in mystery...”* (Baffled Job 33).

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 358 “Because He Lives”

