

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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The Weeping Savior

Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! (John 11:32–36, KJV 1900)

We all too habitually think of God as being utterly void of tender feelings or concern for us mere mortals. Taken to its errant end, the deist belief that God created the material universe, including man, set it all in motion, and then summarily withdrew, becoming only a spectator in the world that He created leaves a believer void of comfort or hope. While rejecting that God is ever involved in the lives of His people as the deists believe, we struggle with the idea that He cares or is actually involved in our lives. We sometimes sing the hymn, "Does Jesus Care?" And, though the song reminds us that He does care, and deeply, tenderly so, do we think in those terms when we face our trials and struggles?

For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him. (Job 23:14)

I find it amazing how that God can direct men to write so much so clearly in so few words. First, take note that Job, even in his dark season of loss, took comfort in believing that God was performing something in his life.

To put this passage and our theme for this week into perspective, let's step back for a moment and ponder this verse. Job doesn't tell us what is and what is not "appointed" for him; he simply tells us that God is faithfully performing whatever He has appointed for Job.

"...and many such things are with him." In one simple clause in one sentence, Job refutes two major errors that people embrace regarding God; 1) deism, the idea that God is never involved in anything in our lives, and 2) fatalistic predestination, the belief that God causes everything that occurs in our lives, or that He actively and with purpose "Permits" everything that occurs with the intent of using everything that occurs in our lives in some way for His glory. Job didn't write that **nothing** that occurred in his life was "appointed." Neither did Job write that **everything** that occurred in his life was appointed and manipulated or controlled by God.

You will occasionally meet the brave soul who actually tries to wrap his/her mind around this Biblical teaching and tries to believe it. However, in

many cases, even this believer will think that only a few such matters throughout his/her life are "appointed" and "...with him." Maybe three or four things in all of one's lifespan might be so regarded. Job also rejects this idea; "...**many** such things are with him," not "few...." By the use of this one word, this verse rejects the two errors already mentioned, deism and fatalistic predestination, but it also rejects the belief that God only rarely bothers to involve Himself in our lives.

Each of these errant ideas imposes some form of moral judgment against God.

1. The deist view paints God in similar manner as the ancient gnostics who taught that their god was wholly unknowable and as wholly unapproachable. For God to be in charge of "...many such things" that He appointed for our life rejects the deistic view of God. He is not aloof or unconcerned.
2. The fatalistic predestination view, not the Biblical doctrine of predestination, paints God as a duplicitous and immoral villain, not as a loving and righteous Savior. If God either caused or consciously considered every action ever committed by a human, or for that matter an angel, and chose which wicked actions He would either cause or "Permit," and orchestrate for His glory, we cannot avoid the moral culpability, not to mention the diabolical moral contradiction, of God actively allowing for a supposed greater good such depraved human actions as the Holocaust or the many other cruel and depraved acts of twisted moral rogues. For the fatalistic view to be supported by this verse, the verse must be rewritten to "...**all such** things are with him." Sorry, that is not what the verse states, and fatalism, however its few believers twist words and parade one logical fallacy after another to give a semblance of credibility to an immoral belief makes God the most immoral of all creatures. It finds no support for its ideas or for its immoral god in Scripture.

3. And the lukewarm belief that God rarely involves Himself in our lives falls short of the verse, because "...**many** such things are with him."

I have observed with more than passing interest that, in recent years, a few modern fatalists, playing the logical fallacy of the horns of the dilemma, or the excluded middle, attempt to brand anyone who refuses to accept their fatalism as "Virtual deists." They are more than a "Virtual fatalist," but disagree with them, and, according to them, you cannot be anything other than a "Virtual deist." I strongly reject this logical fallacy, as I reject the near endless parade of logical fallacies that fatalists constantly use in their failed efforts to wash the moral filth off their belief and deceive the naïve into thinking that Scripture actually supports their error. Job states a simple fact that the fatalist cannot accept and hold to his error. God does appoint some things in our lives, and "many such things"—not no things or all things that occur in one's life—are with Him.

When we examine the moral issues, the fatalist's god is as void of loving sentiment and legitimate care for His people as the deist's god. Neither of these gods can claim support for their existence in Scripture and Scripture's teachings about the one and only true God who created this world, and who remains involved in loving and moral intervention on behalf of His beloved children.

When Jesus, God living briefly on Planet Earth—from His conception to His resurrection and ascension (For that matter, He continues to live in heaven in that resurrected and now glorified human body)—in a human body, observed one of His beloved disciples, Mary, and her friends grieving for their loss of Lazarus, we read a highly instructive and comforting description of His reaction.

1. He groaned in the spirit. The Greek word translated "groaned" means "...to have an intense, strong feeling of concern, often with the implication of indignation..."¹ Yes, He was indignant at the cruelty of death even temporarily claiming one of His beloved children. He was so indignant that He went to death Himself to break death's grip for ever for His beloved children. He fully understood and felt their grief.
2. He was troubled. Once again, we visit the word behind the word. The first century Greek word translated "troubled" means "...to cause acute emotional distress or turbulence—to cause great mental distress."² The King James words serve

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 293.

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida....314.

the intent of the original words quite well. Given these two reactions in Jesus, a reaction that Scripture consistently supports and affirms, we cannot rightly embrace any of the errors named, or any others for that matter. Consider Paul's (I believe the author of the Book of Hebrews) words. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." (Hebrews 5:7) Scripture never depicts either God, our "Father" in heaven or Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, but now resurrected, glorified, and ascended, as being unfeeling or uncaring aloof beings or as amoral and diabolical manipulators of every act of black human depravity.

3. He wept. Jesus shed His own tears, perhaps primarily for them in their present grief, as He knew that He would momentarily raise Lazarus from the grave. (Psalm 56:8)

The study of Jesus weeping is far more demanding than our first thought of the shortest verse in the Bible. We honor the passage only by coming to realize that we have a tender and compassionate God and Savior who cares deeply and involves Himself intimately in our lives. Nothing in Scripture suggests that He takes on the role of aloof observer or cosmic puppeteer.

Perhaps if we could, just for a moment, put ourselves in Mary's and Martha's place, we might begin to understand the power of this lesson. Even knowing that He would momentarily raise Lazarus, Jesus wept with His hurting children, fully embracing and sharing their hurt.

We can hardly imagine ourselves in Lazarus' place. For four days, this dear friend of Jesus enjoyed the glories of heaven, only to return to his life on earth for a season. However faithful and however strong his belief in Jesus, surely his remaining days were lived with a clearer vision of Jesus and who He was, along with understanding and living the faith-walk more than ever before. As I've studied this lesson and reflected on its impact, its divinely intended impact I trust, my mind has repeatedly visited 1 Corinthians 15:19.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. (1 Corinthians 15:19)

When people tell you that they believe that Jesus was a really good man, but not God living briefly in human flesh, they impose this miserable state onto themselves. We either believe what Scripture teaches us about Him, or we do not. We accept the Lazarus story, or we settle into the most miserable outlook imaginable. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church

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Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor