



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 2048

Joshua 10:13 "So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day."

We were looking at this passage last evening in our Bible class. The sun stood still. Remarkable miracle allowing Israel more daylight to defeat their enemy. Joshua defeated a large confederacy of several city kingdoms that had joined with the intent of stopping Israel. It didn't work. Israel, or more accurately, God, crushed those cities.

Did the sun really stand still? The Bible says so, but physics, astronomy and what we know about how tied and connected everything is to each other won't allow us to accept this so easily. We want to figure this out. It's beyond our "figuring." If you are driving in a car around 70 MPH and you slam on the brakes, everything in the back seat will be in the front seat. You will lunge forward. Motion demands that. So if the earth stopped spinning, all the ocean water would rush forward and cover the planet. If the sun literally stopped, it would affect all the other planets. Did God just provide sunlight? Is this just a poetic expression? Did God tilt the earth so it would be closer to the sun and receive more sunlight? According to the passage, this didn't happen for a couple of hours, but the sun stopped in the middle of the sky for a whole day.

Critics of the Bible and scoffers of God will hang their hatred of God on this passage as being impossible. It can't happen. You can't stop the sun, nor hold the earth in its place, without major damage and consequences. Impossible says the voice of science.

But isn't that what a miracle is by definition. It's the impossible. It's God sticking His finger into nature and suspending the laws of nature. How is it that a leprous Naaman can be cured in a muddy Jordan river after dipping seven times? That doesn't make sense. There wasn't anything magical nor unique about the water of the Jordan. Why didn't others come along and bottle up some of that water and sell it as the cure for leprosy? Because it wouldn't work. It wasn't the water, it was God.

Just a couple of verses before the sun standing still, the text tells us that God threw hailstones from Heaven. More were killed by the hailstones than by Israel's swords. The hailstones fell down on the enemy for a large distance. As the enemy ran, the hailstones followed them. Can we believe that? Could that happen? Then comes our verses about the sun standing still.

How is it that God, in the opening paragraphs of the Bible, speaks a word and things come into being out of nothing? How is it that He could put the universe together, and all the laws that govern this world, by simply saying so? That is beyond our understanding. Stars and solar systems that are light years from us, He put them together. The weather. The animal kingdom. The complex system of photosynthesis. The plant world.

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The diversity and complexity, each made in one day. How did He do it? Atheistic science wants to believe that these systems have always existed and that even though they are connected and many need each other, it all came to be by chance. Everything is explainable, modern science believes. Sun standing still? No. Hailstones for miles and miles that kills people? No. Being cured of an incurable disease by dipping in a specific river? No. The Red Sea parting? No. Storms stopping suddenly? No. The dead raised? No.

Founding Father, Thomas Jefferson, made a version of the Gospels. He cut out all the miracles. His book makes the story of Jesus, just that, an interesting story. No power. No point. No purpose. His Bible ends with Jesus in the grave. No resurrection and no hope.

All of this leads us to a few simple observations:

First, we must stop trying to figure God out. We can't. He is too powerful and too good. He is beyond us. Our minds can't understand creation, let alone, His suspending the laws of His creation. He could make the sun stand still and in doing so, make it so that nothing else changes nor is bothered. He can do that. Some things are simply beyond us.

Second, if we can't believe what He said about miracles, what then can we believe? If the miracles can be explained away as natural events, such as the flood being only a localized flood, then what else can be explained away? Surrounding the miracles are enough words that support the event that took place. With the flood, the mountain tops were covered. With Joshua, the sun stood still in the middle of the sky all day. If I can't accept those things, can I accept that I have forgiveness? Can I accept that there is a Heaven? Can I believe that my prayers are heard? Discrediting Bible passages because they are beyond our understanding leads to discrediting faith in God.

Third, our children sing in VBS, "Our God is so big, our God is so strong, there is nothing that our God cannot do." Really? Do you believe that? Can He raise the dead? Can He heal the incurable? Can He hold the sun in it's place? Can He help you? Can He help you beat your addictions? Can He help you restore a broken marriage? Can he help you overcome fear and worry? When Jesus was on the way to Jairus home to heal his dying daughter, word came that it was too late. The girl died. The servants then said, "Why bother the teacher now." They thought even Jesus couldn't do anything about this. They had limitations upon what He could do. They felt that there was a ceiling to what the Lord was capable of and He had just hit that ceiling. Don't bother Jesus, He can't do anything about it now. Is that how you feel about things? Do you have a ceiling upon God? Have you limited God?

Fourth, God doesn't have to explain how He did things to us. We tend to forget this. We feel that God owes us an answer. When someone dies, our hearts scream, "Why, God?" Does He have to tell you? Is He answerable to you? When there has been a mass shooting, the response is, Why didn't God stop this? Does God have to explain Himself to us? Why did God make creation like He did? How did He do it? How, in our study today, did He stop the sun in the middle of the sky without everything flying off the planet? Does God have to tell us? We forget who is the Creator and who is the creature. God doesn't have to explain things to us, or worse, get our approval before He does things. He doesn't work for us, we work for Him. How is it that Jesus could talk to a dead person, just like you and I talk to each other, and the dead person hears him and obeys Him? Trust, faith and love in God realizes that He'll always do what is righteous and good for His people.

Finally, understanding that God, who is so powerful and mighty, He can open doors for us, He hear our voices, and He can be pleased with what we do is most remarkable. Who are we? Most of us are just common, simple people. We do not sit upon thrones of power and shape world policies. We simply live each day, with the hope of getting by and making what little difference that we can for others. Yet, God, who parted the sea, stopped the sun, raised the dead, not only notices you but He is thinking about you. I guarantee the President isn't thinking about me. He doesn't even know who I am. The governor of my state is the same. Yet, the God of Heaven is different. He does know you. In fact, He loves you and is passionate about saving you from your sins and helping you to follow Him. How easy it is for us to think, "God, you have more important things to take care of than me." There is Russia. There is ISIS. There is North Korea. There are people crying for your help. I'm so low on the list, that I probably didn't even make today's list. That's generally how we think. That's how we operate. We have our "To Do" lists. We put things in order. If there is enough day, we get them all done. What doesn't get done today, is moved to tomorrow's list. God's not like that. He has one sheet of paper, and your name is the only name on it. Don't try to figure all of this out. We

don't understand creation, sun standing still or storms ceasing. How can God be so interested in us? He is. He declares that and He shows that by the sending of Jesus.

God loves you and wants you to spend forever with Him in Heaven. That's harder to understand than a sun standing still in the middle of the sky. If He did one, He can certainly do the other.

Our God is an awesome God!

Roger Shouse (used by permission)
