Dear Lexie,

"The Parable of the Lost Ring"

Tuesday at noon I realized my engagement ring wasn't on my finger. I thought I had seen it there that morning. When it was not found in my car or office I thought I must have just left it at home. When I arrived at home after work and could not find it there-panic set in. I had no idea where the ring, a gift of love from my husband was. How was I to tell him that I so carelessly lost something he so carefully selected for me? I spent the next few hours calling and recalling several people to look in all the places where I had been during the day- General Conference... restaurant... office... General Conference... car... I checked the house again. Nothing turned up.

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This Sabbath:
May 3, 2014

Speaker:
Pranitha Fielder
"The Council”*

Raj Attiken,
"Steps, Missteps, and Sidesteps"

Special Musical Guests:
Columbia Collegiate Chorale of WAU
New England Youth Ensemble of WAU
James Bingham, director
Preston Hawes, director
* 1st. Service

Homes of Hope
Discussion Leaders Wanted!

We are still looking for Discussion Leaders and Supporter in Takoma Park, Silver Spring, Hyattsville, Riverdale and Bowie areas.

More Info.>>

A Day without Mammon
A thought by Barry Casey

T. S. Eliot said that April was "the cruelest month, breeding/Lilacs out of the dead land/Mixing memory and desire..." April in Maryland...

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A Flood of Possibilities:
Genesis 6-9

Depending on the lens we use to interpret the evidence, logic and science can support the Biblical account of the flood-showing that it is more than just an ancient myth...

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The Parable of the Lost Ring

Tuesday at noon I realized my engagement ring wasn’t on my finger. I thought I had seen it there that morning. When it was not found in my car or office I thought I must have just left it at home. When I arrived at home after work and could not find it there- panic set in. I had no idea where the ring, a gift of love from my husband was. How was I to tell him that I so carelessly lost something he so carefully selected for me? I spent the next few hours calling and recalling several people to look in all the places where I had been during the day- General Conference…restaurant…office…General Conference…car… I checked the house again. Nothing turned up.

Feeling quite hopeless, I remembered Moses’ prayer and asked God to restore it for His name’s sake. “Lord, for the sake of Your name and Your glory help me find this ring. Give me a testimony, Lord so I can share with everyone that You can do it and that You care about everything in our lives.”

The short of the story is- I drove back to the General Conference where I had been 10 hours earlier. As I drove, I thought of the woman in Luke 15 who lost her marriage coins. She, like me lost a symbol of marriage- a gift from her husband. I thought if I, like that woman could be so disheartened because I lost a material possession- how must God feel? He lost something far more precious- people He gave His life to save.

I was sure I would never see that ring again, but I had to make a last attempt- for my husband’s sake. I searched every square inch of the General Conference parking spot where I had parked that morning- with no success. After a similar lack of success inside the building, I headed to my car to leave.

The cold rain hit me as I was getting to my car. Wait a minute! Since it had been raining all day- maybe the ring got washed down to the end of the parking lot. I followed the curb around the building. When it ended at a drain with water rushing down into the sewers, I accepted the reality that it was most likely lost. Hoping against hope I checked around the parking spot one last time. Steve Chavez saw me hovering over the parking spot and stopped to help me in my search. We found nothing.

As I was facing the finality of leaving- feeling hopeless, despondent, and guilty- Daniel Bermingham, who works in security drove up holding out my ring! I cannot explain the joy I felt! I shared my elation with Steve and Daniel. What a miracle this was! I called my husband. I went back into the building to share with the rest of the security guards. I called Aunty Shyamala Ram, who had stopped to help me search inside the building. I posted the whole story on Facebook, and now I’m sharing it with you. Like the woman of Luke 15, I had to share the fact that what I had lost had been found!

The miracle of the story is that Daniel found my ring in the exact same square inch of parking lot that I had scoured 20 minutes before him. When I started searching at 5:47 p.m., the parking spot where I had parked that morning was empty, so I was able to search the whole parking spot. At 6:10 p.m., Daniel was walking by the same parking spot that now had a car in it. He noticed something odd in a faint splash of water next to one of the tires. No shimmering reflection. No bulge. There was just something odd about this splash of water. He put his hand on the surface- and found the ring!
This slideshow requires JavaScript.

God did not just restore my ring- He did it in such an incredible way, so that I and everyone else would know that it could only have been Him. I believe He did it for His name’s sake- to remind me that He is the kind of God that cares about the very big things and the very small things in our lives. He is the kind of God that is always in control even when we feel lost, hopeless, guilty, and despondent. He reminded me of how He feels when He loses even one of those for whom He has died. He gave me a glimpse of the lengths to which He goes for each and every one of us. If God could, and did, orchestrate such a big story for a little ring- just imagine what He does for each of us every day!

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This Year you will have three curriculums to choose from:

- Hope and Health
- John, a Gospel of Hope
- Hope for Today, A Firm Foundation (revised)

It is not too late, you can still join!

I want to share Hope!
A Day Without Mammon

Barry Casey

Now I have reached the age of judgment giving sorrow that many men have come to, the verdict of regret, remembering the world once better than it is, my old walkways beneath the vanished trees, and friends lost now in loss of trust.

And I recall myself more innocent than I am, gone past coming back in the history of flaw, except Christ dead and risen in my own flesh shall judge, condemn, and then forgive. — Wendell Berry, from A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems 1979-1997

T. S. Eliot said that April was “the cruelest month, breeding/Lilacs out of the dead land/Mixing memory and desire. . . .” April in Maryland comes with the shyness of spring amidst the last blows of winter and before the blast furnace of summer’s heat and humidity. It’s a narrow sliver of chance that could fall, from day to day, any number of ways; of weather rising 30 degrees in a matter of hours or dropping wearily into thunderstorms at the end of a serene day. One never knows.

Somewhere in there is Easter, a mixed blessing of a holy day if there ever was one. Over the years I’ve come to a restless peace with it, but not without a struggle. For a Christian, Easter is both despair and hope, a spiritual slingshot into faith’s parallel universe. In a matter of hours, remembering and following the broken trail of Christ, we stagger under the brute fact of political and spiritual hegemonies crushing the life from the One among the many, bringing darkness—and then unbearable light.

Easter is prime time for many preachers, a kind of telethon of emotional chaos intended to wring the last drop of guilt out of compassion-fatigued parishioners. A few years ago Mel Gibson’s masochistic Passion of the Christ was playing to full houses in churches and sanctuaries, as well as theaters. This year we face only the usual seasonal froth of bunnies, Easter eggs, cards, and sales on spring outfits.

I’m not complaining that commercial interests have rendered Easter just another benchmark for profit or loss. That’s a given. Nor would I want a state-sponsored day of fasting and prayer imposed on all. Under the principle of the separation of church and state we’ve gained considerable freedom from the kinds of sanctimonious peril visited upon Europe for centuries. Instead, I’d cherish a neutral day, as transparent as water, in which it was understood that Easter was a time when one could reflect on one’s past, feel a just measure of shame for having broken promises and adding to the pain of the world, and experience a sense of wonder at forgiveness and the chance to begin anew.

It is a day and an occasion when anyone can find the courage to go on. If nothing else, it’s a celebration of another chance, the earth rising from the depths of winter, stretching and yawning in the early light.

By now Christianity has tangled itself so inextricably with power and pain that such a day can only be experienced quietly within oneself, in the company of a few friends, or in the community of faith. There’s nothing stopping this from happening, of course, for all who wish to worship and reflect.

What am I really asking for then? I suppose it comes down to this: I long for an Easter that is simply there for the
taking, with no taint of commercialism or profiteering. A holiday from Mammon, if you like; one day out of the year that is voluntarily cordoned off from exploitation. This would mean that we would not be bludgeoned with direct mail offers in February about Easter sales nor would we be exhorted to whip ourselves into shape for the beach season. We could let the rabbits get on with getting it on, let the eggs remain in the nest, and leave the baby chicks in their natural state, unsullied by dyes of purple, red, green, and blue.

It's too much to ask, I know, and besides how would such a day come about? It would have to be legislated, thus defeating the purpose or bubble up from below as corporations, media, sports franchises, and the whole vast Difference Engine of calculated profit simply paused. And in that stillness, without the bullying shouts of the traders or the frantic piping of the media or the inexorable pressure of the invisible hand between our shoulder blades we could hear our hearts beating and take a breath.

For some it would be a day to allow oneself to smile in amazement at the fecundity of the earth, for others a day of reflection and meditation, a renewed commitment, perhaps, to accepting grace and extending forgiveness. For nations it could be a day of atonement, asking forgiveness for the wrongs done in the name of ideologies and self-interest. And for this beautiful, wondrous, and besieged Earth it could be a day when our presence upon it as a species brought more good than harm.

As for myself, I shall read the Gospel stories once again, read T. S. Eliot's Ash Wednesday as I have for some years, and carry within me that stillness, if only for a few hours, that is so vital to the spirit.

Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still

Even among these rocks,
Our peace in His will

And even among these rocks

Sister, mother

And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea

Suffer me not to be separated

And let my cry come unto Thee — T. S. Eliot, Ash Wednesday
A Flood of Possibilities: Genesis 6-9

Jamie Jean

Depending on the lens we use to interpret the evidence, logic and science can support the Biblical account of the flood—showing that it is more than just an ancient myth. If the story is true, then the character of God portrayed can also be reliable. Instead of a vengeful God bent on destroying His creation, the story reveals a God who gave mankind a second chance through the obedience of Noah. To show that the Biblical account is possible, I would like to briefly examine a few points of consideration.

Ubiquity of the Deluge:
Tales of a global flood are ubiquitous in ancient cultures (over 200)—existing throughout Asia and Europe, Africa, and the Americans. In most cases, the flood was worldwide. Many also included an ark, a probation period, chosen survivors, animals, and divine judgment.

“These traditions agree in too many vital points not to have originated from the same factual event.” (Furman Kearley, The Significance of the Genesis Flood)

“There never was a myth without a meaning…there is not one of these stories, no matter how silly or absurd, which was not founded on fact.” (H.H. Bancroft, The Native Races of the Pacific Slope—Mythology)

While the existence of flood myths is not scientific proof, the common nature of these narratives indicates that a large-scale catastrophe occurred that left an impression on the conscious of humanity.

“Of the combination of all these elements into a whole (the destruction of the earth by water, the rescue of a single man and seed of animals by means of a boat, etc), however, we may say without hesitation, it could not have arisen twice independently.” (William Wundt, Elements of Folk Psychology)

Physical Evidence:
In addition, National Geographic archaeologist, Robert Ballard believes he has discovered physical evidence in the Black Sea supporting a scientific theory that a large-scale flood occurred approximately 7,000 years ago. His evidence includes an underwater river valley, ancient shorelines as well as Stone Age structures and tools. (National Geographic/New YorkTimes/BBC/Science.howstuffworks.com)

The Source of Water:
“…all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky.” (Genesis 7:11)

Floods normally result from excessive rainfall, but the Biblical account also mentions a significant amount of water erupting up from the earth. This oddity in detail needs explanation if the story is to be reliable. Furthermore, Genesis says that water ultimately covered the ENTIRE earth (Genesis 7:19 & 20). If ALL the ice caps melted, the oceans would rise 216 feet, but there would still be large masses of land. There must also be another source of water. View a map showing completely melted ice caps>>

Recently, evidence that the earth’s crust contains a significant amount of water has been discovered>>
“It translates into a very, very large mass of water, approaching the sort of mass of water that's present in all the world's ocean...” (Graham Pearson, author and a geochemist at the University of Alberta in Canada)

Given that water currently covers about 70% of the planet, this reservoir would be more than enough to flood the remaining land—even if only a fraction of it was pushed to the surface—making a global flood possible, and explaining the details of the testimony.

Eyewitness Account:
The only way ancient man, without modern science, could have known about “the fountains of the great deep” (Gen. 7:11) is if there had been eyewitnesses.

Repopulation:
The “Out-of-Africa” theory is the predominant position held within the scientific community regarding the origin of man. According to this hypothesis, all people alive today have inherited the same mitochondria from an ancient woman (“Mitochondrial Eve”), and all men have inherited the same Y chromosomes from an ancient man (“Y-chromosomal Adam”). Some scientists now believe that at one point a few people left Africa and populated the entire world. Basically, everyone’s genetic code can be traced back to two individuals, and later, a small group of people were responsible for populating the world—while other early-man species died. Here again the interpretation of this information depends on whether it is viewed from a Biblical or a secular perspective. Nevertheless, the parallels are striking. More on genomic theory>>

God’s Character:
“Before the flood God sent Noah to warn the world, that the people might be led to repentance, and thus escape the threatened destruction... For a hundred and twenty years the preacher of righteousness warned the world of the coming destruction, but his message was rejected and despised...Had the antediluvians believed the warning, and repented of their evil deeds, the Lord would have turned aside His wrath, as He afterward did from Nineveh.” (Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets)

In conclusion:
Given that the pyramids were built and still stand, it seems also feasible for an enormous ark to have been built to house the animals and one family. Ultimately, we cannot prove that the Biblical story of Noah occurred, but there is significant evidence that supports its credibility—implying that it is more than a fantastical myth. I have made an informed choice to believe in the Bible, and a God who is deeply invested in our salvation. The Bible is full of second chance stories that testify to a loving God who desires to save mankind from the destruction of sin. It is in this God, I choose to place my faith.

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