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A Silent Heaven

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"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

"And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Rev. 6:10-11).

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him" (Ps. 50:3).

By a silent heaven we mean that God is not openly and publicly manifesting Himself as in other days. By a silent heaven we mean that God is not performing miracles as of old. Webster defines a miracle as "An event which cannot be accounted for as produced by any of the known forces of nature and which is therefore attributed to a supernatural force." By a "public miracle", we mean an event that demonstrates the existence of a personal God. Sir Robert Anderson has said that "Since apostolic times, the finger of God has never been openly at work upon the earth--never once has a public miracle been witnessed, nor a single public event to compel the belief that there is a God at all."

A silent heaven is the greatest mystery of our existence. A silent heaven is the greatest trial of the faith of the saint. The atheist does not believe in the possibility of miracles because he does not believe in the existence of a personal powerful God. The believer's problem is the absence of miracles. As a believer in a personal and powerful and loving Heavenly Father, he cannot understand why miracles are not common today.

If there is a God why does He allow things to be as they are? Why does He not step in and put

down all the wrong and rebellion that covers the face of the earth? Why does He suffer the wicked to oppress the righteous? How is the existence of a good and powerful God consistent with such a long period of silence in the face of the defiance of His enemies and the cries of His people? If there is a personal and almighty God, why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper? In the face of these questions the infidel plies his trade, and the believer is filled with anxiety and perplexity.

In the days of Moses, God was so manifestly at work in performing miracles, that even the wicked magicians of Egypt had to confess, "This is the finger of God." In the days of our Lord's earthly ministry, miracles were common and were not even disputed by His enemies. Christ's miracles made Him famous and popular, but they won no genuine converts. In John 2:23 we read of Him, "When He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man."

Miracles continued through the days of the apostles, but became less common towards the close of the apostolic age. In Acts 19:11, we are told that God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul. The gift of miracles was sovereignly bestowed upon and distributed among the members of the early churches.

NO PUBLIC MIRACLES TODAY

It is obvious that we do not have miracles today at least in such an unmistakable manner as in ancient times. I know there are people today who claim to be able to perform miracles of healing and talking (their claims are usually limited to these two things), but there is something so mani-

festly lacking in their so called miracles, that their claims are not above suspicion. When they are investigated there is room for question, which was not the case in the days of Christ and the apostles.

There is a problem in the silence of God. When Peter was in jail waiting to be executed, God miraculously sent an earthquake and an angel to deliver him. Paul was miraculously delivered from prison at Philippi. Since those days, millions of saints have been martyred, and their cries for deliverance have not been answered. The heavens above them have been like brass.

Long ago Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?" God accepted the proud monarch's challenge and demonstrated His power over him in terrible judgment; but in these days men challenge and even ridicule the idea of a personal God, and heaven says not a word. It is said that Bob Ingersol one day sought to demonstrate that there is no God. With his watch in his hand he challenged God to show Himself. He said, "If there is a God, let Him strike me dead; if there is a God, I challenge Him to kill me in five minutes." To all of this bombast, God was silent.

THE EXPLANATION OF A SILENT HEAVEN

God's silence in the face of defiant and challenging foes can be explained. God's silence to the cries of His helpless children does have an explanation. What is it?

The Question Negatively Answered:

- 1. It is not because God is helpless.

He is never helpless in the face of opposition. There are no crisis with Him. "What His soul desireth even that He doest" (Job). He is able to deliver His children from every danger.

- 2. It is not because He does not care.

The heavenly Father is the wisest and best of all fathers. He never makes any mistakes in the care of His children. We are commanded to cast all our care upon Him on the ground that He careth for us. When we cry to Him in our troubles and He does not give us what we ask for, we must not think that He does not care. It is because He does care for us that He does not always give us what we ask for. He is wiser in giving than we are in asking. It is our love and care for our children that keeps us from giving them all they want. When we are sick and ask God to heal us and He does not do it, we may be sure that it is better for us to be sick. God teaches us some things on the sick bed that we cannot learn while well. Some lessons are better learned on the back than on the feet. The bible is a sweeter Book in the sick-room than in the workshop. If we pray to be delivered from our enemies and He does not deliver us, it is in order that we may hear Him say, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The greatest homage which wickedness can pay to righteousness is to persecute it. It is a gift from God to be allowed to suffer for His name.

- 3. It is not because God does not know.

The omniscience of God is one of the sweetest attributes to the believer. One of the sweetest psalms of David is the 139th in which he celebrates the omniscience of God: "O Lord, Thou has searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and my uprising. Thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways." He knows us and he knows our needs.

- 4. It is not because God has vacated His throne.

God is still on His throne. He is still reigning, and working all things after the counsel of His own will. He is not ruling publicly and openly. He is not ruling in such a way as to compel belief in His existence. He is running the drama of human history from behind the scenes. His reign is secret rather than public. He rules through providence and providence is always mysterious. His judgments are unsearchable and His ways are past finding out. The finger of God is at work today but the world does not see it.

- 5. It is not because of the lack of faith on the part of God's people.

Lack of faith on the part of God's people is not the reason that miracles are not publicly performed today. We are often told that if the people of God had the faith of Peter and Paul and other early saints, that miracles would be as common today as then. I do not believe it. I am not arguing that any of us today have the faith we ought to have, but this is not the reasons for lack of miracles. Miracles were limited to the time of witnessing to Israel as a nation, and when the nation was turned from and the Gentiles turned to, miracles ceased. Miracles were for the purpose of accrediting Christ to the Jews as their Messiah. Miracles were Christ's credentials to the nation of Israel. I give one case to illustrate this. One day a leper came to Him and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt Thou canst make me clean." The Lord healed him with a touch, and then warned him to tell no man, but to go and shew himself to the priest and get a certificate of health. In this way he would be witnessing to the nation that there was One among them who could cure leprosy, and therefore must be their Messiah. In spite of all the miracles attesting the presence of their Messiah, the nation rejected Christ in His personal ministry and in the ministry of His apostles. And then public miracles ceased.

The Question Positively Answered:

- 1. The nature of God's work in this age does not require open and public miracles.

If it did require open and public miracles, we may be sure that He would perform them. He is just as able to perform miracles by the hand of His servants today as when He performed them by the hands of the apostles and other saints in the long ago. This is the day of salvation, and miracles are not necessary to salvation. I mean public miracles, such as the rich man in hades wanted performed, when he begged that Lazarus might rise from the dead and preach

to his five brethren who were still unbelievers in this world. He contended that if one should go unto them from the dead that they would repent. He was told that if they refused to hear Moses and the prophets, if they would not believe the word of God, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

“Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house:

‘For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

‘Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

‘And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

‘And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.’ (Luke 16:27-31).

“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17). Miracles are not necessary to faith.

2. Miracles are not necessary to prove God’s love.

I have no right to ask God to perform a public miracle in proof that He loves me. The very request for such proof would be unbelief. I have His word that He loves sinners and if I take the place of a sinner and trust the Saviour He has provided, I may be sure that He loves me. God has given ample proof of his love for sinners in giving His Son to die for them, and to perform a miracle for that purpose would be to put a premium on belief. Miracles did not save anybody in the days when miracles were common. Judas lived with Christ and saw most of His miracles, but he was not saved. Where most of His mighty works were done, the people were rebuked for their unbelief. Of the people of Jerusalem it is said, “But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him” (John 12:37).

3. Public miracles are usually associated with judgment.

The miracles of Egypt were miracles of judgment. And miracles in the future are to be associated with judgment. When God gets ready to judge this wicked world then He will begin to work miraculously. The finger of God will again appear on the earth. “Our God shall come and shall not keep silence.” He now manifests Himself to His people. They see His miraculous hand in their affairs--but He hides himself from the unbelievers. His word satisfies His people, and He will not satisfy the idle curiosity of the wicked with miracles.

4. The Bible reveals that there will be miracles of a public nature during the last days.

Miracles of a public nature are spoken of in the Bible during the last days of this dispensation, but they will be of the devil and not of God. Our Lord in speaking of the signs of His coming said that false Christs and false prophets would arise and show great signs and wonders inasmuch

that if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect.

The word for sign in this passage is the same word that is translated miracle throughout the New Testament. In Revelation 13 we read that the false prophet shall do great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles. In II Thes. 2:9, we learn that the coming of the Anti Christ will be after the working of Satan with all power, signs, and lying wonders. The word for sign is the common word for miracles. If there is anybody performing miracles today the gift is not from God but from Satan.

There is a clamour today in religion for the miraculous and sensational and spectacular. This is because people tire of the Word of God. People who are looking for miracles as a sign or proof of God’s presence and favor are putting themselves in a good position to be deceived. What is supernatural is not necessarily divine.

THIS IS NOT THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

This is the day of salvation, not the day of judgment. This is the day of patience and longsuffering of God. The only person who has the right to judge is Christ. He is now on the throne of grace, waiting till the time comes for His enemies to be made His footstool. He has already spoken the last word of love and grace, and when He next breaks the silence it will be to let loose the judgments that shall engulf the world in punishment. “Our God shall come and shall not keep silence.” He is silent now so far as the public manifestation of Himself is concerned, but the day is coming when in the words of the second Psalm, “He shall speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure.”

A SILENT HEAVEN! Yes, but it is not the silence of a helpless and defeated God. A SILENT HEAVEN! Yes, but it is not the silence of a callous and indifferent Father. A SILENT HEAVEN! Yes, it is the silence which is the pledge and proof that the way is still open for the guiltiest sinner to draw near to God in Christ. It is the assurance that we are still living in the day of salvation. When the believer faints and the unbeliever revolts, and men beg God to break His silence and show His hand on the earth, they little realize what that will mean. It will mean the withdrawal of the amnesty; it will mean the end of the reign of grace; it will mean the shutting of the door to the ark of salvation; it will mean that no more sinners will be saved; it will mean the dawning of the day of wrath--the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

My dear reader, God has spoken to us in His Son. We have the message in the Bible, the book of salvation and hope in Christ. Despise that message and reject the Son and when God speaks again you will hear Him speak in tones of judgment.