

From Pastor Jim's Desk

“No Appointment Necessary”

How often have your suppers been interrupted by calls from telemarketers? I just wish I could plan for interruptions. I would never answer the phone if I knew it was a telemarketer intruding into my dinner conversation. If I had caller I.D., I would just let it ring.

Like you, there are some interruptions which I appreciate and require no appointment necessary. Wouldn't it be something if that mini-van would pull up in my driveway right during lunch with the words, “Publisher's Clearing House” printed on the side of the van? Wow, what an interruption, but welcomed nonetheless.

While studying the miracles of Jesus, some time ago, I discovered that there are 23 miracles of healing recorded in the Gospels. Of those 23 miracles that Jesus performed, 16 of them were the result of his being interrupted. Even the others weren't necessary planned, but were a response to a needed situation. In fact, there is not one single record of a miracle done by Jesus *by appointment!*

Wonders of all wonders! God seems to delight in guiding us also by means of interruptions. A Notre Dame Professor used to say, “I always used to complain that my work was constantly being interrupted, until I discovered that my interruptions *were* my work.”

No matter what our work happens to be, that simply observation can also apply to us. It's as if we are given a beeper by God called “interruptions” and we are on call 24/7. It's as if God takes our calendars and in every square writes, “subject to change.” What we call interruptions often end up being His appointments. And it's true, isn't it, that these interruptions often become opportunities for our service to Him?

We read in the Gospel of Mark: “Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at His feet and pleaded earnestly with Him, ‘May little daughter is dying. Please come and put Your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.’ So Jesus went with him” (Mark 5:22-24). This interruption of what Jesus had planned on doing became an opportunity for Him to give the help that only He could give. He raised the little girl from death.

How do you deal with interruptions? Do you complain and grouse about the interruption? What if you saw that interruption as God's little detour in your life, to accomplish something even greater than what you had planned on doing? How would that change your attitude about interruptions? This has been my experience with interruptions. We all want to accomplish the most and the best in our lives, so if we adopt an attitude of “welcoming interruptions” as God's plans for us, we will indeed accomplish more in our lives for Him.

In His Service,
Your Pastor Jim

Walk through the Bible Class for the New Year

Pastor Jim gives you a thorough over-view of each book, and identifies the connections that Book has with the New Testament. He also shares with you how each book and its prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The handout class material will become your personal commentary to that book, along with the extra reading that Pastor Jim provides, will provide insight and understanding for years to come. We will be having "Walk through the Bible" classes *through the summer*. Please note especially, we will vary from the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays regular schedule of classes (see * below).

Class Schedule through the Summer Months

May 26th - 1 pm or 7 pm – Begin the Book of Obadiah, Jonah and Micah

*June 2nd – (*FRIST TUESDAY*) 1 pm or 7 pm – Continue with Obadiah, Jonah and Micah

June 23rd – 1 pm or 7 pm – Finish with Obadiah, Jonah and Micah

*July 7th – (*FIRST TUESDAY*) 1 pm or 7 pm – Study Nahum, Habakkuk & Zephaniah

*July 21st (*THIRD TUESDAY*) 1 pm or 7 pm – Continue Nahum, Habakkuk & Zephaniah

August 11th – 1 pm or 7 pm – Finish the books of Nahum, Habakkuk & Zephaniah

August 25th - 1 pm or 7 pm – Begin study of the Inter-Testamental Period

Police stop at 2:00 AM!!!

Ron, a senior citizen, was stopped by the police around 2 a.m. and was asked where he was going at that time of night.

Ron replied, "I'm on my way to a lecture about alcohol abuse and the effects it has on the human body, as well as smoking and staying out late." The officer asked, "Really? Who's giving that lecture at this time of night?"

Ron replied, "That would be my wife."



Life in the Early Christian Church

Acts 2:42–47

At the time when Christianity was just beginning to spread, Christians used Jewish synagogues as meeting places for worship. Later, Christians gathered in homes. Special church buildings weren't built until the third century AD. The Christians not only worshiped together, but also supported each other physically with food and clothing and by providing for other needs. They especially helped the poor, the widows, and the orphans.

The Worship Service

Sunday was the day for group worship in the Early Church. Worship included singing, prayer, Scripture readings, and participation in the Lord's Supper. Often, the offerings gathered were food and other items needed for the poor. Sometimes, worship included the sharing of a meal.



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The Church in Rome

Because of persecution, Christians in Rome sometimes gathered for worship in caves, called catacombs. Christians had buried their dead in these underground caves. There were hundreds of miles of catacombs under the city of Rome.

The walls in the catacombs were covered with drawings of scenes from the Old and New Testaments, including the accounts of Jonah, Noah, Daniel in the lions' den, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and the Good Shepherd. There were also pictures in the catacombs that showed church leaders using a seashell to pour water over people being baptized.



Cave of the coffins.

Persecution in the Early Church

The Roman people worshiped many different false gods. They did not like the Christians. The Roman emperor, Nero, blamed the Christians for a fire that destroyed much of Rome in AD 65. Angry Romans arrested Christians. Christians were expected to curse Jesus Christ and offer praise and sacrifices to Roman gods. If they refused, they were killed. Some were torn to death by animals. Some were crucified. Some were beheaded. Some were burned alive. These executions took place in front of large audiences who cheered and celebrated. For many, this was like going to watch a sporting event. Peter and Paul were probably martyred during this time of persecution.

Even during these days when persecution was common, the Christian Church grew. Many early Christians considered it a great blessing to die for the Christian faith.



Inside the Colosseum in Rome, Italy. Christians are believed to have been martyred here.

Prisons

Prisons in Bible times were different from prisons today. A prison or jail was a place to keep prisoners until trial or until they were punished in other ways. Sometimes, people were in prison for months or even years before they had a trial. If a prisoner was found guilty in trial, prison was not usually given as punishment. Punishments could include fines, flogging or beating, exile (being forced to leave their home or being told where to live), or death.

Conditions were difficult in ancient prisons. Often, they were dark chambers with only small amounts of light coming in through very small openings in the walls. Prisoners were commonly chained during the day and put into stocks at night. Often, the prisoners were mistreated (Acts 16:23–24).

The prison didn't provide daily necessities for the prisoners. Family members and friends brought food, blankets, medicine, and other items to the prisoners. Without help from family and friends, prisoners might starve or die of illness. This is, perhaps, why Jesus commended those who visited prisoners (Matthew 25:36). Such a visit was more than social; it provided some of the prisoners' daily needs.

Guards were held personally responsible for prisoners. If a prisoner escaped, a guard might be punished or even killed for neglecting his duty (Acts 12:19; 16:27).



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Prisoners in Bible Times

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|---------------------|---|
| Joseph | Genesis 39:11–23; 41:14 |
| Joseph's brothers | Genesis 42:15–20 |
| Samson | Judges 16:21–26 |
| Jeremiah | Jeremiah 37 |
| Unforgiving Servant | Matthew 18:21–35 |
| John the Baptizer | Matthew 4:12; 11:2–3; 14:3–10; Mark 6:17–29; Luke 3:19–20 |
| Barabbas | Matthew 27:15–23; Mark 15:6–15 |
| Peter and John | Acts 4:1–4 |
| Early Christians | Acts 8:3; Hebrews 13:3 |
| Peter | Acts 12:1–18 |
| Paul and Silas | Acts 16:16–40 |
| Paul | Acts 24:24–27; Ephesians 3:1; 6:20; Philemon 1 |

DISCIPLES OF JESUS

Matthew 4:12-25; Luke 5:1-11

Andrew

- Name means "manly"
- Brother of Simon Peter
- Fishing partner of James and John, the sons of Zebedee
- Tradition holds that he was crucified on an X-shaped cross because Andrew did not want to die on a cross that was the same shape as Jesus'.



James the Less

- Name means "supplanter"
- Perhaps "The Less" because he was small
- Tradition holds that he wrote the Epistle of James
- Tradition says that he died as a martyr at age 96; his dead body was sawed to pieces.



Matthew

- Name means "gift of the Lord"
- Also known as Levi, son of Alphaeus
- First man to write down the teachings of Jesus
- Symbol is three moneybags or a winged man for the genealogy of Jesus.



Simon the Zealot

- Name means "he hears" or "hearing"
- Had a strong love for Jesus and the rest of the disciples
- Symbol shows a fish lying on a Bible, indicating he had been a fisherman who became a fisher of men through preaching.



Bartholomew

- Name means "son of Talmai"
- Also known as Nathanael (Nathaniel)
- Tradition holds that he brought the Gospel to India
- Thought to have been flayed alive
- His symbol is of a flaying knife and a book or sometimes three parallel knives.



John

- Name means "the Lord has been gracious"
- Known as the Beloved Disciple
- Died a natural death at an old age
- His symbol is a cup and serpent because it is thought that God spared him from being poisoned.



Peter

- Name means "the rock"
- Known as Simon until Jesus called him Peter
- Tradition holds that he was martyred on a cross, requesting to be crucified head downward because of his unworthiness.



Thaddaeus

- Name means "largehearted" or "courageous"
- A Zealot, a Jewish nationalist who wanted to make Christ known to the world as a ruling, earthly king
- Killed with arrows at Ararat
- Symbol shows a ship because he was a missionary thought to have traveled far.



James

- Sometimes known as St. James the Greater
- The first disciple to be martyred, about fifteen years after Jesus' death
- Symbol of three scallop shells refers to his pilgrimage by the sea.



Judas Iscariot

- Came from Judah near Jericho
- Took care of the money for Jesus and the disciples
- Betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver
- Hanged himself
- Symbols are a moneybag and thirty pieces of silver or a hangman's noose.



Philip

- Name means "lover of horses"
- Friend of Andrew, Peter, and Bartholomew
- Sometimes shown with two loaves and a cross because of his part in the feeding of the five thousand and his role in stressing the cross as a sign of Christianity and victory.



Thomas

- Name means "the twin"
- Also called Didymus, a Greek name
- Best remembered as "Doubting Thomas"
- Killed by a spear
- Symbol is a spear and a carpenter's square.

