

STORIES THAT TELL: The Return of the Lorikeets

Study 2

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GRIPPED BY THE GREAT STORY OF THE CROSS OF JESUS

The greatest, most gripping story of all is 'the gospel', which brings us to know, love, fear, trust in, and 'believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification' (Romans 4:24-25). To be gripped afresh by it is a life-giving joy.

While it is a very great and magnificent story, that 'wonderful redemption, God's remedy for sin', the Christian can nevertheless 'forget so soon' about the significance of Jesus, and all that his death and life mean. Faith is required! Stories can awaken us.

Tell me the old, old story
Of unseen things above
Of Jesus and His glory
Of Jesus and His love
Tell me the story simply,
As to a little child;
For I am weak, and weary,
And helpless, and defiled

Tell me the story slowly,
That I may take it in—
That wonderful redemption,
God's remedy for sin
Tell me the story often,
For I forget so soon;
The early dew of morning
Has passed away at noon¹

“THE RETURN OF THE LORIKEETS”

For Thy loving-kindness is great to the heavens, And Thy truth to the clouds (Psalm 57:11 NASB)

Some stories can catch us up unexpectedly into the loving kindness and mercy of God in the midst of our misery as human beings. These sorts of stories can exhort and encourage faith. Unbelieving people can also benefit, from being opened up by such stories, and their mysteries, to see and then enter into the mystery of God's grace plan.

In the book, *The Return of the Lorikeets*, there are some delightful, powerful stories that often—without many, if any, words about God—teach us to understand important aspects of the gospel story. One does of course need *an ear to hear*. One of Geoff's redemptive human stories is indeed, *The Return of the Lorikeets*. Amidst disappointment and depression, a man's² beloved friends—the Lorikeets, return to his Sydney home, in a block of flats, evoking a renewed spirit. We can see that loving-kindness is expressed through the creation, as it demonstrates a redemptive aspect, almost inbuilt. [Let me briefly recount some of the details....from pages 80-90]

¹ Katherine Hankey, NCHB, Hymn No. 191 verses 1-2

² Mr. John Dunn, Sydney

INSTITUTIONS AND LOCAL CULTURE

Personally, I am very thankful for the sense of security, familiarity and stability that local institutions—halls, schools, sporting clubs and businesses—bring to life and communities, in particular. However, I am also aware that institutions are most often in some state of flux, change, decay or even renewal. They do not always stay the same, however much we like to preserve our cultural 'icons'. Whenever we see a spiralling down, takeover, or closure of our trusted institutions, it can be very troubling.

***Question:** Identify some of the significant and, personally disturbing changes you have witnessed during recent days, or even over your lifetime.*

Persons of faith are given to apprehend the fleeting nature of life. *Breath of breath, everything is fleeting* (Ecclesiastes 1:2).³ The wise person is one, who takes an eternal perspective, and so accepts that 'for everything there is a season and a time'. The wise person learns to move with the times and seasons, trusting in the Sovereign Lord.

'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' (Hebrews 11:1, NKJV). In Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, we have a substantial future, and 'we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken' (Hebrews 12:28).

"THE MEDIA CENTRE"

Geoffrey Bingham's story 'The Media Centre' in *The Return of the Lorikeets*, NCPI, Blackwood, 1995, tells the story of a dream. The dream unfolds as a disturbing, sobering, apocalyptic shock. In many ways it is a life-giving story, which helps us to live amidst the sorts of dynamics, set out in St. John's Book of the *Revelation*.

Revelation 6:1 Then I saw the Lamb open one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures call out, as with a voice of thunder, "Come!" 2 I looked, and there was a **white horse!** Its rider had a bow; a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer. 3 When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature call out, "Come!" 4 And out came **another horse, bright red**; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people would slaughter one another; and he was given a great sword. 5 When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature call out, "Come!" I looked, and there was a **black horse!** Its rider held a pair of scales in his hand, 6 and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's pay, and three quarts of barley for a day's pay, but do not damage the olive oil and the wine!" 7 When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature call out, "Come!" 8 I looked and there was a **pale green horse!** Its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed with him; they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, famine, and pestilence, and by the wild animals of the earth.

Revelation 19:11 Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a **white horse!** Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

The following excerpts will help us pick up the gist of the story:

'At first I thought I was in one of the local RSL clubs where the pokies have their own flashing lights, and where human corpses have their eyes glued to the pokey-faces. Same flashing lights and colours'.

³ An authentic, and I believe more helpful translation of 'vanity of vanities! All is vanity'.

'My trouble was that I was trying to watch a hundred screens all at once, and it was nerve-wracking because on every screen there was destruction of a kind I had never heard of in the wildest of prophecies or the grimmest of prognostications'.

'Take this one, for example. I am looking at the Taj Mahal in India. It is glowing with that inner light which has made it mystical and famous. Even as I am looking at it there are also innumerable tourists gazing up at it, or emerging from it. I can't hear the screams because only the man with the earphones can hear them. But what I am seeing is the steady disintegration of the famous world-wonder, this Taj Mahal. I can't believe what I am seeing. It is a media trick, I am thinking, but then it can't be. No one seems to be getting hurt-not physically, anyway. It is as though the famous monument to an Indian king's wife is just dissolving. Maybe into low heaps of fine sand or something. I do not know. People are fleeing. They are running in all directions. They are trying not to fall into the long square lake of water, but not all can avoid that. Panic has set in. People are jamming up like logs in a river'.⁴

The story goes on to include the strange, rapid disintegration and dissolving of:

- ❖ St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome,
- ❖ (...The thought that this dream is a hoax),
- ❖ Arlington Cemetery-the famed resting place of America's great fighting heroes,
- ❖ The White House,
- ❖ (The recall of the Islamic invasion of Alexandria's library with its precious manuscripts and its documents...burned by the insensible invaders)⁵
- ❖ The Great Pyramids
- ❖ The slumbering Sphinxes
- ❖ The Sydney Opera House
- ❖ The great libraries of ...all cities—the art galleries, and the museums
- ❖ St. Paul's Cathedral
- ❖ Westminster Abbey
- ❖ The great Buddhist temples
- ❖ The sanctuaries of Ram and Kali
- ❖ The black Kaaba of Mecca
- ❖ The Mosque of the Golden Dome in Jerusalem

'The demonic screens seemed determined to cover every bit of disintegration of the human Babel and of the magnificent towers to humanity's pride, which the human race had built'.⁶

'The President of the greatest nation was speaking on some of the screens. He could not altogether blot out the final extras of the news sleuths, though doubtless he had a hundred cameras on him to fill out those screens. That he was shaken was not in doubt. His lips trembled as he spoke, but he kept summoning up his fading resources. He fought desperately to fulfil his destiny as *the* man who spoke in civilisation's last hour. He promised to penetrate to the heart of this conspiracy, this devilish virus, the

⁴ G. C. Bingham, *The Return of the Lorikeets*, NCPI, Blackwood, 1995. p. 22-23

⁵ After 639 AD the Library which had held some 40,000 volumes was destroyed

⁶ Bingham, p. 27-28

demonic destruction of the highest, purest, and noblest that the human race had created and accomplished. Sometimes he used the name of the Deity, and sometimes he talked of the human race fighting back against this most deadly of all human enemies-the destroyers of culture, the eliminators of all that Man had accomplished. He promised that already his cabinet had met, and that it was in touch with the leaders and cabinets of other countries, and that every resource would be pooled and every power at human command would be brought to bear on a solution. Some presidents and prime ministers followed him, and it was rumoured that others had gone stark mad or had fled to places of refuge, whatever or wherever they may have been.⁷

Of course there were many rationalisations of the event. The religious said it was a recall to religion. The secular said it was a call to devise greater things than humanity had ever achieved. The artists and poets, writers and script-workers were already shaping up great scenarios and art works, and beginning to build afresh as termites do after a nest is disturbed, or as builders set about when a house is burned to the ground. Their problem was that as soon as they began such work it would dissolve like the accomplishments of the past. It was wondered, fearfully and generally, whether the recorded videos would also self-destruct, but, whatever power had caused them to be shown to the human race, it had decided-if only for a time-to preserve them for many viewings, as though viewed repetitions would teach the lesson it had for the human race.

'I saw why tourism has such drive, why men and women travel thousands of miles to see something from the past which they call great, and no sooner is a modern marvel completed than they also will rush to see that. I pondered the thought that only rare souls ponder the thoughts: most are as busy about everything as they are about nothing. They like to be on the move. They are so gripped in a dependency upon works of art that they can never have enough. They feed on the accomplishments of others as though they would be naked and impoverished without them'.

'Misery is in our veins when beauty is dissolved.... **I must admit I oscillate** between horror for the loss of the great and beautiful things, and a genuine delight in being stripped back to what we are in our human weakness.'

Our application, we can discuss. However, ever the preacher, Geoff Bingham can barely resist the preaching and application for us (haha):

'Now I am finding, to my amazement and chagrin, that I am beginning to preach, to point a moral, to urge on the human race to see what I see as its true destiny, unburdened by what it thinks it has accomplished, undistracted by its human undertakings. Perhaps my dream will have to come true before we do that, and whilst I would not wish that upon anyone, I feel the richer for having dreamed, the quieter for having seen how distracted we become from what must be reality. I also remember that the great prophets were visited by dreams and visions. I have great hope that this sliver of a dream of mine may have something of the prophetic nature in it. Who knows? If some hear it, they may prevent the catastrophe, which would be no catastrophe but, perhaps, the liberation of the human race. In that day our static icons may blaze into life and live in the pure air of human humility.'⁸

⁷ Bingham, p. 28-29

⁸ Bingham, p. 31-32