

Insight Into

March / April 2024

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Timothy 3:1).



“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

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General Information

Insight Into is the official youth periodical of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the United States and Canada.

As a Reformed magazine, *Insight Into* seeks to promote the knowledge of the truth and to give biblical guidance to young people in their daily lives.

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MEDITATION

What Think ye of Christ?

“Why asketh thou Me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them” (John 18:21).

Rev. E. Venema

Suggested reading: John 18:15-21

Peter’s denial is one of the most touching moments of Christ’s suffering. No, no one could have thought that it would come so low with this well-known disciple, himself least of all. He would even give his life for his Master. Though he would have to die with Him, but forsake Him and deny Him? No, never! There was One, who knew what Peter was; He had told His child already. That was a painful matter for the Surety, but it was to Peter’s salvation, and not only for Peter, but also for all God’s dear ones.

He knows what to expect from His children, that their courage is weak, their strength small, and that they are but dust. All this is a drop of suffering in the cup that the Lord had to bear ... and what a drop, for it is enough to make the cup overflow.

You see how He is taken captive in the Garden of Gethsemane, and how He goes bound from judgment seat to judgment seat. Also therein lies a comfort for the Church. He is condemned under justice, so that the Church can be saved through justice. Now the Surety stands before Caiaphas the high priest. He is being questioned regarded His teaching and His disciples. And then comes the tender answer of the suffering Surety: *“Why asketh thou Me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them.”* In other words, Christ calls His witnesses, and who is able to witness better than Peter? He has also come into the hall and is standing near the fire. He is able to hear everything that is asked of His Master. Now then, Peter, the Master is there, and He calleth you. You know best what He taught; you have been touched by it; your heart has been changed by it. You have experienced precious things with Him; you have admired Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. No man save Jesus only; and now you are asked what you think of Him.

What are you able to say of Him?

What Does the Bible say about Climate Change?

Has sustainability become a serious Christian theme?
And what should we do?

Rev. G. Clements



“The whole creation groaneth” (Romans 8:22).

The condition of our planet indeed looks worrisome. The pollution of the atmosphere has been raising temperatures for over a century, and scientists claim that temperatures will rise further if we do not change our lifestyle. The atmosphere in which we live and breathe is continually becoming more polluted. The consequences of this are also noticeable in the animal and plant worlds, as fish in the oceans are dying and the polar bear is losing its habitat. The rich variation among bird species is also declining. The weather system is disrupted, tornadoes ravage the coasts, glaciers are melting, some countries have to deal with flooding, and in other places the fields are destroyed due to persistent drought. It is a worrying development.

Human behaviour

God created the earth clean. He gave the earth to the children of men, with the assignment to cultivate and preserve it. Man was to *“have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth”* (Genesis 1:26). John Calvin has well understood this from Scripture. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, an entire chapter is devoted to the

austere use of earthly goods: “How to use present life and its resources” (Institutes III.10). Temperance is a Christian principle. However, in our century the rich countries have often neglected this calling. All attention has been focussed on economic growth and consumption.

Christ compares the future of the Son of Man with the days of Noah, “*They were eating and drinking*” (Matthew 24:38). Or also with the days of Lot in Sodom, where the city suffered from “*pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness ... neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy*” (Ezekiel 16:49). We are approaching the limits with this pivotal disease. The whole creation groans like never before. It should be noted that the creation groans because of “*the abuse of man*” (Romans 8:20).

Divine judgment

The Book of Revelation prophesies about the natural disasters that will hit the earth. When the first trumpet starts to blow, the third part of the trees and the grass will be burned (Revelation 8:7). When the second trumpet blows, a third of the marine animals will die. The water will become contaminated when the third trumpet starts to blow. When the fourth trumpet blows, the sun, the moon, and the stars will lose their power, and darkness will fall over the earth. When the vials are poured out on the earth, the same phenomena increase in intensity and become all-embracing. The languishing creation is primarily a matter of God in the Bible. “*Verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth*” (Psalm 58:11). Do we still notice this?

Permanent recovery

The preservation of our earth does not lie in the reuse of raw materials or in the change to wind energy. Environmental measures cannot reverse God’s high decision. The Apostle John on Patmos saw the irreversibility of the end of all things mainly because of the spiritual contamination. “*And they repented not to give Him glory*” (Revelation 16:9). In all these oppressive events, the last book of the Bible is intended as a comforting book for God’s Church. “*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth*” (Revelation 21:1). Modern theology lacks this prospect, because it seeks to establish the kingdom of God in this world. Modern green theology therefore has something tragic. What comfort does it have to offer in the face of death? “*For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?*” (Luke 9:25). Christ therefore testified to Pilate, “*My kingdom is not of this world*” (John 18:36). John Calvin realized this all too well. Therefore, he wrote after his chapter on “The use of earthly resources” a chapter on “The contemplation of future life.” The earthly goods are only a journey for God’s pilgrims. May this pilgrim figure also be our part.

~ Translated from *De Saambinder*



"Love all Defects Supplies"


Rev. J. C. Philpot (1802-1869)

Without a loving, affectionate spirit, it is impossible to perform those precepts which inculcate mutual forgiveness and forbearance, kindness, tenderness of heart, bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness and longsuffering (Ephesians 4:2, 32; Colossians 3:12-13). To do all this from the heart, and not merely in lip, we must *“walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us”* (Ephesians 5:2). Without this love we may have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; we may bestow all our goods to feed the poor and give our body to be burned, and yet be nothing and have nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2-3). But if blessed and favoured with this love, we shall obey those precepts which direct our walk with our brethren unto God and from the heart. Who that has seen much of Christian churches does not know the difference between the hard, cold, contentious, unforgiving spirit of some, and the tender, loving, affectionate spirit of others? Who that has a feeling heart has not been cut, wounded, and grieved by the pride, obstinacy, selfishness, hardness and unkindness of the one, and been softened, melted and blessed by the tenderness, meekness, humility, loving and affectionate spirit of the other? Love is so the spirit of the gospel, and therefore of the precept as a part of the gospel, that we may unhesitatingly say that few more break the precept than some of the very persons who most contend for what is called practice. Practice is excellent, admirable, indispensable, and the want of it grievous, lamentable, disgraceful. But let us be clear in our views as to what practice is and what it means. If it be the mere doing of what are called good works, as alms-giving, visiting the sick, strictness of life, dress, deportment, accompanied with unblemished conduct, a sister of mercy will outshine us all, and Father Ignatius be a

pattern of holiness. It is plain, therefore, that something more is needful for acceptable obedience than external practice, and that this something is love to the Lord and to His people. Nor is it less evident that this love must be made manifest by our general spirit as well as our conduct; for love is not a mere occasional spurt, a now and then warming up, like a hot fit of the ague, or the slow, relenting gripe of a miser over a charity plate, but a living principle, ever discovering itself in words and acts of kindness, forbearance, self-denial, self-restraint, consideration of the feelings of others, meekness, gentleness and a humble, affectionate, conciliating manner and bearing. You may be outwardly very consistent, but if you are harsh, censorious, self-willed, obstinate, unforgiving, if you would sooner see the church torn to pieces with strife than give way on some point which involves neither truth nor conscience, but merely some concession of opinion, you are breaking the precept as much by your disobedience to its spirit as others by their disobedience to its letter. God, who searcheth the heart and reads our inmost thoughts, feelings and motives, descries with unerring eye our spirit as well as our conduct; and if, indeed, we see light in His light, we shall read our own heart too, and distinguish between the proud, obstinate, self-willed, contentious spirit of the old man and the humble, forgiving, affectionate spirit of the new. Oh, that this kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, and forgiveness more animated our spirits and guided our words and actions. There would then be no stormy church meetings, no broken friendships, no shy looks, no harsh words, no resentful memories, no magnifying and dwelling on infirmities and defects, no raking up of buried injuries, no malicious insinuations, or slanderous reportings. Having had so much forgiven us, we should freely forgive our offending brethren; and, feeling ourselves to be the chief of sinners and less than the least of all saints, we should rather wonder at their forbearance of us, and admire their kindness to us, than cherish a resentful, unforgiving spirit, even against those at whose hands we may have suffered real or imaginary wrong.

“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself.”

~ Hebrews 7:26-27



Twelve Reasons why Jesus' Trial was Illegal

Mr. B. L. Cocherell

The trial of Jesus Christ was without legal precedent. Although Pilate found him innocent, He was convicted and executed. The following are twelve reasons that the arrest, trial, and conviction of Jesus was illegal.

1. There was no legal basis for Jesus' arrest, because no one had presented a formal charge of crime; He was simply taken. Moreover, those who went with Judas to have Jesus arrested included the priests and elders—His judges (Luke 22:52)—among whom were the ones who bribed Judas!

2. Jesus was subject to a secret preliminary examination at night (John 18:12-14, 19-23). Jewish law permitted only daylight proceedings.

3. The indictment against Jesus was illegal, because the judges themselves brought up the charge without any prior testimony by witnesses. The Jewish court (the Sanhedrin) was not allowed by law to originate charges.

4. The court illegally proceeded to hold its trial of Jesus before sunrise, so that no one would be available to testify on His behalf.

5. Even though Jewish law did not permit the trial of a capital offense to begin on a Friday or on the day before an annual festival day, Jesus was arrested and tried the day before the Sabbath, that also happened to be the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread (John 18:28; 19:31).

6. Jesus' trial was concluded in one day, but the law in the Mishnah says, "If a sentence of death is to be pronounced, it [a criminal charge] cannot be concluded before the following day" (Mishnah, "Sanhedrin" IV, 1). This was done to allow sufficient opportunity for any witnesses

in support of the accused to present themselves. Jesus' trial was conducted in private and completed in less than nine hours.

7. Two false witnesses charged Jesus with saying He would destroy the temple made with hands (Mark.14:58), yet He was condemned by the court on the charge of blasphemy. And He was condemned on His own testimony (Luke 22:67-71). However, according to Jewish law, a person could not be condemned by their testimony.

8. The merits of Jesus' defense were not considered. The high priest did not "*inquire, and make search, and ask diligently*" (Deuteronomy13:14) to see whether Jesus' statement was blasphemous. The law in the Mishnah says, "The judges shall weigh the matter in sincerity of their conscience" (Sanhedrin IV, 5). Instead, the court pronounced the sentence instantly and unanimously!

9. Those who would have voted against condemnation were not at Jesus' trial. Joseph of Arimathaea was a member of the court, yet he was not there (Luke 23:50-51). Jesus' opponents had made sure that only those who hated Him would be there.

10. The sentence was pronounced in a place forbidden by law. The trial took place at the high priest's house (Luke 22:54), and according to the law, a death sentence could be pronounced only in the court's appointed place.

11. Most of the judges were not legally qualified to try Jesus, because most were His enemies. In such cases, Jewish law required these judges to disqualify themselves, in order to ensure that the accused would be tried by impartial judges.

12. The court illegally switched the charges from blasphemy to treason when the case went before Pilate. Jesus' opponents wanted Him killed, but they did not want to do it themselves. Therefore, they charged Him with treason (Luke 23:2)—a crime against Rome—so the Romans would be responsible for His death. No evidence of treason was ever presented (John18:29-30), and after a brief interview, Pilate determined that Jesus was not guilty of treason (John18:38; 19:4; Matthew 27:18).

Understanding the political implications of the situation, Pilate allowed the Jews to crucify an innocent man. The trial of Jesus was a mockery of justice. However, this illegal trial did fulfill the prophecies concerning the condemnation of the Messiah by the covenant people.

Rev. A.W. Pink (1886-1952) expounds as to why the Jews did not have the legal ability to condemn Jesus. This is taken from "*Gleanings*

in Genesis” and is part of his explanation of the prophecy of the tribe of Judah. “It is further to be noted that Jacob declared of Judah that there should not depart from this tribe *“a lawgiver until Shiloh.”* It is a striking fact that after Shiloh had come, the legal authority vested in this tribe disappeared, as is evident from John 18:31: *“Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him: It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.”* What a remarkable confession this was! It was an admission that they were no longer their own governors, but instead, under the dominion of a foreign power. He that has the power to condemn an offender to death is the governor or “lawgiver” of a country. It is “not lawful for us” said Caiaphas and his associates – you, the Roman governor, alone, can pass sentence of death on Jesus of Nazareth. By their own admission Genesis 49:10 received its fulfillment. No longer had they a “lawgiver” of their own stock! By their “words” they were “condemned” (Matthew 12:37). The “sceptre” had departed, the “lawgiver” had disappeared, therefore, **Shiloh must have come.**”



“Christian humility does not consist in denying what there is of good in us — but in an abiding sense of ill-desert, and in the consciousness that what we have of good is due to the grace of God.”

~ Rev. Charles Hodges (1797-1878)

“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness.”

~ Lamentations 3:21-23

*“To be in Christ—is the source of the Christian’s life.
To be like Christ—is the sum of the Christian’s excellence.
To be with Christ—is the fullness of the Christian’s joy.”*

~ Rev. Charles Hodges (1797-1878)

“The gospel is so simple, that small children can understand it—and it is so profound, that studies by the wisest theologians will never exhaust its riches!”

~ Rev. Charles Hodges (1797-1878)

“Never had the throne of grace so little to encourage an address to it as when the King of grace was dying on the cross. Never had a sinner less encouragement to come to the throne of grace than when the Saviour was nailed to one tree and the sinner to another. Marvellous faith! A dying sinner, dying for his sins, employs a dying Saviour for salvation. “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom” [Luke 23:42]. How little did Christ, nailed to and dying on the cross, look like a King? How strong was the man’s faith to believe that Christ, through death, was going to His kingdom, and that Christ’s gracious thought of him would save him? “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise” [Luke 23:43]. As if our Lord had said, “This is thy first and thy last address to Me; verily it shall be heard.”

~ Rev. Robert Traill (1642-1716)

The Dark Side of "Artificial Intelligence"

“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:1-4).

The *Insight Into* editors

Man’s quest

Scripture tells us that there is nothing new under the sun. Man’s quest for power, money, and influence has been evidenced ever since Adam fell as he seeks to be *“as gods, knowing good and evil”* (Genesis 3:5). The confirmation in our current world of man building a tower to reach unto heaven in opposition to God has taken many faces such as evolution, communism, atheism, deism, and antinomianism, to name a few. The latest threat to find fulfillment devoid of God is where the use of artificial intelligence may be headed. Does this mean that every use of artificial intelligence is sinister? Certainly not, but the motives behind the big names in this research are not hard to imagine. Some of the companies spending enormous amounts of capital are Google, Apple, and Microsoft, driven by greed and thirst for more power. Powerful companies are building computers that create an artificial reality in which there is no right and wrong, man lives forever, and he controls his destiny--no God, no sin, no redemption needed, no hell and no heaven. Are we living in the days described in Daniel 12:4, *“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”*

What is Artificial Intelligence or AI for short? To put it simply, this is when computers use stored data to arrive at certain outputs. Computers

are being programmed to “think like people.” One major goal of AI is to replace human intelligence with “computer intelligence” to enhance efficiency and innovation. Is this necessarily bad? This depends upon the bias of the programmers who built the data sets and the programs being accessed. Today’s computers can analyze an immense amount of information very quickly. The steering wheel of many of our new cars automatically moves based upon information that the computer in the car receives. But what if the program is faulty and the result is that the vehicle steers off the road. This is analogous to harmful AI.

A sinister world

Many of the devices that we use today such as phones and computers are “listening” to human speech. It has been discovered recently that the Chinese government put listening devices into the handles of teapots that were sold all over the world as they seek to build a data set about every human being, thereby to one day control human behaviour. If you and your friends are talking about getting a new car, your electronic devices take these words, searches the web for relevant data, and then floods your device with advertisements on the cars you have been talking about. One immediate danger evident is how these devices promote greed and covetousness. More sinister is the fact the devices control thinking by advertising particular brands to make these most prominent in our minds. What we see with our eyes soon replaces what is spiritual, eternal, and therefore most important.

A frightening aspect of AI has to do with human relationships. Our creator has designed us to be social creatures. Man now is able to create “simulated humans” visible on the computer screen with whom conversations and “relationships” are established. These relationships are void of reality by which man becomes more and more isolated from what he was designed for. We fear that some of the readers are playing computer games which are having such an effect, where the game player becomes united with the person on the screen with their senses, feelings, etc. This is a world devoid of reality yet seeming so real, a world without morality, contrary to the unchangeable Word of God. The stimuli received from many games causes the release of stimulant hormones which leads many to addictions for more stimulation. Flee this addiction immediately!

Panacea without God or salvation by God through the infallible Word?

What is the end goal of the big companies spending all this money? It seems that their motive is to make man better and move human consciousness into a simulated human who lives forever. (Transhumanism is when man evolves with greater intellect, lives longer, and reverses the

curse of Genesis 3.) Can man be made better when his most prominent need is reconciliation with his Maker? Sin in our heart has created a vast gulf between us and God. Trying to make things better without God was the very plan of the builders of Babel. They sought to keep man together, contrary to God's express command, and protect themselves from whatever would happen in the future without God. Their goal was not about preparing for the judgment that all men are heading towards. They were not considering the message of the worldwide flood where most of their ancestors died and the single ark of safety through God's salvation.

Is there hope in a world that becomes more and more evil? God is not threatened by sinners upon earth. Scripture remains the same despite man, and the kingdom of God continues to be built as man fills the cup of evil. At the end of the past year, one of our ministers pointed out that each year still ends with D.V. [*Deo Volente*—God willing]. God is still in control and has all power in heaven and in earth. He is still working to transform human beings by His work of salvation. We are to avoid looking for happiness in a perishing world and flee to Him alone, who does wonders of grace being “students of the Word.”

What a precious gift the unchangeable Word of God is in a world that becomes ever more evil and predatory. Matthew Henry wrote these pertinent words about it: “The Bible is incomparably the best book that ever was written, the book of books, shining like the sun in the firmament of learning, other valuable and useful books, like the moon and stars, borrowing their light from it. We call it the holy book, because it was written by holy men, and indited by the Holy Ghost; it is perfectly pure from all falsehood and corrupt intention; and the manifest tendency of it is to promote holiness among men. The great things of God's law and gospel are here *written* to us, that they might be reduced to a greater certainty, might spread further, remain longer, and be transmitted to distant places and ages more pure and entire than possibly they could be by report and tradition: and we shall have a great deal to answer for if these things which belong to our peace, being thus committed to us in black and white, be neglected by us as a strange and foreign thing. The Scriptures, or writings of the several inspired penmen, from Moses down to St. John, in which divine light, like that of the morning, shone gradually (the sacred canon being now completed), are all put together in this blessed Bible, which, thanks be to God, we have in our hands, and they make as perfect a day as we are to expect on this side of heaven. Every part was good, but all together very good. This is the *light that shines in a dark place*, and a dark place indeed the world would be without the Bible.”

Life is very short as evidenced throughout our congregations in the past year. The young can be snatched out of life in a moment's time. Are we ready for this crossing into eternity where our lot will be unchangeable? Should we not be seeking real, lasting good in this time of grace? One verse in Scripture that encourages us to bring our need for a saving change comes to mind from Ezekiel 36, verse 37a: *"Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."*

*In God will I trust, tho' my counselors say,
O flee as a bird to your mountain away;
The wicked are strong and the righteous are weak,
Foundations are shaken, yet God will I seek.*

*The Lord in His temple shall ever abide;
His throne is eternal, whatever betide.
The children of men He beholds from on high,
The wicked to punish, the righteous to try.*

*The Lord is most righteous, the Lord loves the right,
The evil He hates and will surely requite;
The wicked His anger will drive from their place,
The upright in rapture shall gaze on His face.*

~ Psalter 20

"And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

~ Philippians 2:8

"The grace of God exalts a man without inflating him—and humbles a man without debasing him."

~ Rev. Charles Hodges (1797-1878)

*"This is true religion: to **approve** what God approves, to **hate** what God hates, and to **delight** in what God delights."*

~ Rev. Charles Hodges (1797-1878)



The Migration of Birds

“But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee ... Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this?” (Job 12:7 and 9).

Mr. Steve Timmer

The earth is full of the manifold works of God. Consider the sun setting over the western sky in the plains, or the snow-capped peaks of the mountains, the beautiful seasons from year to year, and the continual secession of night and day. Shouldn't God's care for His creation be an encouragement in times of distress? Psalm 74 was written in a time of much distress. The temple was broken down, there seemed to be no prophets anymore, the synagogues were burned, and worst of all, God seemed to have cast off His people.

At such a dark time as described above, the psalmist remembered the mighty works God had done **in the past**. He had opened the Red Sea when Israel was facing annihilation. Pharaoh and all his hosts had been drowned in the sea and their carcasses testified of God's wondrous deliverance. He remembered that God had caused a river to flow in the wilderness out of the rock, so millions could be sustained from day unto day.

The psalmist also began to remember God's **present wonders**, such as the wonder of day and night. Have we ever considered this miracle? The earth spins so perfectly in tune with our biological rhythms He has created, so that when the sun sets, we too, need a period of sleep with all its restorative processes. How many mornings have we awakened refreshed and invigorated? We can read about this also in Psalm 104, verses 22-23: *“The sun ariseth, they (night animals) gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.”*

Various Scriptures also speak about the wonders of migration. Let us focus on bird migration and some of the birds that Scriptures highlights. Of the more than 650 species of North American breeding birds, more than half are migratory according to Cornell Lab of Ornithology. What triggers this massive bird movement each spring and fall? It is believed that birds monitor factors such as the length of day, the temperature of the climate, the positions of stars, and even the position of the sun. How can such tiny creatures respond to the

factors mentioned above? Are they not evidence of a powerful Creator and Sustainer? Birds seem to migrate using the earth's magnetic field and familiar land markers such as streams, forests, and lakes that they have traversed with more of their species in the past, probably over the centuries.

Is it not truly remarkable that birds know **when** to go, **where** to go, and **how** to go on labourious trips that typically cover thousands of miles? Take, for example, the Pacific Golden Plover. It travels nonstop from Alaska to Hawaii for about 66 hours **over the ocean**. If they miss the Hawaiian Islands, a tiny speck in the ocean, they will not survive, for they cannot swim. (How would an evolutionist explain this miracle?)

Birds flee to escape impending and impossible events

Birds have been created to escape an environment that would be impossible for them to survive in. The winter for them would be an inhospitable environment in which there are short days and very cold temperatures. Birds spend a large portion of their day feeding and need to maintain a temperature of 104 F (40 C) which would be very difficult in winter. During that time, the insect population is nonexistent, and ice covers the bodies of water. Therefore, most land and waterfowl could not survive. In the winter months, the deciduous trees have lost their leaves and therefore birds have nowhere to hide from predators. (Granted, amazingly many birds do survive such a harsh environment!)

Bird migration is monitored using radar which has opened the breadth of this amazing event. Take, for example, one day a few months ago. On this single night of September 12, 2023, it was estimated that 330 million birds were migrating south in North America!



This was a large number, but on the night of October 6, it was estimated that 1.2 billion birds migrated. This major migration is pictured in yellow on the map. (To see how many birds are migrating, go to the site <https://birdcast.info>. It seems that birds use the stars and fly together in mass when the winds are conducive. It has been estimated that about 4 billion birds migrate from Canada into the United States and about five billion migrate from the United States to the tropics. These numbers certainly are incomprehensible.

Why don't birds stay in the south and enjoy the warm weather in summer? It is believed that the northern latitudes provide a better place to raise the young with less predators and host a huge insect population for feeding. The northern latitudes also provide abundant nesting habitats.

Migration in the spring is different from fall migration. First, spring migration occurs over a shorter period of time. Birds seem anxious to

get to their nesting areas, attract a mate, and begin raising their young. This short migration period lasts from March to late May for many birds in North America. Another difference is seen in the brilliance of the birds themselves. In the fall, many birds are drab colours such as brown tones, but in the spring, they generally have a brilliant plumage, especially among the males. In Job 39, the beauty of the peacocks' feathers is noted. A third difference is that in the spring season birds sing! How wonderful to come out of our homes in late spring and hear the trill of the wren, the song of the robin, or the call of the hawk. Even Solomon spoke of this wonder, "*the time of the singing of birds is come*" in Song of Solomon 2, verse 12.

Migration in Scripture

Jeremiah wrote of several migratory birds as follows: "*Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD*" (Jeremiah 8:7). The four birds in this passage are cited as knowing when to migrate.



<https://www.ynetnews.com/environment/article/s11cfe1n>

The turtle dove of Israel is a very colourful bird about the size of a common blackbird in North America. Large flocks of these birds arrive in Israel and make their presence known by the "cooing" sound that they make. Having migrated back to Israel, their presence indicated to these people that spring had come. These birds were very abundant in Israel in the

past, but their numbers have vastly declined. This bird could be used as a sacrifice instead of a lamb if an Israelite was very poor, as in the case of Jesus' mother recorded in Luke 2, verse 24. In October, it migrates to southern countries and returns to Israel in the spring. The turtle dove is also mentioned in Genesis 15, verse 9, as one of the birds that was offered by Abraham after which God covenanted to give the land of Canaan to his posterity.



<https://biblesearchtoday.com/2019/06/04/turtle-dove-day-4-of-30-days-biblically-wild/>

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The crane is and has been a very common sight in Israel. In the Hula Lake region of Israel, it is estimated that about 90,000 cranes will land as part of their migratory path. The cranes fly from Russia through Israel on their way to Africa with an estimated 40% remaining in Israel for the winter. The crane is a very tall bird around 115 cm (or 45 inches) and known for its very loud piercing call. During the breeding season, this call will usually be accompanied by a distinctive courtship ritual. Interestingly, common cranes fly in family groups with parents and



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_crane

youngsters migrating together!



<http://www.tatzpit.com/site/en/pages/inPage.asp?caIID=9&subID=333&subsubID=340>

The swallows of Israel are the same as the barn swallows that we have in North America. These birds can be seen zipping back and forth in the sky catching insects with an insatiable appetite. Many migrate from Europe and Asia to Africa during winter in the northern hemisphere. They build their nest from mud and guard their young tenaciously from threats. It

was the swallow that David desired to be with, since she could be at the temple where God said He would dwell (2 Chronicles 7:12). This was the place of daily sacrifice pointing to the only hope for lost sinners. However, David was far away, an outcast in Israel and being hunted as a wanted man who testified: *“Refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul”* (Psalm 142:4b).

Conclusion

The Scriptures give us an honest report of events which will one day come upon all those who have inhabited this world. We are facing a judgment day that we cannot escape. Scripture commands us to flee to the Rock of refuge. However, sin blinds us to the enormity of our debt and reality of this future event. How much wiser the birds are than humans! The migratory birds know **when, where, and how** to escape the impossible months of winter. What a great necessity that our spiritual eyes are opened to our need, so that we might flee. When? In the small space of time. Where? To the Refuge set before. How? By a God-given faith. What was David's plea as he viewed his ignorance and sinfulness in Psalm 25? He pleaded, *“show me, teach me, lead me, and remember me.”* The God of Scripture yet condescends to teach those who have no righteousness, for *“good and upright is the LORD: therefore will He teach sinners in the way”* (Psalm 25:8).

We read in Augustine's *Confessions*: “O Lord, give what Thou commandeth, and command what Thou will.”