



Saturday, September 7, 2013 Zapping-you Whenever Thoughts Flow

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## Sheep for Slaughter; The Birth of Jesus Christ; The Death of Stephen.

With every trial, we follow in  
the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

“On Thy account we are being put to death  
the whole day, we are reckoned as sheep for  
slaughter.” –Romans 8:36

Christ came into the world bound for slaughter. He slowly realized He was bound for slaughter when He was around four years old and His dad started reading sections of the prophet Daniel to Him, on his knee. In the meantime, He made a few friends. His dad was nice to him. His mother was nice; pretty but plain. She had a sense of humor, though. His neighbors were mean.

When He was little, He had a babysitter: Selannah, the daughter of Mary's sister. Joseph and Mary had to go out once in a while, just to get away from Jesus. Like all parents, they needed a break. The babysitter was nine years old. She was a nine year-old, watching a two year-old. She was babysitting the Son of God and did not realize it. (Mary didn't tell her.) This is how well God hides Himself.

Joseph and Mary did not tell many people about their Son being the Messiah of Israel. How do you tell people that? It was hard enough for Mary to tell Joseph. She gave it her best shot, but he did not believe her. Her best shot failed, and he was ready to divorce her. It didn't matter that he loved her, which puzzled him.



Selannah;  
Joseph and Mary's  
first babysitter.

Really, he wanted to kill himself. But God massaged his spirit so that he did himself no harm. Joseph had to have an angel show up and tell him to take Mary as his wife. The angel frightened Joseph when it came. (It was Gabriel.) Even then Joseph didn't get the program, but decided he had better trust Gabriel.

By the way, here is an account of the birth of Jesus Christ, from the writings of Mary and Joseph themselves:

### FROM MARY:

Every now and then in life, a significant thing happens that freezes you in time. It stops your blood and you forever remember where you were when the thing occurred. I was in the living room with my feet up, fanning myself, having just finished an article in the *Nazareth Enterprise Review* about a local family

that had put out a fire in their home, when Joseph came in from the shop and stood in the doorway.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Ab Bodie just left. He told me that Quirinius has just issued a decree from Caesar that every citizen of the Roman Empire fifty years and younger has to register an oath of allegiance. And I mean, like, *now*." "What for? Didn't they do that seven or eight years ago?"

"Not this. Augustus has just received the *Pater Patriae*. And it's his Silver Jubilee, or some such wonder. Now he wants something big."

The title *Pater Patriae* is the most acclaimed title a Roman emperor can receive. It means Father of the Country. Still, this didn't seem like a big deal to me. At the last registration, we had each simply signed our names to a document at the town hall.



Washroom.  
The Nazareth home.

"This is different," Joseph said. "It's not just a registration, like last time. This is an oath of allegiance. And Herod has added *his* little handful of spice to the pot."

"How?"

"All 'royal claimants' have to register in Bethlehem."

"What? Why?"

"The government is afraid of us child-bearing types, if you can believe that. Herod wants an accounting of who belongs to the royal throne. He's using this as an excuse."

"But I'm exempt. I'm married now, and you're not a royal claimant. So I can just register here."

"No you can't. Herod says—are you ready for this?—that females could give Davidic heirship to descendants with or without a certificate of marriage. It's true, I hate to admit. But it's the premise of the thing that's so stupid."

"Well, we can just go after the baby is born." I was well into my ninth month.

"I wish we could. But we have to go now. Herod wants this done before the Day of Trumpets."

"What?"

"I know. Four days."

I threw down the newspaper. "You have got to be kidding me. Don't they care that people have lives? We can't just pick up and leave on their whim. What's with these people? Who says we have to register before the Day of Trumpets? I swear allegiance to Caesar, not Herod. When does Augustus say we have to go?"

"The Day of Trumpets. They're all in cahoots."

"What does he care? Augustus doesn't know Trumpets from Saturnalia."

"I know. This Bethlehem thing is all Herod's idea. And so is the Day of Trumpets. But apparently, he's got the sanction of Rome. Ab said everything's coming down fast. If we don't go to Bethlehem to take the oath, Rome can shut down our business. I doubt they would, but that's what they're saying. That's what Ab's saying they're saying."

"So you're dead serious. You're absolutely not kidding about this."

"I'm absolutely not kidding."

"What ever happened to 'advanced notice?' Hello? I'm about to have a baby here. I've got a midwife. Sarah won't be able to go with us. She's got too many other pregnancies now."

"I know. But I don't think Herod is much into maternity issues."

"Are you absolutely positive about this royal claimant thing? That sounds so dumb. I mean, I really look like I could take over Israel."

"You look pretty mean to me. Anyway, Ab's on the counsel. He knows. The whole town is just finding out about it. But I think we're the only ones who have to go to Bethlehem. I don't know anyone else in Nazareth who's blue-blooded and still procreating."

"This is just so stupid."

"Tell me about it. But, hey. C'mon." Joseph flexed his arm muscle. "I could take the nation barehanded, don't you think?"

Joseph could make me laugh during an earthquake. "But you're not a royal claimant." Now he was just standing there again, looking at me. "What are you staring at?" I asked.

"You. I want to catch your reaction. I *am* a royal claimant."



Spoons recovered from the Nazareth home.

My arms were crossed and sitting on my very round belly. “Okay, sweetheart.”

“No, really. I’m David to the core.”

“You don’t know your lineage. Don’t you remember you told my father you were related to no one. You were trying to be funny.”

“I didn’t know it then. But Gabriel thought I should know.”

That got my attention. “Gabriel told you? In all truth ...”

“I swear it. God’s truth.”

“I’m of Nathan.”

“I know. I’m of Solomon.”

“He told you that?”

“He said it was no trouble at all; said I had no idea how big this whole thing was, and that me being related to Solomon was, like, the easiest thing in the world.”

“Joseph! This is too wonderful! Why didn’t you say anything before?”

“I didn’t want anything to change between your father and me. I *want* to be the underdog. As for you ...”

Joseph raised his eyebrows. “Well, you know I was going to get around to telling you eventually. I was just kind of hanging onto it.”

“Come here. This whole thing is getting scarier by the minute. What’s God doing with us?”

“I don’t know. But there’s some reason we have to go to Bethlehem, I know that. Think of it as a second honeymoon. It’ll be fun.” He bent over and hugged me.

“Fun? I wasn’t nine months pregnant on our honeymoon. What if I have the baby on the way?”

“Nothing gets through these hands,” Joseph said.

#### FROM JOSEPH:

Augustus Caesar came through with an asinine plan that every royal claimant of childbearing age in the Roman Empire was to take an oath of allegiance. I guess that wasn’t so asinine, except that Mary and I would get a no-expenses-paid trip to Bethlehem, compliments of Herod. His Royal Bombasity wanted an accounting of everyone related to David, just in case one of us kingly types got the idea of overthrowing Rome, declaring Israel’s sovereignty, and tossing Herod’s fat can out the window. I was too busy in the shop to overthrow Rome, but I think Mary was mad enough to at least pitch His Royal Lardhood headfirst down our meat cellar.

I looked at the whole thing as an adventure. And since I was included in Herod’s paranoid little scheme, I finally had to tell Mary about my lineage. She was surprised, but it didn’t make any difference between us. I’m the same guy I’ve always been. It hasn’t changed me. Gabriel spoke wisdom when he said how different I’d have been had I known my lineage as a child. I’ve thought about that ever since. I think it’s so true.

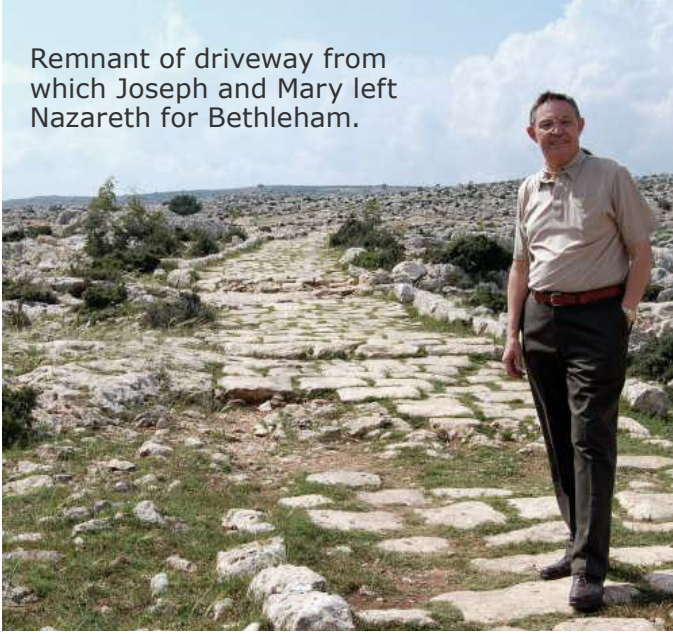
#### FROM MARY:

Joseph packed everything. I left everything to him; I had no choice. I could hardly bend over to latch my sandals, let alone throw loads onto Frisk. Frisk was a good girl, the offspring of Joseph’s first donkey, Imra. I told Joseph he should have named her Friskie, with the “ie” added, to make her more feminine. Joseph said she was sweet and dainty enough, and that if we added the “ie” it would make her impossible to live with. It would be Frisk who we would trust to get us to Bethlehem, me mounted, and Joseph walking beside.

Though it was early fall and we were in the driveway finishing our packing by seven, it was already hot.



Remnant of driveway from which Joseph and Mary left Nazareth for Bethlehem.



Most of our neighbors knew I was of David, and I think they assumed Joseph was merely accompanying me to Bethlehem, not registering himself. Joseph didn't tell anyone different. He was so humble that way, so good. Father and Mother were there to see us off, Father attempting to look calm but unsucceeding, Mother wringing her hands and hugging me, then patting my belly. "The next time I see you," Mother said, "you'll be a mother yourself."

"Maybe not," I said. "God may be merciful and make the baby late." That's what I said to Mother, but the real mercy would have been a contraction right there in the driveway. It had been a long summer and I was ready to have it over with.

"God bless you, Father."

"God be with you, dear Child," Father said. We embraced for a long time.

Sarah, my midwife, had checked me a final time the day before we left. Joseph was there, kneeling beside me next to the sofa as Sarah felt my stomach. "The baby's good, Mary," she said. "Right where he should be." I asked her how long. "Honestly," she said, "you should be ready to deliver on the way. God forbid it, but you must be ready. Have towels, blankets, and a razor on hand. Be sure to have water on board at all times, I know you will. God will be with you." Then she fetched a razor, a piece of my knitting yarn, and some fishing line, and showed Joseph, with the yarn, how to cut and tie the umbilical cord.

Sarah smiled and pet my hand. Then she put Joseph's hand on my belly and told him to feel the move-

ment. Joseph had already done that so many times before, but for Sarah he acted as delighted and surprised as if it were the first time. But now I retract that and say that Joseph was not acting. The movements of the child always astounded him. Since early in the pregnancy, Joseph read Scripture to Jesus every evening through my belly. And each time he read, Jesus would jump. To see Joseph's eyes when that happened! "How can a whole person actually be curled up inside there?" Joseph would ask. But it astounded him even more, I think, to wonder how in the world it would get out.

Bethlehem was a hard three days from Nazareth. Our first day was hot and miserable. We had to stop frequently, whenever we found trees enough for shade, to rest Frisk and get us all some water. Public wells came infrequently between towns, so we stopped at private homes where there looked to be a source of water. Joseph was our front man for this operation. I would see him in the distance talking to the homeowner. Then, in accordance with our plan, he would gesture toward Frisk and me—and I would sit up straight so that my belly would show. If anyone was willing to take pity on us, I was most willing to let them.

\* \* \*

The first contraction hit on the evening of the second day, in the wilderness of Mount Ebal. It was the worst possible place to have a baby. The contraction came so hard that I doubled over. "Joseph! I just had a cramp. I think this is it." He told me not to panic. We stopped Frisk in the middle of the road and Joseph slowly brought me down. He led me to the softest place we could find beyond the ditch, and laid me on my back, kneeling beside me. Several minutes passed. I had got my breath and we thought everything was all right. But then another terrible contraction came. "Oh, God, no! Not now!" I said. Then Joseph said words I still treasure. He told me that this was a beautiful place to meet our son, that it was God's nature at the foot of His mountain, with just us and Frisk and God and the angels. He spoke so convincingly. He massaged my belly then, and made a pillow for me from one of our packs. He kept giving me water, sprinkling me with it, and talking to me.

Several minutes passed and not another contraction came. We at last surmised this was false labor. Sarah had told us it could happen. Still, we waited ten more minutes. "I guess this isn't the place," Jo-

seph said. When he was sure I was ready, he gathered me—literally picked me up—and set me on Frisk. The strength of that man! Thank God it was only four miles to Colchis, where we found an inn.



We pushed harder than I thought possible. Everything in us taxed itself to make Bethlehem by nightfall. Jerusalem, which would have been a stopping place of magnificence and a mecca to reach and rest in, was now only a place to have dinner before the final five miles to Bethlehem. “This is not a bad place to have a baby,” Joseph said. “We still have a day and a half before Trumpets.” But I told Joseph no. If I had the baby here, it would be much harder to get to Bethlehem. “How could I possibly ride a donkey after delivering a baby?” I said. Joseph said we could rent a cart and I could ride in that. I knew he was right, we could. But the spirit told me to push to Bethlehem. “It’s only five miles,” I told Joseph. “There’s something about Bethlehem.” Then he,

too, remembered how he had felt about the City of David. Joseph said he thought we could make it by nightfall. “I feel fine,” I said. “Let’s sail.”

#### ENTRY FROM MARY’S DIARY, ELUL 11:

The 11<sup>th</sup> of Elul now, on the edge of night. The stars are just appearing as we make the city limits. Frisk is barely walking. “You’re a good girl, Frisk,” Joseph says. He pats her rump and reaches into his clothes to pull out a sugar cube for her. She munches it without stopping. A strange thing happens then. It is as if I have already seen the whole scene before, Joseph pulling the sugar cube from his pocket, and Frisk eating it. It almost makes me dizzy, it feels that real to me that I have seen it all before.

\* \* \*

If I concentrate today, I can still hear Frisk, dead these many years, munching that sugar cube. That sound pierced everything and sealed the moment forever in my mind. Strangely, this is the thing I associate with arriving in Bethlehem that night: Joseph pulling out that sugar cube, and Frisk eating it.

\* \* \*

We were surprised at the number of people in the city. “I can’t believe this,” Joseph said. “What’s up?”

“It must be the registration,” I said.

“Oh, great,” said Joseph. “We’ll be lucky to find a room.”

\* \* \*

“It’s impossible,” Joseph said. He came back out after the fifth place we had checked. “There isn’t a room left in this city. Not one. And this is the last inn in Bethlehem.”

“Did you tell them I’m about to have a baby?”

“Of course I told them. But these people don’t give a damn about us or our baby. Some louse of a city this has turned out to be.”

I started to cry. “Please don’t talk like that.”

“All right, but please don’t cry. It’s not going to help us. I’m doing the best I can.”

Night had fallen. We were surrounded by people and never so lonely in our lives. Our only friend was God. “I think we should pray,” I said.



"No," Joseph said. "I mean; no. Look, we just have to start trying people's houses."

I would never have predicted such a reaction from my husband to my request for prayer. I did not understand it and it pained me. "You don't want to pray? Who else can help us but God...*oh, God!*"

"What? A cramp?"

"Yes! And—oh, God—my water just broke. Joseph, this is it. We've got to do something—now. God help us!"

\* \* \*

Joseph said, "I love you, Mary. Please, just hang on."

At that moment, a man came out of the inn Joseph had just tried. "You. You, with the pregnant lady."

Joseph turned. "Me?"

"No, your donkey. Come here. Aber wants to see you."

Joseph looked at me. "Go," I said. "I'm all right. Maybe this is good news. But hurry."

"I'll be right back."

"This is good news."

In less than a minute, Joseph was hurrying back out. "This guy has a stable behind the inn. It's warm and dry and we'll have some privacy. C'mon."

Joy and relief! God had provided for us, as I knew he would. A stable seemed a luxury. Joseph led us behind the inn.

\* \* \*

The stable was separated from the inn by a muddy alleyway where travelers took shortcuts through town. I could never have imagined waiting for traffic in an alley just to get into a stable, but such was Bethlehem that night. Joseph finally couldn't stand it any more and pushed us in, saying "excuse me, excuse me" and then, "get the hell out of our way, please." Some people cursed at us. One man spat.

I was thankful to see that the stable was deep. Three horses were tied in their stalls to the left, with an open but narrow area to the right. "Over to the right, Joseph. And take us all the way back. Hurry. Can we close the doors?"

"I know, I know. Yes, we can close the doors." Joseph slid both doors shut. This shut off some of the noise of the people, but now it was dark as pitch. A horse whinnied loudly when Joseph slammed the door, and Frisk backed up—with me still on her—and ran me hard into one of the doors. I nearly fell off. Joseph was cursing



Mary in Nazareth,  
three weeks  
after the birth.

Gammograph on copper at 700.75 iL.  
Courtesy Joseph Jabrecki.

again, "For God's sake, Frisk ..." and then he said many terrible things.

"Joseph, please!"

He felt over to us. "I'm going to get you down now. Put your arms around my neck." I fell onto him, and he carried me slowly to the back of the stable and gently set me down. We could not see anything.

"I'm going inside to get a lamp," Joseph said. "And I'm going to see if I can find someone who knows something about delivering babies." He groped for my hand. "Listen. I'll be back as soon as I can, I promise." My belly was wracked with another cramp, and I cried out. "Hang on. Don't even move," Joseph pleaded.

The contractions came more regularly now. I cried out to Frisk, to God, to the three horses. I was sure that the people outside could hear me, but I couldn't help myself. Whenever a contraction came, I put my clothes into my mouth. The contractions hurt so badly! Each one was a knife that cut me in half. I was scared. "Dear God, please help me! Joseph, hurry!" My clothing was soaked now, from water and from sweat. "Joseph!" I cried.

\* \* \*

One of the doors finally slid open and Joseph came in holding a lamp. Another person stood behind him,

also holding a lamp. “Mary,” he said, “this is Bathsheeba. Bathsheeba, Mary.”

“Just like the wife of David,” I managed to say. “Are you related to David?”

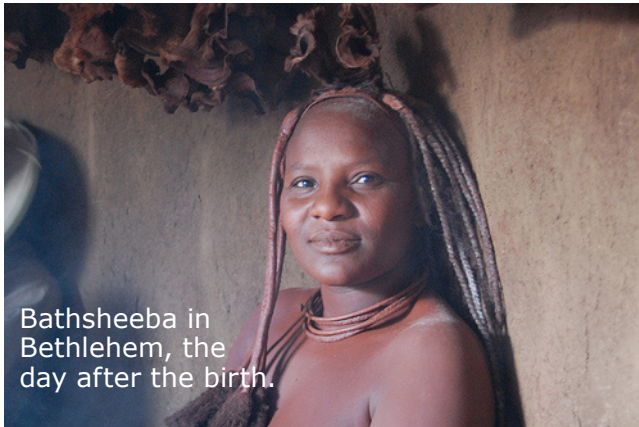
A deep voice came from behind Joseph. “What David?”

“Bathsheeba is from Ethiopia,” Joseph said. “I’m sorry we took so long. Bathsheeba can do this. She’s delivered ... how many babies, Bathsheeba?”

“One.”

“How about that, Mary? One baby. See? Bathsheeba can do this. Praise God.”

\* \* \*



Bathsheeba in Bethlehem, the day after the birth.

Bathsheeba put the lamps on either side of me. Another contraction came, and I screamed into my handful of clothing. “Sir,” Bathsheeba said to Joseph, “take bales and make wall against outside sound.” Bathsheeba took my hand. “No one will hear now,” she said to me. “And you will be free.” I sank into Bathsheeba’s warmth and care. And I travailed. There were enough hay bales for Joseph to stack them three-quarters of the way to the top.

“And now, Child. I must reach and feel for him. You have woman helper before, and she does this?”

“No. She never did this.”

“That is fine. But now see how slow I make it. Breathe now. Hold still, please. And now, I feel him, yes. Good. He is ready. Sir. Give me lamp please, very close here.”

“Don’t let him,” I said.

Bathsheeba took my hand. “Your husband is here,” she said. “And blessings of all gods is here. Do not be in shame. The crown of woman is nothing to feel shame for. And this is the crown of woman.”

Joseph was still in the shadows, near the doors. “It’s all right,” he said. “This is your glory. It’s God’s glory, too. I want to see, Mary. I love you. Please let me.”

I closed my eyes. “Then come,” I said. Another contraction then, and I bit my clothes and moaned my agony.

\* \* \*

The contractions were wrenching me in half. The pain was too much for me. It was a clear pain, so pure and hard and terrible. I could not escape it. It made me see bright lights behind my eyes. Then the knife would come again, to slash me. *How could God allow so much pain?* There was no remedy for the onslaught except to bite my clothes and try to swallow the screams through my teeth, and pray that God would end the misery.

Joseph had knelt in front of me with Bathsheeba, and was holding the lamp. “The baby is here now, Sir,” Bathsheeba said to Joseph. “Come. Here he is. This is the head of him. See?” Then to me: “Now Child. Push.”

“My Lord,” Joseph said. “My Lord, that’s his head. Mary, I can see his head.”

More contractions came, faster and harder and closer than the ones before them. “It hurts so much! Help me! Oh, *God!* Joseph! Help me! *God!*”

Joseph rushed to kneel at my head. He stroked the sweat from my hairline into my hair and sprinkled me with water. “It won’t be long now. The baby’s coming. He’s coming. Push him out now. He’s almost out. Hang on, Sweetheart. God is with you. Keep breathing. That’s it. Just keep breathing. I swear to you he’s coming. It’s almost over.”

\* \* \*

“God help me, *please!* God help me—oh...*God!*”

“Sir, come now,” Bathsheeba called. “Here he is, the whole of him.”

I said, “Don’t leave me!” But Joseph had run and knelt between my legs with Bathsheeba.

“Oh, Lord!” Joseph sounded panicked.

“What’s wrong?” I screamed. “*What’s wrong? Tell me!*”

“He’s so white. Is he supposed to be that white? What’s wrong with him? Moses, help us.”

“Oh, he is fine, fine,” Bathsheeba said. “Oh, how beautiful.”

“He’s fine? Oh, Moses, look at him. Thank God. Mary, he’s fine. You should see this.”



Frisk in Bethlehem.

I was breathing in spasms now, half crying, half laughing. He was out of me. The relief is unknown, except to women. “Show him to me. Bring him here.”

\* \* \*

I was crying, “Oh, my baby.”

Joseph and Bathsheeba moved the lamps, to let me see.

(MANUSCRIPT IS TORN AT THIS POINT)

Anyway, everything God does is unbelievable. Everything. This is why faith (belief) has to be a gift. Nothing God does can be believed by normal people, without a gift. We are all normal people, except for a few of us.

So back to being sheep for the slaughter. Jesus Christ was our precedent for that. He was prepared for it from His birth between horses in the stable, and being delivered by a black woman, who was the first one to touch Him. The Jews supposed all black people to be unclean, but look at how He silences the Jews once again. (The first one to see Him after His resurrection was a loose woman named Mary Magdelene. She was not black-skinned, but many thought she was black of spirit. She wasn't, though. Her spirit was full of light.)

### Cute doesn't matter

We are sheep reckoned for slaughter. Sheep are born to be slaughtered. It doesn't matter that they are cute. You may think that if you are cute in this life, you will be spared. You had better think again. Consider the sheep. Nothing is cuter than a baby sheep, and yet from the day of its birth it is slated to be slung—bound by a rope around all four legs—upon an altar to have its throat slit. Its blood runs quickly down a channel in the stone altar, down into the floor through another stone conduit, then down into the Gihon Spring where it rushes out toward the valley of ben Hinnom.

This is your whole life. It doesn't matter if you bump your head on a bathroom stall door, or lose your wife. It doesn't matter if you praise the name of Jesus, or damn the day God brought you into the world. It's all the slaughter block. This is how the world accounts you. The world goes its merry way. They are not sheep for slaughter, so let them go. They will come back to you, though not so favorably. There is only you and the slaughter-bucket, because you belong to Jesus Christ. It is a miracle of faith that keeps you kicking in the ropes even after your four legs get trussed and the robe-man nears you with that long, unsheathed knife which looks suspiciously like an emotional crisis, or the edge of a bathroom stall door.

The best thing to do is present your neck. When you do this, the sounds of the world grow strangely dim. They say that, just before death, everything outside goes dim and dark. You no longer care if your teeth are brushed or if you're

fat. You no longer care about your mortgage, or whether your kids like you, or how your yard looks. It is best to go with style; I speak now of presenting the neck. The world thinks one thing of style, but I am teaching you another thing about it. (Listen to me, not the world.) I am teaching you the style of the slaughter block. I am teaching you a grim but fine lesson on Romans 8:36.

**“You may think that if you are cute in this life, you will be spared. Think again.”**

I said, *present your neck*, and I meant it. Present it. It is no time to shrink. Be elegant. Think stylistically. Think of Jesus Christ before Pilate. Why shouldn't





**Top:** Pontius Pilate.  
**Bottom:** Jawbone of Pilate.

Jesus Christ walked His final steps upon the stage of His humiliation.

### Get down tonight

He descended to the lowest parts of earth, Scripture says. I used to think this was figurative, but it's not. It's as literal as my left ventricle. The region around Jerusalem is the farthest down below sea level that is possible to "gain" on this glorious little planet. The Dead Sea is 1,401 feet below sea level. It is depressed, and so will you be. The Sea of Galilee is 696 feet below sea level. This means that, even if you are on a boat on the Sea of Galilee, your head would be 696 feet beneath the surface of the ocean, where you would probably suck ink from the butts of octopi.

Present your neck to the priest. Listen to Pilate's questions, but present your neck. There is no sense arguing with Pilate. But since you are reckoned as a sheep for slaughter, you may as well speak boldly to him; you have nothing to lose. Tell him he would have no power over you—none whatsoever—if your Father had not given it to him. Pilate will be impressed, because most criminals pee their pants in front of him, instead of speaking boldly. This is the only advantage of not giving a crap what the world thinks, and knowing the world can't do anything to you unless God lets it: you can speak the truth to the world and let the chips fall. Stephen did this in Acts, chapter 7, and the chips fell right on handsome head.

### Death of Stephen

(Stephen didn't feel anything, I don't think. I think the glory shielded him from pain, much as shock shields

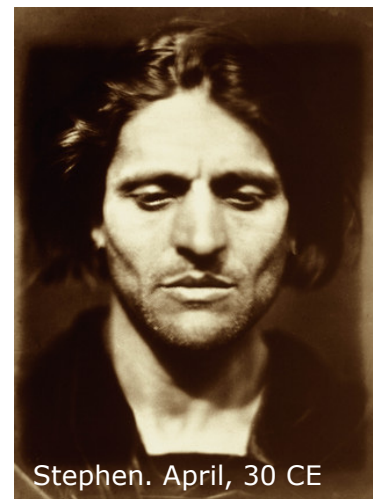
you? This is what the sheep thing hearkens from. He was silent, like a sheep before the shearers, except now the shearers want more than your skin, they want your heart. Go ahead and give it to them, God will give you a new one without ventricles. The knife people are doing you a favor. Pilate did Jesus a favor because at last Je-

people in automobile accidents from feeling anything, even when they see their leg across the street. I will never forget Stephen kneeling in that pit, looking up to heaven. He said he was seeing the son of God standing at God's right hand. That really pissed off the rock-hurlers, and they threw larger stones, harder. One hit him on the shoulder, and over he toppled. Once over, he never moved. The next one got him straight on the right temple, and that was it. Like the sheep on the block, he felt nothing. Next stop: glory. I looked at the man at whose feet the murderers put their coats, and I knew very well who that was. I was the only person who knew, and that contented me. He does not look anything like you imagine him to look. But then, he was only twenty-eight years old at the time.)

### One shiny swoop

As I was saying, present your neck. Pilate will be the one shaking, and so will the world. God will give you a surreal peace as long as you don't give a crap. The secret is to not give a crap. This is just the end of a long line of slaughter God has been busily preparing for you from birth, when you passed from the happy hum of your mother's womb into the white-noise electric hubbub of this germ-filled Enterprise, where the nylons of nurses whiz when they walk. Every day of your life is a sacrifice in preparation for the ultimate presentation at the Praetorium. One shiny swoop from the bloodstained arm, and the world goes dark again. At least your blood will drain. (Watch out, Gihon Spring!) His blood stayed put until the consummation of His extravagant suffering. That's why He's the Savior, and you're the saved.

The next thing you know, there will be a great light. ■



Stephen. April, 30 CE

Gammograph on copper at 600 iL.  
Courtesy Peter bar Jonas.