

# EVANGEL

*The Good News of Jesus Christ*



# The Great Exodus

## Does your vehicle make strange noises?

Here's a handy free diagnostic tool:

“Wahp, wahp, wvup, wahp” – likely your rotors need attention.

“nnYinn, nnYinn, nyongg, nyongg” – check your fuel pump.

“Eek, eek, eek” – yup, there's a mouse on the loose. Might I suggest also taking a close look for your neighbour's prize winning Siamese cat?

Ever had it – you take your vehicle into the shop – and despite an impressive (and humbling) imitation of the noise – you're greeted with only a blank stare? I've got some good friends who are excellent mechanics. But even they have scratched their heads when I describe my problems.

## Whatever . . . ?

Something similar happens – with the whole world, I think.

There are all sorts of noises – which tell us something is definitely wrong on this planet. But can you get to the bottom of it? That's tougher than nailing down what's wrong with my car.

Every religion, in fact, is yet another attempt at diagnosis. I don't know about you – but I certainly don't believe the modern idea that every religion is just a different road up the same mountain. It's more like they're all different garages or mechanics, each with their own idea about the noise. You can only have the modern “tolerant” view of religion if you've first denied there is any truth at all to them. Or if you think we can't really know what the problem is, or worse, if you don't really care. Then, of course, it's just “whatever works for you.”

## Just doesn't cut it

“Whatever works for you” doesn't cut it when you're fixing your car. I think it doesn't work in life, either.

What really is our problem?

What specific noise is your life and my life making? Just what does it mean? Those are questions worth some serious attention. Let me for a moment use the Biblical account of the Exodus from Egypt to illustrate the Christian perspective.

## Under the thumb

Maybe you know the story. If not, here it is in a nutshell.

The Israelites are slaves in Egypt, under the thumb of a nasty king, a dude we call “Pharaoh.” They cry out to God for help. God then comes to their aid with ten plagues of truly Biblical proportion. A man named Moses is his servant. Finally, Pharaoh lets all the Israelites go, only to have second thoughts a day later. When he thinks he's got the Israelites trapped by the Red Sea, God miraculously divides the water and makes a path for his people. Pharaoh and his mighty army also attempt to set foot on the sea floor. But they quickly find out they're in way over their head. Quite literally, of course.

## Lessons from the pyramids

What does this account tell us about our problems and God's solution? On a number of levels, this is a perfect picture of our predicament and God's provision.

First, the Israelites are slaves in a foreign land. If you read the account in the Bible, you can't help but see that Pharaoh has them completely in his grip. He drowns Israelite baby boys in the Nile (although God foils some of that, too.) He literally works the Israelites to death. The pyramids tell you that the kings of Egypt knew how to use slave labour – and you see that cruel “art” in the Bible, too. The Israelites are powerless before this monster.

## “You gotta serve somebody”

It's a picture, not just of ancient peoples enslaved in a foreign country, but of everyone in this world.

Many years later, Jesus tells descendants of those Israelites (and that's deliberate) that anyone who sins is a *slave* to sin. (John 8:34) Sin is never something little or casual – sin is a tyrant! Sin puts you under its thumb! There is a greater slavery on this planet than we realize at first.

In the same chapter Jesus goes even further. He also tells us that there's someone worse than Pharaoh – there's a devil at loose in the world. And we're under his grip! That shocked the Jews he was first talking to. I think it shocks us as well.

## DIY

Our world loves the message of “do-it-yourself.” So many religions have that, too. Here's your problem, they say, and here's the tools for *you* to fix it.

I'm flattered by their approach. But the fact is, no matter how handy we are, in this area – our souls, our natures – we're unable to make things better. That's what the Exodus tells us. Sin and satan have us in their grip – just like the Israelites under Pharaoh. We're up against stuff more serious than we realize.

One commentator I read on the book of Exodus quoted a bit from Martin Luther King Jr. You can imagine that this was one of King's favourite Bible books. “When slaves unite, the Red Seas of history open and the Egypts of slavery crumble.” (That's from King's book 1967, *Where Do We Go from here? Chaos or Community*, p. 124.)

But Rev. King must have read a different Bible. It's not slaves uniting that sparks the Exodus or opens the Red Sea. Not in the slightest. As a matter of fact, the Israelites themselves are pretty jaded, skeptical, even strangely

comfortable in their misery. Just like we often are.

*God* has to come to our aid. *God* has to break our chains. The Exodus account makes it pretty clear.

And we see this beautiful truth even more clearly in the birth and death of Jesus Christ. God has come to us. That's a sign of both our powerlessness and God's power. In Jesus we see the God who acts – not us. He must.

## Imposters

Secondly, look at the help God gives – the ten plagues.

Most of the ten plagues, if not all, are directed against the Egyptian pantheon, their collection of deities. At first glance, God turning the Nile to blood, or multiplying frogs, or bringing darkness on the land – at first glance this appears to be simply natural stuff.

But the Egyptians had populated nature with hundreds of gods and goddesses. The Nile was the manifestation of a few gods – considered, for instance, to be the life-blood of Osiris. The sun, you probably know, was worshipped in ancient Egypt as the god Re or Ra.

In the ten plagues, God is reducing the Egyptian pantheon to rubble. All divine imposters are revealed to be just that.

In the Bible, there is a reoccurring refrain after each cycle of plagues is introduced: “Then they will know that I am the LORD” God says through Moses.

Through the plagues, the Israelites will know who God is. They also seemed to have been enchanted by Egyptian gods and goddesses. The Egyptians will know who the real God is – that there is a God far above all their cheap imitations. The broader world, too, will hear about what has happened in Egypt. And quake in humbleness and awe.

## Me and My Harley

This is also part of our problem. We're not only powerless slaves, we're also entranced by that which is not God.

The ancient Egyptians loved their idols. But really we're no different. Sure we don't have Re or Horus, Osiris or Seth. But we still love to find things to erect as worthy of worship and trust. They might be named Harley Davidson or Country Estates, Jack Daniels or AIG.

Still today God needs to destroy the imposters. And He does – in Jesus Christ.

It's in Jesus Christ that we see the glory of the true God – far greater than we can imagine, in wrath, in love, in power. It's in Jesus Christ that all other “gods” are reduced to dust. What “god” of ours can save us from death? What “god” of ours can make us sinners righteous with God? What “god” of ours can tie the devil up in his own plans?

The Israelites needed a serious refresher course in the character of their God. So do we all. The ten plagues accomplished that goal. Jesus does that in the greatest way. In his salvation, we see a love, a grace, a power, that is clearly divine. He makes it clear, there is no one like the LORD.

## Blood

Then there's one more part of the Exodus to notice.

Before the actual Exodus, the Israelites have to sacrifice an animal – a lamb (or goat kid.) They have to smear its blood on their doorposts – as a sort of protection. (It's the first Passover.)

That blood reminded the Israelites that they were sinners, too. They're not really any better than the Egyptians.

In fact, this sacrifice connects with another rather strange event

at the beginning of the Exodus. In chapter 4 you can read that at one point the LORD met Moses – and was about to kill him. There, too, blood has to be shed.

God – about to kill Moses? What's going on?

All of this reminds us of what we hardly dare to consider – all of us are under the great wrath of God. None of us are entitled to deliverance. If blood is not shed, the coming of God means judgment and destruction even for the Israelites – just like with the Egyptians and their gods.

## The biggest danger

I think it would have been incredibly tough for the Israelites to realize this. Essentially – their biggest danger was not Pharaoh. Their biggest danger was God Himself!

It's tough for me to believe this, too. But this is the diagnosis of the Bible. As a sinner, God is against you, against me. The noises in the world are a sign also of his displeasure and wrath. Our biggest danger is not cancer, climate change, whatever. Our biggest danger is a holy God!

But – blood has been shed! Blood of the great Lamb of God, God's own Son. And so those who do not deserve salvation can richly enjoy it!

## Let's go!

What's wrong with this world? We need an Exodus – a way out. Made by no one less than God Himself.

And that's what the work of Jesus Christ is all about! It's a great exodus – out of a world, out of a life, ruled by sin, satan, even under the wrath of God!

Are you coming with?

Thanks for reading,  
Marc

# What does it mean to repent?

The magazine you are reading is called *Evangel: The Good News of Jesus Christ*. In it you will sometimes read that we need to repent. Sometimes, the authors will explain what this means; other times, they may take for granted that the reader knows what this means. In this issue, I would like to write a whole article of what it means to repent. I am going to do this by structuring the article around a definition of repentance someone gave about 450 years ago. The definition goes like this: **“(Repentance) is the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification (= putting to death) of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification (= coming to life) of the Spirit.”** Bear with me and keep reading as I unpack this definition for you bit by bit.

## Repentance is a turning of our life to God

Repentance is a turning of our life to God. God eternally exists as three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who eternally live in a relationship of love with one another. In fact, they live in one another (John 14:10-11). This “indwelling” in each other and living for each other in love is an expression of their unity as well as their diversity (John 17:21). At a certain moment, God created a world and human being to inhabit this world. God absolutely had no need to do this, but He did so because He wanted human beings to enter into and share in his relationship of love (1 John 4:8, 16).

That God created human beings in his image illustrates this (Genesis 1:26). Among other things, this means that we have the capacity

to be indwelt by God just like the Father, Son and Holy Spirit indwell one another. We have this capacity because God created us with an immaterial or inner self and a material or outer self. The immaterial or inner self is often called the soul or spirit. In other words, one of the reasons why the Father, Son and Holy Spirit can live in one another is because they do not have a body, but are spirits. The reason why God can live in us is because we also have a spirit.

God’s design then for human beings is that they turn their souls or spirits towards Him so that He lives in them and they live in Him. When we do, we experience no greater joy in life. Moreover, we notice just how well life functions for us for this is how we were made to function.

Ever since the fall into sin, however, we no longer do this naturally. In fact, ever since Adam and Eve fell into sin by turning their souls or spirits towards themselves and finding the fulfillment of their lives in themselves, we all have a natural tendency to turn our souls or spirits towards ourselves and try to find the fulfillment of our lives in ourselves or in the things that God has created instead of finding it in the Creator Himself.

You see, it’s so easy to think that you will be happiest if you think primarily of yourself first. Me first, me second and me third. And it is easy to think that you will find the greatest fulfillment in life by having lots of money and being able to do what you want, when you want and with whom you want. Sooner or later, most people realize that this is not the case. Because we were made to live in God and have God live in us, living for ourselves and for the pleasures that this world has to offer never really ultimately satisfy.

That is one of the reasons we need to repent, i.e., turn our life to God. Think of this, first of all, as a turning in your thinking. You change your mind about the ultimate values of your life. But also think of this as a changing of the direction of your life. You’ve been walking west, so to speak, but now you need to walk east. When we turn in our thinking and in the direction our life is taking, the image of God begins to be restored in us. We begin to live in God again and have Him live in us.

## Repentance is a true turning of our life to God that arises out of pure and earnest fear of God

Repentance, however, is not just a turning of our life to God, but a *true* turning of our life to God. The Bible gives us ample examples of people who only turn their lives to God because they do not want to go to hell because they are afraid of God’s final judgment. You will understand, of course, that this is not a true repentance or turning of our life to God. This is not to say that fear of God’s final judgment cannot play a role in your repentance. It can and it should, but the point is that that this is not what should be the only motivation for your repentance.

What should be the primary motivation? First, your sorrow and hatred of sin, i.e., that you are living your life contrary to God’s design. That you are not living in God and having God live in you, but are living primarily for your own self-fulfillment and joy. True repentance means that you have a deep sorrow in your heart for this as well as a deep hatred for it because you have offended God by this kind of behaviour.

Second, in addition to having a deep sorrow and intense hatred of sin you should also have a firm trust in God's benevolence or mercy towards you in Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). In addition to sorrow over and hatred of sin, putting your faith in Jesus Christ in whom God offers you mercy is part of true repentance or turning to God.

Third, repentance is not just something inward. It is also something outward. To be sure, it begins with what lives in your heart: your sorrow and hatred of sin, on the one hand, and your trust in Jesus Christ, on the other. But if this turning around that has taken place in your heart is true, this will also manifest itself in the way you live. You will begin to stop living for yourself and all the good things this world has to offer you and begin to live in God and live for the Creator of all the good things He has placed in this world.

### **Repentance consists in the mortification of our flesh and the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit**

Repentance is a true turning of our life to God that arises out of pure and earnest fear of God. This repentance consists in the mortification of our flesh and the old man. I already touched upon this a bit when I said that ever since Adam and Eve fell into sin by turning their souls or spirits towards themselves and finding the fulfillment of their lives in themselves, we all have a natural tendency to turn our souls or spirits towards ourselves and try to find the fulfillment of our lives

in ourselves or in the things that God has created instead of finding it in the Creator Himself. This still continues to be the case when we become Christians by turning away from this way of life and turning to God as the One in whom we live and find our highest joy. This natural tendency or bent towards ourselves continues to exist in us. To be sure, no longer as our primary tendency or bent, but it is still there and it can trip us up at any moment. This is what the Bible calls our flesh or our old man or our old nature. The author of our definition of repentance compares this flesh or old nature to "a smoldering cinder of evil, from which desires continually leap forth to allure and spur [us] to commit sin." In other words, just as a fire has not gone out if it is still smoldering, so our old nature is still smoldering and generating sin in our lives.

This does not mean that our humanity must die, but that our sinful desires and sinful will must die. Inwardly, this calls for a life of self-denial, a life of saying no to desiring and willing to live your life for yourself and the things of this world. Outwardly, this calls for a willingness to accept and embrace the sufferings and difficulties God puts on our path and in our lives as gifts of his love that teach us to draw closer to Him and continue to live in Him and have Him live in us.

Because this smoldering cinder of evil or our sinful nature stays with us till the moment we die, this saying putting to death of our sinful nature or saying no to our sinful desires and will is a continual process that needs to take place until our death. In this sense, the author of our definition of repentance refers to this daily practice of putting to

death of our sinful nature as a "race of repentance that (we) are to run throughout (our) lives."

Yet, true repentance not only consists in mortification or the putting to death of our old nature. It also consists in vivification or the coming to life of the new nature. In other words, true repentance not only consists of saying no to sinful desires and wants, it also consists of saying yes to good desires and wants. These two aspects of true repentance do not have to occur one after the other, but often happen simultaneously. Thus, the whole life of a Christian is a continuous putting to death of the old nature and a continuous coming to life of the new.

### **Repentance occurs when we are united to Christ through the Holy Spirit by faith**

How does this happen? Well, this happens when you place your faith in Jesus Christ. When you do, the Holy Spirit unites you to Jesus Christ. More precisely, then the Holy Spirit unites you to Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. That is part of the mystery of repentance. Ultimately, it is something Jesus Christ Himself does in us through his Holy Spirit as we cling to Him in faith.

And so the question really is: do you want to believe in Jesus Christ? If you do, you will find that Jesus will begin to change the way you think and behave. He will begin to restore the image of God in you by having you turn your life God so that you live in Him and He lives in you. And remember, this is how God designed us to live. Moreover, this is our highest joy! Thanks for reading.

*Dick Moes*

# God Prepares Moses to Become a Saviour

## Bible Story Based on Exodus 2:11-24

The young man Moses lived in the palace of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. He had a very good life. Pharaoh's daughter had taken him in when he was a young child. She loved him and treated him like a prince. He wore beautiful clothes and his hair was groomed in the style of the Egyptians. He was taught by the best teachers in the land.

But Moses knew that he was not an Egyptian, even though he looked like one. He was a son of the Israelites. He lived in the palace, because Pharaoh's daughter had saved Moses' life. Pharaoh had wanted to kill all the Israelite boys, but God had used the princess to keep Moses alive. God had a special plan for Moses.

The princess raised Moses to serve the false gods of the Egyptians. But the true God of the Israelites made sure that Moses did not forget him. He watched over Moses when he learned the ways of the Egyptians.

Moses was very curious about his own people. He heard stories that they were forced to work very hard. They were beaten if they did not work hard enough.

When Moses became a man he visited the Israelite villages. To his horror he saw that an Egyptian taskmaster beat an Israelite worker. Moses could not bear the injustice. He looked around to see if anyone was watching. Then he killed the Egyptian and quickly buried him in the sand.

The following day he went back to the Israelites. He was shocked to see two Israelites fight with each other. He called to the man who had started the fight, "Stop hitting your brother!"

The man looked at Moses. With a mean look on his face he said, "Who made you our ruler? Are you going to kill me like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?"



Moses realized that someone had seen that he killed the Egyptian. He went back to the palace. But the palace was not his home anymore. Pharaoh had found out what Moses had done and he wanted to kill him.

Moses had to flee. He did not belong anywhere. The Israelites did not like him because he was an Egyptian prince. The Egyptians did not like him because he was an Israelite traitor. He must run for his life.

He fled through the desert. After many days he came to the land of Midian. He sat down at the well to meet the townspeople who came to get water. Soon a group of seven young women arrived with a herd of sheep. They were the daughters of a Midianite leader. They started to draw water for their sheep.

As the young women were working hard, a group of shepherds came to draw water as well. They were strong and bossy. They pushed the women away and went first.

Moses stood up. Again, he was not able to bear the injustice. He chased the shepherds away and drew as much water as the young women needed for their sheep.

When the sisters came home the father asked, "How come you are so early?" They told their father about the Egyptian at the well who chased the pushy shepherds away and drew as much water as they needed.

The father sent for Joseph and invited him to stay in his house.

Moses explained that he looked like a prince of Egypt because he was raised in Pharaoh's palace. But he was born a son of Israel. The father trusted Moses and gave him one of his daughters as wife.

Meanwhile the Israelites in Egypt cried to God for help. The Lord remembered that he promised to be their God and Saviour. He would send them someone who would set them free from their slavery. His saviour was Moses, the rejected Egyptian prince who was despised by the Israelites. But the Lord had prepared Moses for this work. The Egyptians had taught him to be a leader, and the Lord had taught him to wait for God's time.

Moses became the saviour that led God's people out of Egypt. He brought them to a place where they could serve the Lord freely.

God's people have another Saviour, who is more special than Moses. This Saviour is the Son of God, who came to live among men. He is our Lord Jesus.

Jesus cannot bear it that we suffer under the burden of sin. He wants to set us free from doubt. He wants to deliver us from oppression by the prince of darkness.

Jesus gave his life to set us free. After he rose from the dead he went back to heaven. He is preparing a place for us where we can serve our Lord forever without the burden of sin.

Jane

# Activity Page

## SAVE ME O LORD

God's people call on their Lord to help them.  
The Israelites cried to the Lord for help when they were oppressed in Egypt.  
The Lord heard their cry and prepared Moses to save them from their troubles.

## GOD SAVES TODAY

Today God's children still cry out to their Lord to save them. God always hears their cry. But he saves them in a different way.

In our days God's people do not all live together in one country, like the Israelites did. Today God's people are part of many nations all over the world. But they are united in the Lord Jesus. Together they are the church.

God helps his church by saving them from sin. Their sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus.

The Lord hears the prayers of his children by making all things work together for their good. He will make sure that they have peace with God both now and forever more.

## JESUS IS OUR SAVIOUR

Moses was the saviour who led the Israelites away from their troubles in Egypt.

The Lord Jesus is the Saviour of all God's children. He saves them from the burden of sin. In freedom they can serve the Lord.

## WORD PICTURE

We are saved because Jesus died on the cross. The sign above the cross is a crown. It shows that Jesus was King, even when he died. The little fish in the cross is the sign for Jesus. It is based on a Greek word and stands for: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour.

## THE PSALMS

The Bible has a special songbook. It is called "The Psalms." Many Psalms sing about the times when the Lord saved his people.

PSALM 116 verses 4 and 6:

*"I called on the name of the Lord:  
'O LORD, save me!'*

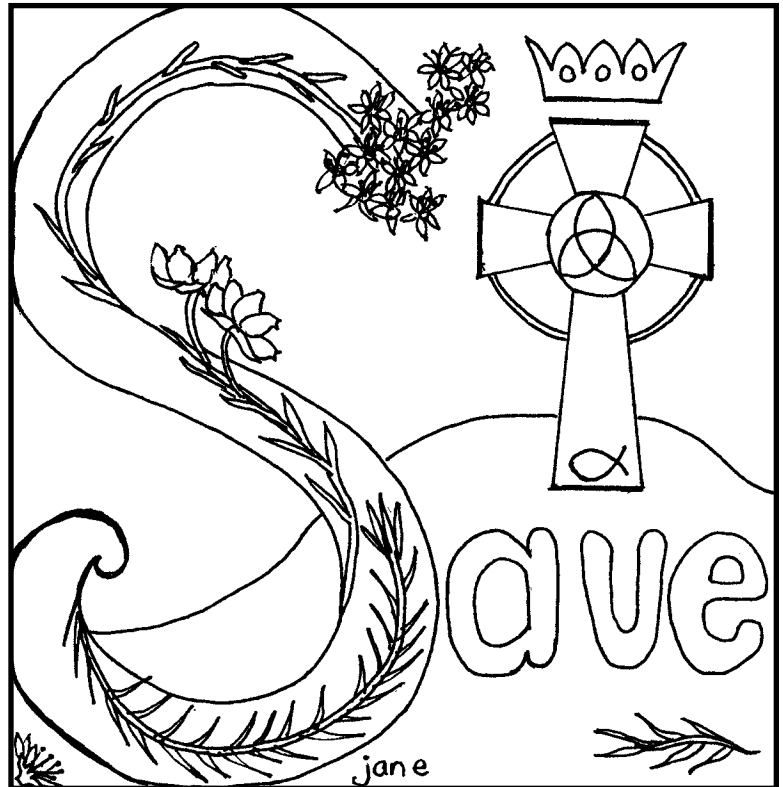
*When I was in great need, he did save me."*

## THERE IS A GREEN HILL FAR AWAY

*There is a green hill far away  
Outside the city wall,  
Where our dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.*

*There was no other good enough  
To pay the price of sin.  
He only could unlock the gate  
Of heaven, and let us in.*

(Song by Cecil Frances Alexander, 1848)



Dawn

jane

# A Shocking Love Mystery

*“None of the rulers of the age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”*

## 1 Corinthians 2:8

If I were a police detective who had to figure out who the murderer was, I'm sure that I'd arrest the wrong person. I don't think I've ever figured out a murder mystery correctly. When Columbo, Hercule Poirot or Miss Marple reveals who the murderer is, how he did it and why, I'm always as surprised as anyone. Maybe more.

But there is one mystery which many people don't understand, but which I do. I have the inside scoop on this one, and I would that you had it too. It is not a solution to a murder mystery but to a love mystery. Because people did not understand, they arrested and executed the wrong person. It is a shocking, love mystery.

People thought that Jesus was an enemy of the Jewish people and a blasphemer against God, so they arrested him in the garden of Gethsemane and executed him on a cross on a hill called Golgotha. They thought he was a contemptible criminal who deserved the most disgraceful death imaginable. So the people cried out to have Jesus crucified.

But it was a mistake. Jesus was neither an enemy of the Jews nor a blasphemer. He was the Lord of glory, the most glorious being ever to walk the earth. He still is the Lord of Glory. He's the only human being who deserved to walk from the realm of humankind, into the realm of God. This is described in Psalm 24. This

Psalm celebrates the arrival of the King of Glory through the gates of heaven.

How could the rulers of the age in which Jesus lived, make such a terrible mistake?!

Well, it is the mistake which I would make too, and so would you. Sin has fallen upon this world. Sin has blinded us to certain facts and gives the devil lots of power. The devil can disguise God's love so effectively that we think it is its opposite – hatred. We all can hate Jesus and want him crucified because we can all think that is what he deserves. We think he is the guilty one, but the truth is, I am the guilty one and so are you. We are guilty of sinning against God. Jesus did no wrong. He only loved us. And he let people crucify him so that he might die on the cross in our place. It was an act of unimaginable love.

And we thought he hated us!

The only way we can see the love of God in Jesus is by the Spirit. He alone can make me understand. “God has revealed it to us by his Spirit”, Paul writes in the very next verse.

I don't understand many mysteries, but this is one that I do understand. As I said before, I got the inside scoop. The Holy Spirit helps me to understand that Jesus is the Lord of Glory. I pray that the Holy Spirit makes you see it too, and then goes on to enthrone the Lord Jesus as king in your heart over your whole life.

Go to Church. There is the place where the Holy Spirit loves to explain the greatest mysteries – and you'll wonder ever after, “Why didn't I see that before?”

*Paul Aasman*

## EVANGEL

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