

“An Epic Event”

When an event is described as “epic” it refers to an experience extending beyond the usual scope of ordinary events. Many times the reference is to the heroic dynamics which will display themselves in the midst of an event. Some might describe our current pandemic as epic, implied by referring to the past month and a half as “unprecedented times and circumstances.” We even recognize those heroes in many situations, especially in the medical field, who are dedicated to ministering to those affected by Covid-19. However, what actually makes these times and circumstances unprecedented?

It is unprecedented in that it has turned **our** whole world upside down, affecting **our** context and times. Unprecedented is always understood in light of the present context as people in other generations experienced dynamics which affected their lives in epic proportions as well, thus bringing them to describe their situations as unprecedented too.

In 49 AD some Christians in Thessalonica were *dragged . . . before the city authorities*, being accused of welcoming men into their homes who were affecting the world in epic proportions. They were referring to Paul, Silas and Timothy on a missionary journey bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. Their accusers described them as *men who have turned the world upside down*. How were they turning *the world upside down*? They were accused of *acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus* (cf. Acts 17:6-7).

Before you interpret their accusations as simply “drama” in order to produce affect, it was a serious matter to confess “Jesus is Lord” in the Roman Empire. Anyone who countered or

discredited Roman paganism with its many gods was not only undermining the Roman government but was discrediting Caesar's claim to be Lord as well. This was the cause for the persecution of Christians of epic proportions in the first few centuries of the Christian Church.

However, the message of the Gospel is epic as it continues to turn *the world upside down*. Why? Consider this drama of a lifetime in light of the dramas of epic proportion which you experience daily on the big screen.

A good movie usually contains a number of basic elements in the midst of a drama to make it epic:

- ▶ people
- ▶ an evil villain
- ▶ oppression
- ▶ a hero
- ▶ redemption
- ▶ restoration

As the drama unfolds it reveals an evil leader who desires to oppress people and bring them under his/her control.

The majority of the movie draws you into the numerous ways in which this villain continues to victimize, abuse and destroy people's lives in various bouts of confrontation.

Every scene brings you closer and closer to wanting the evil scoundrel to suffer, get blown away and be destroyed in the end by a hero who acts on behalf of the people.

Once this hero has accomplished this act of redemption, delivering the people from their oppressive enemy, they can enjoy new life, free from the oppression of evil.

The movie concludes where the people enjoy an environment where everyone can continue to live in peace and tranquility with each other again

. . . .

. . . many times, however, leaving you with a screen shot of some implication that the evil is still present even though its power has been conquered.

While you may think that writers and directors thought all this up in their minds, God enacted it first. In fact, it is actually the drama of your life.

You've been abused, victimized, crushed and oppressed spiritually under the power of sin, the world and the devil. You're a sinner living with sinners in a sinful world. When sin came into this world through Adam & Eve giving into the devil's temptations (cf. Genesis 3:1-13), God made a promise to send His "hero" to defeat the devil's power (cf. Genesis 3:15).

As the drama of human history unfolded over and over again this villain seemed more and more successful at oppressing God's creation and the human race, the love of His creation.

So He sent His Son, Jesus, to crush the devil's head and destroy His power in a great battle which took place on a hill, on a cross, where the Savior of the people died and all looked hopeless and defeated. Continual oppression in the power of sin looked inevitable with the Hero gone.

Then came that one Sunday morning in the midst of apparent hopelessness. Jesus rose from the dead in the midst of a great earthquake! He defeated the enemies oppressing you—sin, the devil and death! No longer can they have their grasp on you as you cling to Jesus, trusting in His heroic redemption in your life.

You now can live a new life! Sure, as the drama unfolds you still deal with the presence of evil, sin, sicknesses and yes, even viruses, in this sinful world this side of heaven. But you

know Who is Lord. You know Who wins the war in the end. You know your life is secure in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus!

This is the epic reality of Easter. It isn't just about one particular Sunday of the year when families traditionally get together for a big meal. It is an event of epic proportions because it infiltrates every day of your life turning your *world upside down*. Thus, no matter what the context or situation which seems unprecedented to you, you can in faith exclaim: *Thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:57) Amen.

— **Pastor**