

The Inscrutable Question: Death Cloths: Darkness in Job 38:9, Bandages in Luke 2:7, & Darkness in Luke 23:44-45a

23. I'd like to go back to one of the passages of Scripture that helps document these things in the Written Record:

Job 38:8 - "Who enclosed the sea with doors, when, bursting forth, it went out from the womb;

v. 9 - when I made a cloud its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band."

The words, "swaddling band" (NASV and KJV) and the word "wrapped" (NIV), is the Hebrew noun:

חַתּוּלָה *chathulah* - "bandages"

24. This word has an interesting correlation to the spiritual and physical deaths of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the first Christmas this word's Greek equivalent was used to describe prophetically the destiny of our Lord Jesus Christ from the first moment he entered into human history in hypostatic union.
25. The complete development of this subject was originally taught as a Christmas special on December 21, 1999 and was lesson number 246 in the Joshua series. The lesson was entitled, "The Indescribable Gift." I'd like to go back to that study and extract a few principles in order to correlate Genesis 1:2 with the birth of our Lord.

Luke 2:7 - And Mary gave birth to her firstborn Son. She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and she laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

- 1- After the delivery of the true humanity of Jesus Christ, His parents took Him and performed a technique common in the first century. Babies were wrapped in strips of cloth not only for protection but also to keep their limbs straight.
- 2- In this case apparently all that could be found available were bandages. The Greek word for the cloths with which our Lord was wrapped is the aorist active indicative of the verb:

σπαργάνω / *sparganoō* / - "to wrap in bandages"

- 3- This word was generally used as a medical term and originated with Hippocrates, a fifth-century B.C. physician who is recognized as the Father of Medicine.
- 4- The word also applies to the cloths that are used in the binding, or "swathing" of a corpse for burial.
- 5- Consequently, the Baby Jesus at his physical birth was wrapped in burial cloths or death clothes.
- 6- After preparing their Child in the prescribed fashion of the day, Mary and Joseph then laid him in a manger. This word looks odd to us but it is the perfect English word to describe where our Lord spent His first night of the Incarnation. The word is the locative of place from the noun:

φάτνη / *phatne* / - "manger"

- 7- The word goes back to the Middle English when it was spelled *mangeour*. The word can be tracked all the way back to the Latin, *manducare*: to eat, chew, or devour. Its modern English definition is a trough or open box in a stable designed to hold feed for livestock.
- 8- So "manger" is a perfect translation. But since we are not very familiar with the term the best translation for us is the not very sophisticated, "feeding trough."

- 9- In this setting and the circumstances it offered, we see a number of signs and messages that relate to our Lord's future work on the cross.
- 10- First, our Lord was wrapped in cloths that were used to prepare a person for burial. Jesus was born to die twice:
 - 1) He was to die spiritual death as our substitutionary sacrifice on the cross and
 - 2) He would die physical death because His work would be finished at that point.
- 11- As the Baby Jesus lay in a feeding trough He was surrounded by a wooden box crafted by a carpenter, the trade that He would be taught by His father, Joseph.
- 12- During His two deaths He would be nailed to a cross of wood for the sins of the world.
- 13- His physical body was perfect having no genetically formed sinful nature and thus no imputation of Adam's sin. Therefore, Jesus was born qualified to be Savior.
- 14- Further, He was born the Last Adam; a perfect Man in the same manner that Adam was created perfect by Christ Himself in the Garden of Eden several millennia before.
- 15- The shadow of the cross was thus well represented in this stable. The qualified Messiah must have a perfect body in His true humanity.
- 16- At physical birth He was wrapped in death cloths foreshadowing His two deaths on the cross.
- 17- On our Lord's first night in hypostatic union He slept in a box of wood. Thirty-three years later He would die spiritually as our Substitute nailed to a cross of wood.
- 18- Consequently, the Personality lying in that wooden feeding trough was the greatest Christmas gift ever given. It was a gift from God the Father to the entire human race.
- 19- In fact it was a demonstration of the perfect, undiminished, and unconditional love of God expressed through perfect grace.

John 3:16 - [CTL] God demonstrated His unconditional and undiminished love to the world in the following manner: He gave His uniquely born Son for the purpose and with the result that anyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life.

- 20- This gift from God was presented to the world on the first Christmas as described in:

Luke 2:7 - And Mary gave birth to her firstborn Son. She wrapped Him in death cloths [σπαργανώω / sparganoo] and she laid Him in a wooden feeding trough [φάτνη / phatne] because there was no vacancy for them in the inn.

- 21- The fact that the Christ Child was swathed in death cloths and laid in a wooden feeding trough is a sign that His birth was unique: He was on a mission of death. The Archangel Gabriel relates this information to the group of temple shepherds who were tending their flocks near Bethlehem:

Luke 2:8 - In the same area there were shepherds living out in the fields and they were guarding their flocks by night.

v. 9 - And suddenly the King of Arms in the Angelic Order of Battle hovered above them and the glory of the Lord shined around them and they were struck with fear.

v. 10 - And the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid! Behold, I bring you good news of great happiness which shall be for all people;

v. 11 - for this day in the city of David there has been born for your benefit the Savior Who is Messiah, the Lord.

v. 12 - This sign is for your benefit: you will find the Baby having been swathed in burial cloths [**σπαργανώ / sparganoō**] and lying in a feeding trough [**φάτνη / phatne**].”

22- The Lord was born at night which means that the Light of the World entered the world in darkness swaddled in death's cloths and lying in a wooden feeding trough.

23- Interestingly, when our Savior was nailed to the cross being judged for our sins this judgment took place in darkness:

Matthew 27:45 - At noon, darkness [**σκότος / skotos** /] fell upon all the land until three o'clock.

Mark 15:33 - When it was noon, darkness [**σκότος / skotos** /] fell over the whole land until three o'clock.

Luke 23:44 - It was now about noon, and darkness [**σκότος / skotos** /] fell over the whole land until three o'clock,

v. 45 - the sun being obscured [**ἐκλείπω / ekleipo** /].

24- Because of the sun's obscurity some commentators explain this darkness as an eclipse. This explanation is impossible since the Passover, which was about to be observed, always falls on the 14th day of Nisan.

25- Since months on the Jewish calendar always begin with a new moon, then Passover falls on a full moon making it impossible for a solar eclipse to be the explanation.

26- Thus the darkness that occurred during our Lord's judgment on the cross was a miracle. A plausible explanation for why the Father enshrouded our Lord with a “swaddling band of darkness” is offered by:

Liefeld, Walter L. “Luke.” Vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein. (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1984), 1045:

Luke does not say what caused the sun's light to fail. Some think it was to symbolize, or possibly to veil, the judgment endured on our behalf by Christ. A number of Scriptures link darkness with God's judgment.

27- Throughout Scripture the word **σκότος / skotos** / , “darkness,” also belongs to Satan. It is also a metaphor for sin, immorality, spiritual blindness, evil powers, evil works, and the kingdom of Satan. In short, *cosmos diabolicus*.

28- Darkness is also used for judgment as is seen in the three passages we are noting. In Job 38:9 we see that the fall of Lucifer caused the universe and specifically the earth to fall under the judgment of darkness:

Job 38:9 - I made a cloud the earth's garment and thick darkness its swaddling band.

Luke 2:7 - And Mary gave birth to her firstborn Son. She wrapped Him in death cloths and she laid Him in a wooden feeding trough because there was no vacancy for them in the inn.

Luke 23:44 - It was now about noon, and darkness fell over the whole land until three o'clock,

v. 45 - the sun being obscured.

- 29- In Genesis 1:2 the judgment on Planet Earth is imposed by a darkness initiated by the removal of all electromagnetic radiation.