



- September 2002 Newsletter -

My friends,

It seems that the central difficulty we all face is how we *interpret* our lives.

Sometimes, our prayers are answered...but sometimes they aren't. Why is that? Sometimes, God seems so near...but sometimes, he seems to have abandoned us. Why is that? The things that have happened to you in your life – why did that happen? And how come the things you so desperately wanted to happen didn't? You see, whether we rise or fall, whether or not we keep faith or lose it, if we are going to live from the heart, we have got to see more clearly what's happening to us. As Paul said, we must see "with the eyes of our heart" (Eph 1:18). Allow me to share with you, then, an excerpt from the book I'm working on, entitled *Waking the Dead*...

Things are not what they seem

And what do all those great stories and myths tell us? What does every fairy tale have in common? Wherever they may come from, whatever their shape might be, they nearly always speak to us Three Eternal Truths. First, *things are not what they seem*. There is a whole lot more going on here than meets the eye. After the tornado, Dorothy steps out of her old farm house to find herself in a strange new world, a land of Munchkins and fairies and Wicked Witches. The land of Oz. Alice falls through the rabbit hole into Wonderland. Jacob falls into a dream under the desert stars, and sees a ladder "resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God...ascending and descending on it" (Gen 28:12). He wakes, more awake than he's ever been in his life thanks to the dream, and realizes for the first time that there is more going on around him than he ever imagined. "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it" (28:16).

This is precisely what the Bible has warned us against all these years – "un-awareness." We live in two worlds – or better, in one world with two halves, part which you can see and part which you cannot. We are urged, for our own welfare, to act as though the unseen world is in fact more weighty and more real and more dangerous than the part of reality we can see. Things are not what they seem. Not by a long shot.

We are at War

There is another, more urgent quality to every true myth. The Second Great Truth brought to us comes like a broken message over the radio, or an urgent telegram from a distant country, telling us that some great struggle, quest or battle is well underway. May even be hanging in the balance. When the four children stumble into Narnia, that lovely country is under the spell of the White Witch and has been for a hundred years. In another story, Jack and his mother are starving and must sell their only cow. Frodo barely makes it out of the Shire with his life. In the nick of time he learns that the ring he bears is the fabled One Ring, that Sauron has discovered its whereabouts, and the Nine Black Riders are already across the borders searching for the little hobbit with deadly intent. The future of all Middle Earth hangs in the balance.

Again, this exactly what the Scriptures have been trying to wake us up to for years. Christianity isn't a religion about Sunday School and pot luck suppers, being nice and holding car washes and sending our second-hand clothes off to Mexico. *This is a world at war.* Something dangerous is unfolding all around us, we are caught up in it, and above all doubt we have been given a key role to play. Do you think I'm being a bit too dramatic? Read again the tale told in the story of Daniel, chapter ten. A cosmic battle, an unanswered prayer, a man caught in the middle.

The reason we love Star Wars or Narnia or The Matrix is because they are telling us something about reality that we never, ever get on the evening news. Or from most pulpits. *This is our most desperate hour.* Without this burning in our hearts, we lose the meaning of our days. It all withers down to deadlines and bills and voicemail and who really cares anyway? Do you see what has happened? The essence of our faith has been stripped away. The very thing that was to give our lives meaning and *protect us* – this way of seeing – has been lost. Or stolen from us. It is as if we have landed on the beaches of Normandy in the early hours of D-Day, June 6, 1945, with a lawn chair and a book to read. We are mistaken; we are that unprepared for our lives.

Things aren't what they seem. This is a world at war. Now for the most stunning news of all.

The Weight of Your Glory

Last, but not least, not by a long shot, every mythic story *shouts* to us that in this desperate hour we have a crucial role to play. That is the Third Great Truth and it happens to be the one we most desperately need if we are ever to understand our days. Dorothy is just a farm girl from Kansas, who stumbled into Oz because someone had hurt her feelings and she decided to run away from home. Yet she's the one to bring down the Wicked Witch. Frodo, the little Halfling from the Shire, young and naive in so many ways, "the most unlikely person imaginable," is the Ring Bearer. A little boy will slay the giant; a loud-mouthed fisherman who can't hold down a job will lead the Church and a whore with a golden heart is the one to perform the deed that Jesus asked us all to tell "whenever the gospel is told around the world" (**).

A glory has been given to you, a glory the enemy fears. All his powers are set against that glory...which is to say, against your heart. I believe if you'll hold this up like a candle to light your way, things will suddenly come much more clear to you. At least, that is my prayer.

Fighting on, and in desperate need of your help,

John

PS. We would love to keep you informed about what is happening at Ransomed Heart but we NEED YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS. Some of our correspondence are only sent via-email. If you've never received an e-mail from us, please logon to www.ransomedheart.com and provide us your current information under STAYING CONNECTED.

Also, we are very excited to invite you to our first ever Ransomed Heart Women's Event. It will be held in early November 2002 in Colorado and all of the details and registration information will be posted shortly at www.ransomedheart.com.