

Reverse The Curse

Tragedy can happen in an instant. One moment in time can literally make the difference between life and death, altering the trajectory of human existence for all time ... and sometimes throughout eternity. Such is the power of an event that happens or a decision that is made in a single crucial moment.

It was 15 years ago today (January 28, 1986) that schoolchildren around North America sat watching such a crucial moment unfold before their eyes, as the Challenger space shuttle lifted off, carrying for the first time a civilian schoolteacher who planned to make history by teaching her lessons from space.

Christa McAuliffe had beat out 11,000 other candidates in a nationwide competition to become the first civilian in space, with the full support of her husband Steve, 9-year-old son Scott and 6-year-old daughter Caroline.

She carried with her the school flag from Concord High School in Concord, New Hampshire, where the entire student body was watching the mission on a TV monitor.

But suddenly, in a split second of time, what Christa had promised would be "the ultimate field trip" ended in disaster. The last words radioed on that freezing January morning 15 years ago were from shuttle commander Dick Scobee: "Roger. Go with throttle up." Only 74 seconds into the mission, the watching world knew that something had gone terribly wrong, when a huge explosion and an awful plume of smoke wracked the sky above them. It seemed an eternity until the voice of Mission Control uttered the fateful words: "Obviously ... a major malfunction." Families were quickly hustled away from the launch site, and horrified teachers tried to calm thousands of children in hundreds of schools. Steve McAuliffe, with Scott and Caroline, sat in Christa's dorm room at NASA, her sneakers still on the floor. "This is not how it's supposed to be," he said.

Mission Control turned rapidly to spin control. Rather than delivering the State of the Union address that evening as scheduled, President Ronald Reagan made a brief speech. "We'll continue our quest in space," he promised traumatized Americans, for whom the word "shuttle" had once sounded so routine.

"There will be more shuttle flights and more shuttle crews and, yes, more volunteers, more civilians, more teachers in space." But there would be no shuttle flights for almost three years. There would be no teacher in space.

And for those left on the ground, for the families of the seven adventurers who died, there would be years of bitterness, of grief and pain and anger before, finally, lives could heal. **One moment in time ... gone horribly, irreparably wrong.**

The search for shuttle debris would take seven months, 31 ships, 52 aircraft and 6,000 workers. It would find Christa McAuliffe's lesson plans for space floating in the Atlantic Ocean, and would discover that some of the astronauts had been alive during the three-to-four-minute fall to the sea.

Shortly after the last funerals were held, a commission chaired by Secretary of State William Rogers revealed the conclusions of its investigation: The explosion of the \$1.2 billion spacecraft was due to a faulty O-ring seal on the solid rocket fuel booster, a \$900 synthetic rubber band that engineers had warned was vulnerable at temperatures below 51 degrees. The Challenger launch, canceled three times, had finally taken place in 36-degree weather.

The Rogers Commission found both the company that made the O-rings and NASA itself guilty of allowing an avoidable accident to occur. "It shouldn't have happened," said Christa's mother, Grace Corrigan. "They were told not to launch, and they decided, 'Twenty-four other shuttle flights went off O.K.' They were complacent."

One crucial decision ... gone horribly, irreparably wrong.

Think back with me for a moment to mankind's most horrific hour, when Adam and Eve failed God in the Garden of Eden, effectively dragging all their descendents down with them into the gaping chasm of sin. A tragic transgression frozen forever in a split second of failure, when the guillotine of guilt fell and God's highest creation was severed from their highest destiny.

The Bible informs us that God gave only one command to Adam and Eve, yet they still disobeyed Him by eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that grew in the Garden.

Genesis 2:16-17 ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷But of the tree of the knowledge

of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Genesis 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

In that awful instant, they knew that they were naked before God and each other – even their own bodies would now be a hindrance to them in their relationship with a holy God. The knowledge that had looked so desirable only a moment before suddenly lost its attractiveness, as the full weight of moral responsibility now fell on the frail shoulders of fallen humanity.

The Bible doesn't tell us directly what kind of tree our first parents ate from when they disobeyed God, but it does give us a strong hint. Ask yourself this question: When Adam and Eve immediately grasped in desperation for a covering for their nakedness, what was it that their hands fell upon? That's right – FIG LEAVES.

Genesis 3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

Man was attempting to cover his fallen nature with the fruit of the tree of KNOWLEDGE – his own thinking on how to achieve righteousness before God and conquer the evil now throbbing within his own heart. And mankind has been trying in vain to sew “fig leaves” together ever since, with hundreds of religions, thousands of self-help projects and millions of righteous deeds.

But the answer will never be found in our garments of goodness, our clothing of competency or our aprons of accomplishment. In actual fact, it is this very desire to jealously guard our right to choose in matters of good and evil that has been our undoing.

Mankind was felled by a fig tree! It is well documented in ancient Jewish literature that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was a fig tree. For example, the Midrash refers several times to “the fig leaf which brought remorse to the world” (Midrash, Bereshith Raba, 15,7).

But wait! There's a SECOND fig tree in this tale! Both Matthew and Mark record a strange event in their gospels that has always puzzled Bible scholars ...

Mark 11:13-14, 20-21 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, [Jesus] came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever ... And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. (see also Matthew 21:18-20)

The dilemma scholars find in these verses is quite simple - Jesus cannot be teaching a lesson about the consequences of unfruitfulness here, as is often assumed, because it would be clearly unreasonable to expect figs from a fig tree when “the time of figs was not yet.” There is **no seemingly sensible explanation** for His curse on an innocently barren fig tree. But could it be that there is something much more momentous happening in this mysterious passage?

Consider for a moment the possibility that Jesus is making an eternal statement as He walks into Jerusalem, only four days before his crucifixion. Might God be looking back to another fateful day in history as He now stands in flesh before a tree **just like the one that started man’s slide into sin?**

That would explain Jesus’ otherwise unjustified curse, if He is now bringing judgment on the **same type of tree** that Adam and Eve first ate of, the one that brought sin and death to humanity. Jesus curses the root cause of man’s problem, leaving it withered and dead – **for when the God-Man speaks, the curse is cursed!**

The first Adam ate the fruit of the tree and brought death, but the second Adam – Jesus Christ – could not find any figs to eat. **He did not partake of sin!**

Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was IN ALL POINTS TEMPTED like as we are, YET WITHOUT SIN.

SECOND ADAM – 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47 ⁴⁵And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit ... ⁴⁷The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

Johnny James message: “Second Beats First”

The first Adam cursed us; the second Adam blessed us.

The first Adam hurt us; the second Adam healed us.

The first Adam put us out; the second Adam brought us in.

The first Adam put us down; the second Adam lifted us up.

The first Adam put us on the road to Hell; the second Adam put us on the road to Heaven.

The first Adam ate off of a tree; the second Adam died on a tree.

The SECOND ADAM brought us the SECOND BIRTH so we could avoid the SECOND DEATH and be ready for the SECOND COMING.

SECOND BIRTH – John 3:4-5

⁴Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? ⁵Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

SECOND DEATH – Revelation 21:8

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

SECOND COMING – Hebrews 9:28

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

In cursing the fig tree so that it withered and died, Jesus was illustrating His victory over all the factors in the Garden of Eden around which the first Adam failed. No man would ever be able to eat from the cursed fig tree again; and after Calvary, no man would ever have to rely on His own insufficient power to know good and evil ever again.

Jesus was saying in effect, “I am about to ‘**reverse the curse**’ that has bound my creation.”

YOU HAVE A SECOND CHANCE! No matter what your life has been like up until this point, you have a chance to reverse the curse of sin that you have carried since you came into this world.

If you are born once, you'll die twice! But if you are born twice, you'll only die once!

You are better off not to be born at all than to not be born again.

You must be born again, because only your second birth can cancel out your second funeral! (You think your first funeral is sad? It only lasts an hour; your second funeral will last for all eternity!)

Two dimensions to being born again: water baptism puts you in Christ, Holy Ghost baptism puts Christ in you!

YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN ... OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT!