

Chapter 16: The Ocean Portrait

Life Application Verses:

Job 38: 1-11 (NIV). Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said: “Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? “Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt’?”

During the writing of this book, my wife and I and my daughter’s family co-rented one of those timeshares in the panhandle of Florida. It was August and the Florida heat was



staggering with humidity so thick and clingy that you could slice it with a dull butter knife. We braved the weather to spend time with our daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter; and to go down to the beach and play in the water and the sand, and maybe collect a few rare shells. Melting in the 100+ index heat was just a nice added side benefit! My official role—as TaterPop the Grandfather—was to help watch my very active 4-year old granddaughter. She loved to get in the water with her ‘floatie’ and when we were in God’s ocean with all its creatures, I made sure she did not get past a few feet out into the Gulf of Mexico. “I was pretty good at it too”—he says as he nervously watched for fins, rays, and crabs!

After ‘floatie’ time, we made our way to the sand where my new duties included building a sandcastle so that my granddaughter could jump on it and smash it like the Vikings might destroy a castle in their path. I’d work at building for an hour and she could crush it in minutes, all the while laughing. I loved every minute of it. Our first morning there, I gathered all the gusto I could muster—which was fleeting as the heat became nearly unbearable. I grabbed some breakfast and sat down in the family room of the guest house to rest before venturing out as I had done late in the afternoon on the previous day. The view provided was as if God had painted a canvas before my eyes. It was a Heavenly Minded scene right out of His storehouse of Visual Blessings. My Earthly Good response was to give Him the Glory for the exquisite beauty that He was providing.

The sky was a huge backdrop of pale blue with a slight mix of nearly transparent white clouds; the ocean was an uncharacteristically calm shade of deeper blue, with various birds feeding across the watery landscape. A fishing boat had come into view and was bobbing slightly from the nearly inconsequential small waves that were barely visible from our vantage point. Like Air Force F22 Raptors, a group of pelicans flew in formation across the field of vision as if they were just out for a quiet flight before fishing in the ocean waters. In the forefront of this masterpiece, there was the beach sand that gave the canvas a bright glow near the lower portion of the Blessed Portrait—the reflective light from the sand was almost impossible to view without shading your eyes, whether by holding your hand in front of your face or wearing sunglasses. In between the sky and ocean was the horizon which seemed to go on forever as it separated Heaven and Earth. It was almost as if the demarcation line, seemingly perfectly straight and at the same time with the slightest curvature to indicate that our world is not flat—spoke to God’s Power of Creation. His power to make ocean, land, birds, sand, waves, ocean breeze, heat, dunes, and all the items you find on the beach—became *The Ocean Portrait*—that tells me that our world is not a random evolution of events and living things, but an ordered series of events and creations that were designed by a Most High God.

The afternoon before when we had arrived, we were so busy unloading and getting down to the beach to beat the sunset, the entire process was more ordeal than ordered. I think that God had already planned the next morning’s portrait for all of us staying at the beach area.

Brought to my mind was what God had said in Psalms 46: 10: “Be still and know that I am God.” As I sat still on the sofa absorbing every color and hue before my eyes, I thought about Job as he realized who had the power to command *even the ocean*: “This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt?” (Job 38). I wondered at that moment how many Christians (and non-Christians alike) have been to the world’s beaches, been blessed with similar Ocean Portraits, and never considered the Author of All Things? My question is: “How can you witness the ultimate artist at His best and not be moved to the depths of your soul?” In other words, God surrounds us with His natural order of things for which we enjoy the Heavenly Minded beauty. Moreover, we are to be Earthly Good responsible stewards of His creation.

Is everything we see around us an example of *The Ocean Portrait*? Of course not. Because God has given us Free Will, we inhabit this Earth and have been given authority over it (Genesis 1:28). However, if we use our Heavenly Minded Free Will, we can find Earthly Good Ocean Portraits in roses, trees, grass, mountains, rivers, fields of sunflowers, gardens, the Grand Canyon, Mile Crater, the Redwoods of California, from the seat of our flight at 35,000 feet, and more opportunities than we can even begin to list here. We can also see the devastation in our war ravaged areas, the trash that we illegally throw out of our car windows, floods, draught, land excavation, and so on. How did I go from *The Ocean Portrait* to Earth’s devastation? Simple—as Christians we must be the Guardians of this Earth as our home away from Home. We are the Guests here, and how would you like it if guests stopped by for—say a lifetime—and leave the place in a mess? We should be involved in the care of this world in supporting legislation that provides a balance between the needs of mankind and the world that God gave us. If we destroy this one, there is not one waiting in the wings. There’s no spacecraft ready to lift off to a Brave New Galactic World. There is only God and His provision. And rightly so!

I would like to think that our nations are very concerned with the cleanliness of our towns, cities, communities, states, and our oceans. Yet, we often hear about water contamination, ocean dumping, landfills with serious issues, litter on our highways, and the problems don’t seem to be improving. As Christians, maybe we should organize groups to lead

in this global issue. For example, on the NBC Affiliate in Montgomery, one of the reporters gives a weekly review of local restaurants. At the end of the segment, if there are any that fall below an acceptable score, he shouts: “CLEAN UP!” That is the message to all of us: CLEAN UP!

If we do less than we can or should, CLEAN UP will be the sentiment of those who look at historical video clips of what was and the outcome of those who did nothing. There is a saying that goes something like, “For Earth to become an uninhabitable trash bin, all it takes is for good men and women to do nothing.” Start on your local street. Adopt it, clean it, and put into place a method to maintain it. Move from your local street to your neighborhood: “clean, rinse, and repeat.” Migrate to your neighborhood, to your neighbors’ neighborhoods; from the neighborhoods to major areas in your city; then to districts in your state, entire states, entire nations, and globally. Can we stop all the illicit dumping or manufacturing misconduct? No, but does that mean we should sacrifice *The Ocean Portrait* for the sake of inaction? I shall not provide an answer to this question as I Hope and Pray that you have an answer of your own. I believe that God gave us this Earth to impart Heavenly Minded followers of Christ to be Earthly Good stewards to care for it in our actions—by cleaning up, promoting clean resources, running for office to enact reasonable legislation, Praying for our Earth, etc. I’m not advocating Green Living as Political Rhetoric to garner votes; I am advocating involved action, based on Prayer and Guidance from our God. God made this world and He surely can guide us on how to best care for it. Amen!?

What I didn’t mention to you about *The Ocean Portrait* is that on this same beach there were beer bottles, some discarded trash, and other stuff trapped in the sand and beach shrubs. From my viewpoint, I didn’t see that until we went outside and actually got on the beach. Then it became obvious that Free Will had left its footprint. I opted for God’s footprint in *The Ocean Portrait*. Moreover, I opted to understand that God’s power allowed the ocean to move in tides, yet He commanded the ocean to stop at its boundary—which God set at the creation of Earth as He gave Free Will to care for His creation. To find *The Ocean Portrait* that instills in you a Heavenly Minded action to create Earthly Good in clean resources and natural beauty, ask God what part you might play in this process while you are a Guest of His on this Earth. This planet is all we have; let’s be busy at the task of doing some ‘CLEAN UP.’

A Question of Curiosity:

As we understand and assume that people will not take care of the Earth as God intended, does this give us excuse as Followers of Christ to do nothing? Don't you think that it is our responsibility to Pray for a clean Earth—by giving Feet to our Prayers? If your response is that we didn't create the mess and thus it is not our responsibility to clean it up, we might seek God's guidance on this...and find *The Ocean Portrait* (beauty in nature) that moves you to action.

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“O God, thy sea is so great, and my boat is so small.” ~ Unknown. ~

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***The Ocean
Portrait***

The Ocean Portrait

‘Appear O My Oceans’, spoke *I Am That I Am*; Massive, and Mighty, and Moving, Before;
I Granted It Life, To Even the Clam; I Gave It Law, ‘At Shore, No More.’
To make their depths, no man can know; Yet they exist, their waves, they break;
Stand on the shore, their ebb and flow; Watch the tide, *My Praise*, You make.
My Voice, I spoke, I made them all; Creations Glorious, to remember, *My Name*;
Look upon each with Holy Awe; Do you see *My Power*, are you still the same?
~ DrK ~

Near the end of our stay, as the beachfront storm approaches, a band of Pelicans fly out of harm's way. When Life's storms arrive, fly to God for His protection from the storms of life! God's creation can teach us so much if we would take a moment of our time and look for it. Whether it is the beach, mountains, cloud formations, the flight of birds, the beauty in the flowers that surround us, and so many things that God has given us. The Ocean Portrait can be anything of beauty that God in Christ has provided us in His creation. Yet, we sometimes get in such a hurry that we miss His Hand of Creation in the very world in which He created for us to enjoy! Have you ever thought about how the oceans obey God and stop at the shoreline, unless there is a storm? Or, have you ever thought about the Power of Christ when He calmed the storm when He and the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee? What awesome power!



My Prayer For You¹:

I offer the following verses as a Prayer to God for clarity of His Awesome Power: (Job 38: NIV)

38 Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said: ²“Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? ³Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. ⁴“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. ⁵Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? ⁶On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—⁷while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? ⁸“Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, ⁹when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, ¹⁰when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, ¹¹when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt’? ¹²“Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, ¹³that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it? ¹⁴The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment. ¹⁵The wicked are denied their light, and their upraised arm is broken. ¹⁶“Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? ¹⁷Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the deepest darkness? ¹⁸Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this. ¹⁹“What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? ²⁰Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings? ²¹Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years! ²²“Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail, ²³which I reserve for times of trouble, for days of war and battle? ²⁴What is the way to the place where the lightning is dispersed, or the place where the east winds are scattered over the earth? ²⁵Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain, and a path for the thunderstorm, ²⁶to water a land where no one lives, an uninhabited desert, ²⁷to satisfy a desolate wasteland and make it sprout with grass? ²⁸Does the rain have a father? Who fathers the drops of dew? ²⁹From whose womb comes the ice? Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens ³⁰when the waters become hard as stone, when the surface of the deep is frozen? ³¹“Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades? Can you loosen Orion’s belt? ³²Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? ³³Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God’s dominion over the earth? ³⁴“Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water? ³⁵Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, ‘Here we are’? ³⁶Who gives the ibis wisdom or gives the rooster understanding? ³⁷Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens ³⁸when the dust becomes hard and the clods of earth stick together? ³⁹“Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions ⁴⁰when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in a thicket? ⁴¹Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food?

The image on the next page will contain no text. I wanted it to be ‘stand-alone’ for you to reflect the Power of God! Can you see His Power in the image?

¹ Read Job 38-42 to understand the Absolute Power of God in ALL things.

