

## **SERMON: TELL IT LIKE IT WAS PART THREE (TROUBLING HISTORICAL WATERS)**

### **John 5:2-4**

**(2) Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. (3) In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. (4) For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.**

### **Introduction**

There are some who have a misimpression of Black history. It is designed to add what was omitted and correct errors. It is not designed to change proven historical facts. I am sure we have seen award shows, like the Grammys, in which an honoree during his or her acceptance comments omits someone, maybe a parent or spouse. They then apologize and recognize the omitted person. This is how Black history works. We just want to recognize the omitted achievers. It is designed to give historical credit to whom credit is due.

In the history of sheet music publications, at one time, it was common only to list the song writer and not the arranger. The arrangers pushed for acknowledgement and they were eventually included on the covers of the scores. Now every piece of sheet music gives the name of the song writer, the arranger, and many times the orchestrator. Just as the arrangers wanted recognition, Blacks just want the accomplishments of their ancestors and their contemporaries to be acknowledged and appreciated.

I see history as a library of sheet music where every song writer, arranger, and orchestrator should be acknowledged. Here's an example. The tomato was first cultivated and developed by the indigenous people of Central America, but it was the Italians who used it to make pizza. The indigenous people of Central America were the song writers and the Italians were the arrangers. Mind you, the Italian arrangement is one of many arrangements. Each of us could list scores of uses of the tomato. I think you get my drift.

In our text, the angel had to trouble the water in order for healing to take place. Sometimes the healing does not occur because no one wants to trouble the water. No one wants to acknowledge the elephant in the room. Even the study of Black history can trouble the waters of world history and American history. Sometimes Blacks don't want to talk about our history because some facets are too depressing. Some Blacks don't even want to sing spirituals. Why sing slave songs? In the process, they omit the great accomplishments of our ancestors. Some Whites are hesitant about mentioning certain

facts of American history because it induces guilt and shame and shines a light on some of their ancestors' immoral behavior in the treatment of Native Americans and Blacks. Some elements go against the narrative of America as a beacon of democracy, justice, and enlightenment for the world. In many text books, slavery is only given one or two short paragraphs and is described as a "sad, dark, short" period in our country's history.

Some of what we have discussed in this sermon and the last two sermons tells us about "noble history" and it also tells us about "nauseating history." Everything I present has been verified many times by credible scholars. I have spared you all of the footnotes and bibliographies. I do not want my sermon/lectures to become doctrinal dissertations. I am presenting a few of the many facts about our history. This is just the tip of the iceberg. It will cover many time periods. It will cover the good, the bad, and the ugly. Please hang with me.

## **Exposition**

### **1. Victor I-The First Black (African) Pope**

He Was Pope From 189-199 A.D.

He Carried a Latin Name.

He Set The Date For Easter and Ended The Pascal Controversy.

He Crushed The Doctrine Of Adoptionism.

Adoptionism Taught That Jesus Was Not Equal To The Father, Nor Eternal, But After The Father Saw His Great Works, He Adopted Him.

He Is Buried In St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, (Rome) Next To St. Peter, the First Pope.

### **2. Miltiades-The Second Black (African) Pope**

He was the 37<sup>th</sup> Pope and he led the church from 311-314 A.D.

His Name Is Pronounced: mil-ee-Tie-ah-Dees.

The Accents Should Be Placed On the Third and Fifth Syllables.

Under His Leadership Emperor Constantine Was Converted To Christianity.

After Constantine Was Converted, the Persecution of Christians By The Roman Empire Ceased.

He Convened Several Doctrinal Councils Of Bishops In Rome.

He Settled Several Doctrinal Disputes.

He Demanded Ethical Behavior Of All The Bishops.

Some Historians Contend That He Was Assassinated Because Of His Strict Disciplinary Enforcement.

He Was The Last Pope To Be Buried In The Catacombs. This Was His Desire, Rather Than In St. Peter's Basilica.

### **3. Gelasius-The Third Black Pope**

His Name Is Pronounced: gee-Lay-see-Us)

The Accents Should Be Placed on the Second and Fourth Syllables.

He Was Pope From 492-496 A.D.

He Was Born In Rome Of African Parents.

He Instituted Financial Reorganization Of The Church.

He Replaced Pagan Festivals With Christian Holy Days.

Lupercalia Was Replaced With The Feast Of Purification.

In His Writings Are the First Inklings Of "Separation Of Church And State."

### **4. St. Augustine was from Africa**

He Is Called the Father of Theology.

His Writings Still Influence Christian Theology today.

He Coined the Term "Original Sin."

He Wrote 90 Books.

The Most Well Known Are *The Gift Of Perseverance*, *The Confessions* And *The City Of God*.

### **5. The Nazis Used American Racial Practices As Their Play Book.**

They Went Further, but Used How America Treated Native Americans and Blacks as a Model to Treat the Jews and Other Groups They Loathed.

They Studied How They Could Make Segregation and Discrimination Legal.

A Young Nazi Intellectual Named Hebert Kier Was Tasked With Compiling a Table of U.S. Race Laws for Use in Germany.

American Racial Law Was The Prototype For The Nuremberg Laws.

The German Translations of Two Books By American White Supremacists Were Used As Text Books In The Nazi Regime.

Their Pseudo-Science Was Called Eugenics.

*The Passing of the Great Race*, by Madison Grant-published in 1916.

*The Menace of the Under-Man*, by Lothrop Stoddard-published in 1922.

The Nazis Sent A Young Man, Named Heinrich Krieger, As an Exchange Student, To Study At The University Of Arkansas.

He Was Really There To Study The Race Practices Of Americans.

In 1936 Krieger Wrote A Book Published In Germany Titled *Race Law In The United States*.

This Book Became a Standard Reference Work for Hitler's Regime.

The Nazis Admired the Red Summer of 1919.

Ironically, The Nazis Rejected The "One-Drop" Rule. They Thought It Was Too Harsh.

Hitler Was Intrigued With How The United States Could Treat Native Americans and Blacks So Cruelly and Yet Retain Such a Sterling

Reputation on the World Stage as the Model for Equality. He Wanted To Emulate It.

## **6. A Slave In Boston, Named Onesimus, Introduced Vaccinations To America. His Master Cotton Mather Got The Credit.**

## **7. Our Foreparents Had More Active Faith Than Some Of The Main Biblical Characters.**

They Did Not Question The Existence Of A Balm In Gilead. They Declared It. (Jeremiah 8:22)

Their Faith Brought Them Through The Atrocities.

### **Closing Thoughts**

Let me finish the story because I have dwelt on three verses. There was a man who had been at the pool for thirty-eight years. He waited patiently for a miracle to happen to him. Time and time again, when the waters surged, people all around him flung themselves into the pool. Not him. He needed help to get in. For some reasons, good or bad, he had been abandoned by all. Except Jesus! Jesus healed him and told him to take up his bed and walk- and that's just what the man did.

Our foreparents used this Biblical incident as a reason for additional hope. They put it in the form of a spiritual. "Wade in the water, Wade in the water children, Wade in the water, God's gonna trouble the water."

They were saying, "You don't have to wait for the angel to trouble the water; God is right here right now. He is greater than any angel. If we do our part, which is getting in the water, God will do His part, by stirring up the water and bringing forth healing." Give God Glory! Give God All the Glory!

### **Related Scripture**

#### **John 5:1-9**

### **End Note**

In the summer of 1721, an epidemic of smallpox besieged the city of Boston. Cotton Mather was a Puritan minister and a lay scientist in Boston who owned a slave, he named Onesimus. Onesimus told Mather of a method he had undergone back in his homeland that protected him from similar illnesses. People in West Africa had discovered that they could fend off contagions by inoculating themselves with a specimen of fluid from an infected person. They would use splinters, thorns, or sharp stems to transfer the specimen from person to person. Sometimes they would use pus from a boil. Mather was intrigued with the idea and called it "variolation." Mather who was not a medical doctor had trouble getting the doctors of Boston to try it. It sounded crazy and plus it came from an African slave. Finally, one medical doctor, Zabdiel Boylston, decided to try it. "What do we have to lose; people are dropping dead like flies." He inoculated 240 people and only six died. By 1750, vaccinations based on the method introduced by Onesimus, was standard practice in Massachusetts and later in

the rest of the country. Some say his master became envious of him and treated him badly thereafter. Please don't get mad, but Onesimus never gained his freedom.

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