



Amtrak

TRAIN 188

Echoes of Grace

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TRAIN 188



It was a terrible train crash! Amtrak Northeast Regional 188 was en route from Washington, D. C., to New York City, when around 9:30 p.m. on May 12, 2015, it suddenly flew off the rails, killing eight people and injuring about 200 others. The second car was mangled almost beyond recognition. Six other cars derailed and three landed on their sides. As the cars slid on their sides, emergency windows became dislodged, allowing some passengers to be ejected from the train. One resident nearby said that the crash felt like “a mild earthquake,” and another said that it “sounded like a bomb.”

The wreck occurred 11 minutes after leaving the 30th Street Penn Station in Philadelphia. As it approached one of the sharpest curves in the Northeast Corridor, it was travelling at a speed of 106 mph, as it went into the 50 mph curve.

The National Transportation Safety Board deter-



mined that “the probable cause of the accident was the engineer’s acceleration to 106 mph as he entered a curve with a 50 mph speed restriction due to his loss of situational awareness because his attention was diverted to an

emergency situation with another train.”

Apparently, he had become distracted by radio chatter between another commuter train and dispatchers. A SEPTA train had been hit by a rock and was in an emergency stop. The safety board reported that during seven to nine of the 11 minutes before the crash, the engineer listened to and participated in about two dozen radio transmissions. Due to this level of distraction, they believe that the engineer thought that he was past the curve, where the speed limit opened up to 110 mph. “He went, in a matter of seconds, from distraction to disaster,” said Robert Sumwalt, the lead NTSB investigator.

An Even More Dangerous Distraction

We are all similar to Amtrak 188. We are speeding through life at an incredibly rapid pace. None of us knows when, where or how we will be ushered into eternity. **“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away”** (James 4:14). As we speed through life, Satan does everything in his power

to distract us from receiving the gospel of salvation. It was not drugs, alcohol, or talking or texting on his cell phone that distracted the engineer of Amtrak 188, but radio chatter. Satan will use whatever it takes — sports, business, politics, pleasure or just plain everyday living to keep us from even thinking of spiritual things and of our eternal well-being. It is his aim to keep man in a continual state of “loss of situational awareness.”

“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Pay attention! Right now, while you are able, seriously consider which track you are on — the track that leads to heaven or the track that leads to hell. It is certain that you are on either one or the other — the Bible puts it this way: **“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).**

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Have you repented of your sins before a righteous and holy God by asking Him to forgive you and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness?

Though the engineer's distraction was the main cause of the wreck, another contributing factor was the absence of a backup safety system called positive train control, or PTC. This safety system is designed to automatically slow or even stop a speeding train regardless of the engineer's input.

The Bible, God's Holy Word, is our "positive train control." It tells us how to get on the right track to heaven and eternal life: **"Testifying... repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Acts 20:21). Have you repented of your sins before a righteous and holy God by asking Him to forgive you and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness? God gave His only Son to die and shed His blood on the cross for our sins. **"Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"** means to simply trust Him for the finished work done on Calvary's cross. **"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"** (Romans 6:23).

The Great Mystery presents a vital lesson from a very different train experience.



The Great Mystery

A few years ago in the Seattle area, someone looking for an evening's entertainment might have bought tickets on the "Spirit of Washington Dinner Train." The train, a vintage diesel engine, pulling several refurbished dining cars, left a suburb of Seattle in the evening and traveled a loop of several miles through the Cascade Mountains. Passengers onboard were treated to a first-class, scrumptious meal, beautiful scenery and a mystery show put on by trained actors. The actors disguised as passengers, cooks, conductors or waiters would deliver several clues in the first part of the journey. At least one of the clues delivered by the actors would be a red herring, or a clue intended to mislead the audience. Also, on occasion, a passenger might be asked to act out a certain role. At some point in the journey, a serious crime would be acted out. Then the diners would use powers of deduction to try to figure out who committed the crime.



A TRULY FASCINATING WONDER

People like the distraction created by mysteries. The dinner train was a mystery on a small scale. It consumed a few hours, provided some entertainment and then was over. But there is a mystery or fascinating wonder that is vastly more important, and certainly not a distraction. It is a wonder that has power to fill the human heart with timeless awe.

It began in the distant past. The Author is the One who called all created things into existence. He created all the beautiful scenery that is a backdrop to our lives. In the vast expanse of space, He placed a little watery planet full of life, and He placed men and women on it.

The chief person in this wonder is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. When men and women had fallen into sin and were headed to a lost eternity, out of love to them, He left His home in heaven and came down to this earth. Although He was God and spoke for the world to leap into existence, He humbled Himself and became a man, so that from that time forward, He would forever be both God and man in the same person.

What a profound wonder that Christ should come and live on earth. Why did He come? He came seeking lost people in order to bring them back to God. **"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"** (Luke 19:10).

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One created world crucified the very creatures He made!

Can this wonder, as marvelous as it is, get any deeper? Amazingly, the answer is yes! The crime usually enacted on the train was a homicide. It wasn't real; it was just acted out. But the crime committed against the Son of God was very real. After 3½ years of telling others of the kingdom of God, doing miracles of healing and even raising the dead back to life, at the age of 33, Jesus Christ was taken by wicked hands, given a false trial and then condemned to death.

The One who created the world was crucified by the very creatures He made! Nailed to the cross, He suffered untold agony. Then He cried out, **"It is finished,"** and He dismissed His spirit and died. Why did He let this happen? He let it happen because, through His death, He made a way that the sins of His creatures could be forgiven and washed away. **"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures"** (1 Corinthians 15:3).

After He died, His body was wrapped in linen grave clothes, anointed with spices and laid in a grave. But the grave could not hold Him! Three days after He was buried, He arose from the dead.

He had done many wonderful works while He was alive, and you can read about them (in the books called the Gospels) in the Bible. But



**We are given
no guarantees
that we will live
out another day,
week or month.**

far and away, the most important work He accomplished on earth was His sacrificial death on the cross. By that atoning work, all who believe on the name of the Lord Jesus are justified and obtain the forgiveness of sins. **"To Him give all the prophets witness, that**

through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).

And this brings us to the role you have to play in this great drama. Will you believe what God has said about these things, which is a most reasonable thing to do, and trust the blessed Savior? God has demonstrated His love to you in giving His Son to die on the cross. God freely loved you by sending His Son when He didn't have to. Will you love Him in return? He wants you to come back to Him, and by His grace, He is willing to help you every step of the way home to heaven.

But what of those who decide against the Lord Jesus? Then the role they have chosen to play will eventually lead them to hell. There is nothing fake or pretend about the horrors of hell. Those who suffer torments there will not be playacting.

The Dinner Train traveled down the tracks for a short loop, and then the ride was over. Life is short too. We are given a few short years at best. Ask any older person, and they will tell you how fast life goes by. Also, we are given no guarantees that we will live out

another day, week or month. In the short lifetime God has given us, we need to trust in the Savior if we are going to enter heaven.

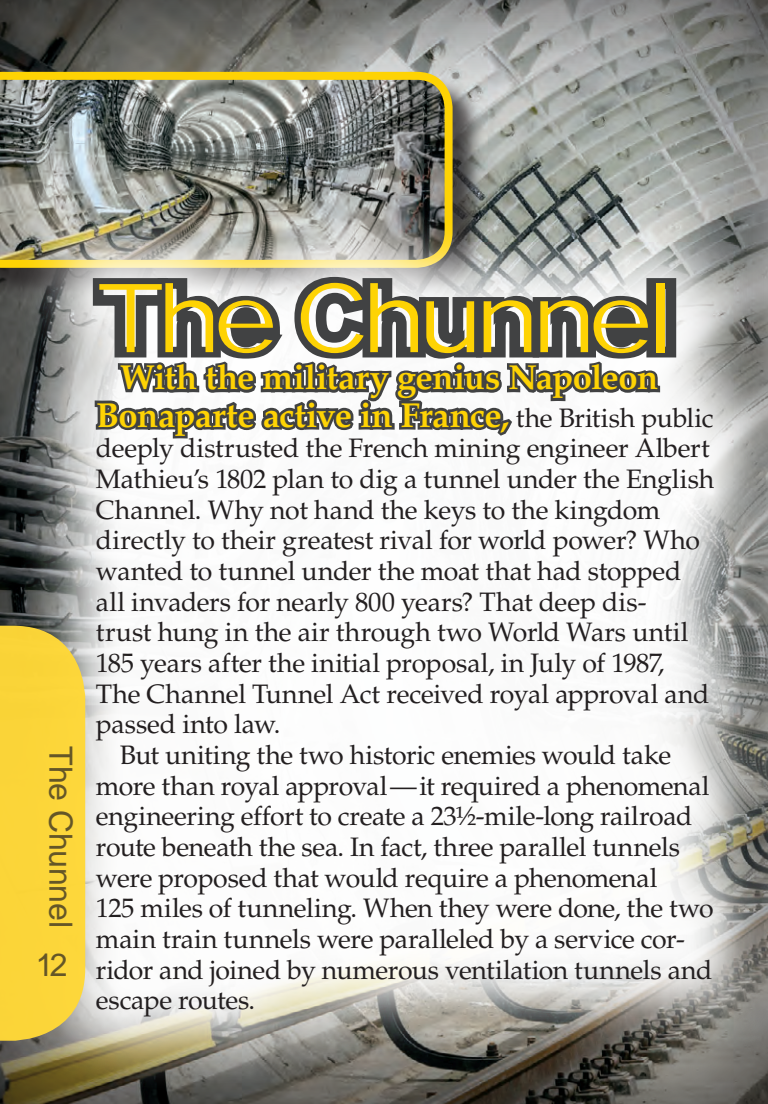
The great wonder, which began in a past eternity when God drew up the plans for salvation that came to a climax when Christ died on the cross, will continue on into the distant ages of eternity to come. The resurrection bodies of those who believe in Christ will be far more glorious than our earthly bodies. They will never be subject to pain, decay or fatigue. They also will be well suited for the endless joys of heaven. The greatest joy of heaven will be seeing our Lord Jesus Christ. **“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”** (Matthew 5:8). The great wonder of God’s love shown to us through the Lord Jesus will fill us with joy forever.

People who wanted to ride the Dinner Train could buy a ticket, while others who didn’t want to ride could opt out. But this is not so with the great issues of life. Every person must be part of this drama. People get a “ticket” to participate in this great story when they are born. What will you do with Him that is called Christ?

Will you believe on the Lord Jesus and spend eternity with Him in heaven? **“Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life”** (John 3:15).

The Chunnel presents the greatest railroad tunnel of all time and an even greater barrier than the English Channel that has been bored through. ◀

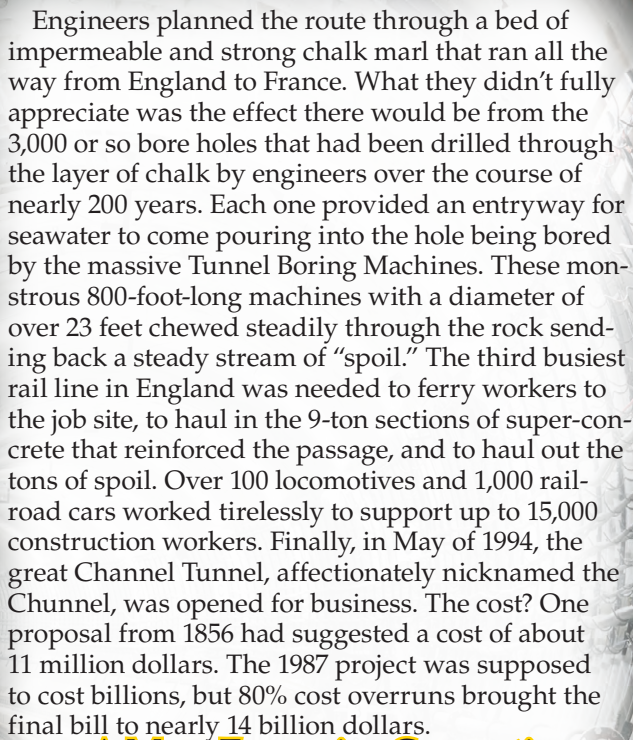




The Chunnel

With the military genius Napoleon Bonaparte active in France, the British public deeply distrusted the French mining engineer Albert Mathieu's 1802 plan to dig a tunnel under the English Channel. Why not hand the keys to the kingdom directly to their greatest rival for world power? Who wanted to tunnel under the moat that had stopped all invaders for nearly 800 years? That deep distrust hung in the air through two World Wars until 185 years after the initial proposal, in July of 1987, The Channel Tunnel Act received royal approval and passed into law.

But uniting the two historic enemies would take more than royal approval—it required a phenomenal engineering effort to create a 23½-mile-long railroad route beneath the sea. In fact, three parallel tunnels were proposed that would require a phenomenal 125 miles of tunneling. When they were done, the two main train tunnels were paralleled by a service corridor and joined by numerous ventilation tunnels and escape routes.



Engineers planned the route through a bed of impermeable and strong chalk marl that ran all the way from England to France. What they didn't fully appreciate was the effect there would be from the 3,000 or so bore holes that had been drilled through the layer of chalk by engineers over the course of nearly 200 years. Each one provided an entryway for seawater to come pouring into the hole being bored by the massive Tunnel Boring Machines. These monstrous 800-foot-long machines with a diameter of over 23 feet chewed steadily through the rock sending back a steady stream of "spoil." The third busiest rail line in England was needed to ferry workers to the job site, to haul in the 9-ton sections of super-concrete that reinforced the passage, and to haul out the tons of spoil. Over 100 locomotives and 1,000 railroad cars worked tirelessly to support up to 15,000 construction workers. Finally, in May of 1994, the great Channel Tunnel, affectionately nicknamed the Chunnel, was opened for business. The cost? One proposal from 1856 had suggested a cost of about 11 million dollars. The 1987 project was supposed to cost billions, but 80% cost overruns brought the final bill to nearly 14 billion dollars.

A More Expensive Connection

Perhaps you're aware of a deeper gulf of fear and suspicion than the one between the French and the British. People have long suspected that God wanted to move in on "their turf" and steal their supposed freedom to do whatever they feel like. They've erected a moat of doubts, theories and excuses in an



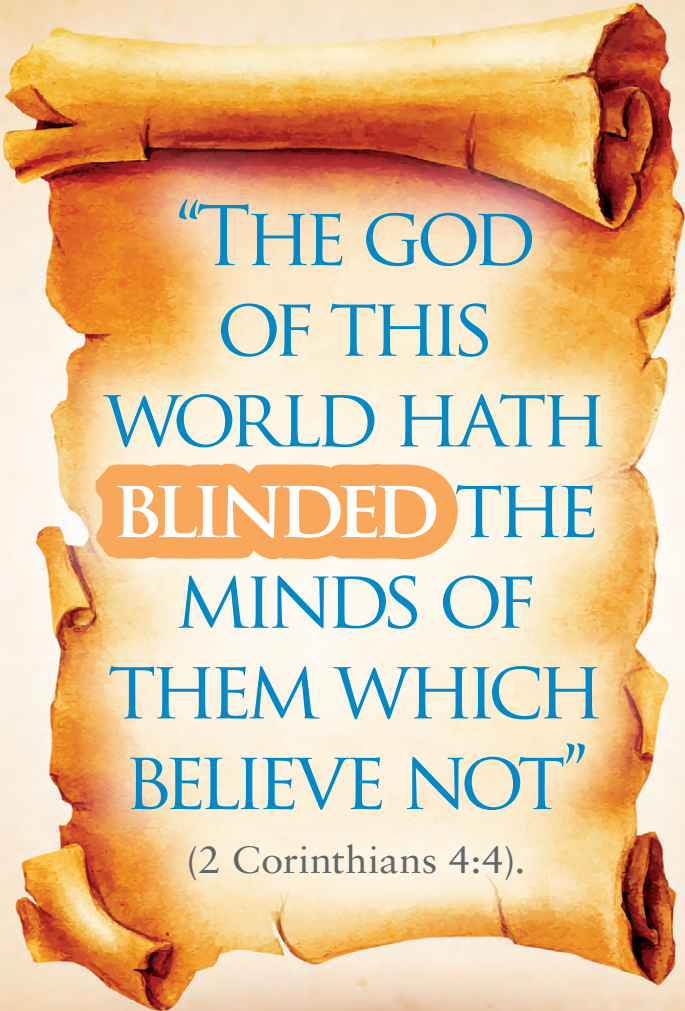
attempt to keep their Creator at “a safe distance.” But the fear, uncertainty and doubt has been entirely one-sided. We humans have walled ourselves off from

a God of love who has a deep desire for intimacy with us. He prepared a plan to break us free from the sin that kept us away from Him and that chained us up on an island of suspicion, anger, covetousness, lust and fear. **“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:8).

God’s plan of salvation wasn’t without cost to Him.

But unlike the Chunnel cost estimates, God knew exactly what price He would have to pay to buy back people from the slavery of sin. When the great Chunnel was planned, a group of investors in a coalition of 10 banks worked out the complicated financing so they could get a return on their investment. God’s plan involved an infinitely greater cost—the death of His Son on the cross of Calvary. **“When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son”** (Romans 5:10). At the end of His time of suffering on the cross, the work to buy back sin-scarred people was complete. Now all who believe on Jesus Christ can enjoy Him forever. **“We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Romans 5:11). But those who refuse to pass through the escape route from the isolated island of sin that God has opened at such tremendous cost face **“the blackness of darkness forever”** (Jude 13). Which will it be for you?



A parchment scroll with a light beige background and a darker, textured border. The scroll is unrolled, showing a central area with text. The text is in a blue, serif font, with the word "BLINDED" highlighted in a white, rounded rectangle with an orange border. The scroll has a slightly aged, wrinkled appearance.

“THE GOD
OF THIS
WORLD HATH
BLINDED THE
MINDS OF
THEM WHICH
BELIEVE NOT”

(2 Corinthians 4:4).

ECHOES OF GRACE

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*"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).*

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the front of a blue Amtrak train, specifically the "Train 188" (the Capitol Limited). The train is moving towards the viewer, with its headlights and red marker lights visible. The number "188" is displayed on a white rectangular sign on the front of the train. Overlaid on the right side of the image is a large, stylized logo for "Amtrak TRAIN 188". The word "Amtrak" is in a large, orange, sans-serif font, and "TRAIN 188" is in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, both set against a dark, cloud-like background.

Amtrak
TRAIN 188