

New Phase



by Rolaant McKenzie

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When people are accustomed to living a certain cherished way of life, dramatic alteration of that life due to impending events can be very difficult to accept. Even when confronted with the impossibility of maintaining the status quo, many will stubbornly disbelieve the facts of the situation and fight to keep things as they have been. An extraordinary demonstration is often needed to realize the truth and act accordingly.

Lt. Cmdr. Data discovered this in the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode *The Ensigns of Command* (Season 3, Episode 2, 10/2/1989). The USS *Enterprise* was contacted by the Sheliak Corporate, the first contact with the Federation in more than a century. The Sheliak demanded that a human settlement they discovered on Tau Cygna V, a world they wished to colonize, be removed since the planet was ceded to them by treaty with the Federation. The *Enterprise* was given three days to evacuate the humans, or they would be exterminated.

Tau Cygna V was wrapped in hyperonic radiation that is normally lethal to human life, but the *Enterprise* crew found that the humans on the planet found a way to adapt and thrive. However, the radiation prevented the use of the ship transporters. Since Data, an android, was immune to the radiation, he was sent by Captain Picard in a shuttlecraft to warn the residents of the planet of the immediate need for evacuation.

Arriving on the surface, Data was taken to the colony's leader, Gosheven, who told him that the 15,253 people there were descendants of the colony ship *SS Artemis* that was launched from Mars 92 years earlier. The ship's intended destination was a planet orbiting Septimis Minor, but its guidance system failed, causing the ship to drift off course and eventually land on Tau Cygna V. Though Data explained the grave situation to Gosheven, he remained unconvinced. Gosheven, proudly referring to the sacrifices his ancestors made to create their thriving colony, especially the sophisticated aqueduct system, insisted that the planet was theirs and that they would not lose everything for which they had worked so hard. He vowed he would lead his people to fight the Sheliak rather than leave, and the people cheered and gathered around him in support.

Failing to persuade Gosheven by conventional means and with time running out, Data decided on a dramatic demonstration. He brought a hand phaser to one of the aqueduct pumping stations and fired on it, causing a chain reaction of small explosions that stopped the flow of water from its source in the mountains. Data pointed out to Gosheven and the stunned colonists that one android with a hand phaser was able to destroy their aqueduct. The Sheliak on their way would have far more powerful weapons at their disposal and could annihilate them from orbit without them even seeing their killers.

Sobered by this demonstration, some of the colonists tell Gosheven that there are other places and other challenges. Finally yielding to the reality of their situation, Gosheven reluctantly started preparations for evacuation. Data tells him that things like the aqueduct can be replaced, but their lives cannot.

Exploiting a clause in the treaty, Picard was able to persuade the Sheliak to delay their colonization efforts for three weeks so that the Federation could deploy a fleet of

shuttlecraft to transport everyone from Tau Cygna V. Accepting this new phase in his life and the lives of his people, Gosheven oversaw the evacuation and left with the colonists to resettle on a Federation world.

Moses, a child of Hebrew slaves designated for extermination by royal decree, was providentially delivered from death and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. She raised him as her son in the Egyptian royal court. But Moses, in his early childhood with his birth mother, was made aware of the God of his fathers and that the people of Israel were his people (Exodus 2:1-10).

According to the ancient Jewish historian Josephus (AD 37-100), Moses became the crown prince of Egypt and as a young man was a mighty warrior who led the armies of Egypt in victory against the Ethiopians (*The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 2, Chapters 9-10). As he grew older, he felt sympathy and grief for the suffering of his people's enslavement. He came to believe that God had put him in his powerful position in Egypt to deliver Israel (Acts 7:23-29).

When Moses was forty, he went out to his Hebrew brethren to see their suffering firsthand. When he saw an Egyptian beating one of them, he looked around and, seeing no one else, laid hold of the Egyptian and killed him. Moses was dismayed when he found that he could not keep this hidden from Pharaoh, who sought to kill him.

Moses realized that his plans to deliver Israel from slavery could not take place and that remaining in Egypt would result in his death. As he fled the life he had known, he probably experienced deep feelings of defeat and abject failure. But God was not done with Moses. He entered him into a new phase of life. God used the next forty years to prepare Moses to lead his people to freedom according to His way and plan. He used this period also to prepare the people of Israel to receive Moses' leadership, deliverance from slavery, and

freedom as God's people.

Sometimes our long-term plans can take an unexpected turn. For example, a young man through high school and college devotes himself through dedicated training and participation to a career in professional football, but a serious heart ailment develops in him as a rookie professional player, and he must make a choice to disregard it and die or end his aspirations, treat the illness, and move on to a new way of life. Another example could be a woman in a successful and satisfying job for more than twenty years who is unexpectedly downsized by her company and faces retirement as her new lot in life. Like the people of Israel when they were in the midst of the Babylonian captivity and exile, we may long for the way things were when our plans were underway and dread the new future confronting us. But we can take comfort in what the Lord told His people through the prophet Isaiah:

"Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:18-19)

In this new phase of life for His people, God provided new purpose, work, guidance, sustenance, and hope. And we can trust in the Lord to do the same for us when we face life-altering circumstances because of His unchanging love and promise to never abandon us (Hebrews 13:5-6, 8).

Like the initial skepticism of Gosheven and the colonists he led in the *Star Trek* episode, if we do not recognize the truth of our situation and the need to change course, we will face certain death. All stand guilty of sin before God and face the consequences of death and eternal separation from Him (Romans 3:23). But the Father sent His Son Jesus to pay in full our sin debt on the cross and grant forgiveness and redemption to anyone who turns away from his terminal path and trusts in Him (John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 5:8, 6:23).

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’” (Romans 10:9-13)

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ not only for guidance in a new phase of life, but also for the ultimate new phase, eternal life of joy, peace, and reconciliation with God (Romans 8).

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