

October 2010

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Things That Should Be Known

"I was with God and I was with the devil. But God won. I held on to God's hand. At no point in time did I doubt that God would get me out of there." --Mario Sepulveda, 40, second rescued miner

Politically speaking, a seismic shift from left to right is expected after polls close on Tuesday night. Whether Republicans prevail in a majority of local, state and federal elective races or not, the politicos will be on the first plane to Iowa Wednesday morning. Most everyone else will look forward to the return of summer and winter, springtime and harvest.

One recent event that wasn't so much played out but was nearly drowned out by incessant political chatter, was the miraculous rescue of 33 Chilean miners who were encased 2,300 feet below the earth's crust for 69 days in a living room size space following a major mine shaft collapse. For 22 hours, the world watched the amazing images (captured live from above and below) as each miner emerged from near death. But, many asides—too many—were not reported by US media.

Inevitably, the deft handling of the disaster by Chilean President Sebastian Pinera has invited comparison to President Obama's management of the BP "Gulf" oil rig explosion earlier this year. Pinera welcomed all outside help while Obama waved off offers of assistance from foreign and other offshore firms with proven technical expertise. Pinera and his First Lady vowed to remain at the disaster site until every miner was rescued. They were true to their word. Mr. Obama assigned blame for the oil rig mishap and promised to "kick some butt." So much for style.

At the least, America's cheerleader-in-chief missed an opportunity following the rescue, to acknowledge Yankee ingenuity and thank American engineering firms for their herculean role throughout the rescue operation. What, you didn't hear about key American involvement?

According to the Santiago Times "...Schramm Inc. of West Chester, Pennsylvania, built the drills and equipment used to reach the trapped miners. Center Rock Company, also from Pennsylvania, built the drill bits used. UPS, the US shipping company, delivered the 13-ton drilling equipment from Pennsylvania to Chile in less than 48 hours.

Crews from Layne Christensen Company of Wichita, Kansas, and its subsidiary Geotec Boyles Bros. manned the drills and machinery used to locate the miners and then enlarged the holes to ultimately rescue them. Jeff Hart of Denver...was called off his job drilling water wells for the U.S. Army's forward operating bases in Afghanistan to lead the drilling crew that reached the miners.

Atlas Copco Construction Mining Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, provided consulting on how to make drilling equipment from different sources work together under differing pressures. Drilling Supply Co. of Houston, Texas, was also involved.

Aries Central California Video of Fresno...designed the special cameras that were lowered nearly a mile into the ground to send back video of the miners. (The cameras' fiber-optic cable came from Japan)."

“Zephyr Technologies of Annapolis, Maryland, made the remote monitors of vital signs that miners wore during their ascent. NASA engineers gave medical and nutritional counseling while the miners were underground and provided the spandex suits to maintain their blood pressure while they were lifted to the surface. The engineers also designed the “Phoenix” rescue capsule that the Chilean Navy built.

Oh, and the Canada-based Precision Drilling Corp. and a South African company, Murray & Roberts, drilled back-up rescue shafts in case the American rig failed. Which it didn't.”¹

MORE NON NEWS

Israel’s Tourism Minister Stas Misezhnikov, invited the 33 Chilean miners and their wives to spend the Christian holidays in Israel to give thanks for their rescue. Israel has offered to pay for their flights, room and board and a week’s worth of tours of Christian holy sites.

“Your bravery and strength of spirit, your great faith that helped you survive so long in the bowels of the earth, was an inspiration to us,” Misezhnikov wrote. “It would be a great honor for us to welcome you as our guests in the Holy Land.”²

Another topic of modest interest to media had to do with the nightly Bible studies led by fellow trapped miner José Henriques. At least two miners were moved to make a first-time profession of faith in Christ.

When Henriques requested the assistance of an evangelical pastor to minister to the miners and their families, rescue engineer Igor Bravo, a member of First Baptist Church of Santiago, immediately launched a search for an onsite chaplain. Marcelo Leiva, pastor of Vallenar Baptist Church—located two hours away, said Bravo’s action was the “channel of blessing” that brought him to Camp Esperanza (Hope), where he connected with the families—leading some of them to Christ. “That [connection] allowed a lot of other people to hear the Word,” said Leiva, who along with a Pentecostal pastor were the only evangelical pastors allowed in the camp.³

But there is another aspect of the Chilean mining mishap that makes us curious. What were the private thoughts of the miners during the first excruciating 17 days with no assurance that officials even knew they were alive? One miner said, “I was with God and I was with the devil.” What did he mean? Did he ponder a future estate in bonds in the nether parts of the earth?

Although 69 days of confinement within the earth would seem a frighteningly “hellish” foretaste of *Hades and of death* (Rev 1:18)—such imagery does not comport with growing western beliefs. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life finds that while 74 percent of Americans believe in a place of future rewards, only 59 percent believe in a literal hell. Findings among the *Mosaic* generation (age 18-23) are more discouraging. Only one-half of one percent possess a biblical worldview.

If the Church cannot establish or defend the veracity of the “second death,” how can it proclaim the good news that Jesus will save us? Save us from what?

Ask the miners. We saw the (Campus Crusade) T-shirts they donned over their green pressure suits that on the front read, *Gracias Señor*’ (Thank you Lord); on the back—*In His hand are the deep places of the earth; The heights of the hills are His also* (Psalm 94:5); and on the left sleeve—JESUS!

“For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell” (Psalm 86:13). We can think of at least 33 souls in Chile that can surely relate to that verse now!

Rick Forcier

¹ santiagotimes.cl/home-mainmenu-1/letters/20027-american-help-in-the-chilean-mine-rescue, 10/21/2010

² Tzvi Ben Gedalyahu, “Israel Invites Chilean Miners to Visit for Christian Holidays,” *IsraelNationalNews.com*

³ Tristan Taylor, “2 Chilean miners accept Christ while trapped underground,” *Baptist Press, bpnews.net*, 10/11/2010