



## PREPARED AND POSITIONED *for* DESTINY

by Vincent M. Newfield

It was the wee morning hours of October 12, 1492. With less than a few hours remaining until the break of dawn, the long awaited cry rang out from the lookout aboard the Pinta—Land! A new day had dawned . . . a new era for all mankind.

After nearly ten weeks at sea, the water-wearied group of men finally set foot on dry ground. What seemed impossible and hopeless just three days earlier had now become a reality. Against seemingly insurmountable odds, Christopher Columbus had discovered the New World. But why did he do it? What motivated Columbus to take to the sea in search of the Indies? Is there anything in his story that speaks to us today?

**Why was Columbus bent on discovering the New World?** Christopher Columbus had a firm conviction of God's call on his life from an early age. Interestingly, his name *Christopher* is derived from *Christo-ferens*, which means "Christ-bearer."<sup>1</sup>

He had a vision of taking the Gospel message of Jesus Christ to the unreached natives of the Indies—a vision which was more than likely planted in his heart by his father, Stefano Columbus.<sup>2</sup> He not only had a vision, but he also had the skills and training to carry it out. Before his historical discovery, he had sailed the seas for over forty years and had become experienced in astronomy, geometry, arithmetic and drafting spherical maps.<sup>3</sup>

Columbus took the great commission from Jesus in Matthew 28:19,20 very seriously. He clung tightly to a number of scriptures, especially from the book of Isaiah, which spoke of taking truth, righteousness and salvation to the inhabitants of the isles.

Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations. Before I was born the Lord called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name . . . I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth. —Isaiah 49:1, 6 NIV

As he pondered verses like this—one of his favorites—he became certain that God had chosen him out of all the men in Europe to travel beyond the seas to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

**What motivated him?** Nothing answers this question better than Columbus' own words written in his diary. He declared: *It was the Lord who put into my mind the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies. All who heard of my project rejected it with laughter, ridiculing me. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, because He comforted me with rays of marvelous inspiration from the Holy Scriptures.* . . .<sup>5</sup>

Convinced it was his destiny to bring the Gospel to the unreached people of the New World, Columbus spent seven years in the courts of royal dignitaries, such as King John II of Portugal, trying to persuade them to financially back his expedition. After much disappointment, hardship and the humbling of his soul, God granted Columbus favor with Queen Isabella of Spain and her husband, King Ferdinand.<sup>6</sup> Upon commissioning him, Isabella said, "It is hoped that by God's assistance some of the continents and islands in the ocean will be discovered . . . for the glory of God."<sup>7</sup>

**Did his actions back up his heart?** Upon the first island he landed, Columbus gave the name *San Salvador*, meaning "Holy Savior." Shortly after his feet touched the soil, Columbus knelt and prayed: "O Lord, Almighty and everlasting God, by Thy holy Word Thou hast created the heaven, and the earth, and the sea; blessed and glorified be Thy name, and praised be Thy majesty, which hath deigned to use us, Thy humble servants, that Thy holy name may be proclaimed in this second part of the earth."<sup>8</sup>

With each island he discovered, he offered a prayer of thanks and dedication, invoking that the New World would belong, not to any country, but to God.<sup>9</sup> And with every prayer, he also planted a large wooden cross “as a token of Jesus Christ our Lord, and in honor of the Christian faith.”<sup>10</sup>

Throughout his four voyages to the New World, Columbus attempted to spread the Christian faith, at times leaving behind some of his fellow travelers to establish colonies and carry on the work of missionaries. One such traveler was Bartolomé de Las Casas. He was a priest who knew Columbus personally and became known as “the Apostle of the Indies.” He spoke of Columbus saying, “He was extraordinarily zealous . . . and was eager for the conversion of these people [Native Americans], and that in every region the faith of Jesus Christ be planted and enhanced.”<sup>11</sup>

**How does Columbus’ story speak to us?** Christopher Columbus was a human being like you and me—a follower of Jesus Christ, a sinner saved by grace. He had a God-given dream and the skills and training to fulfill it. Yes, he made mistakes along the way—he even got sidetracked with the allure of fame and fortune. But through it all his enduring passion was to see people who didn’t know Christ come to know Christ. It was a pure desire that lined up with God’s will—a desire that God blessed and brought to pass.

As Americans, you and I are blessed by Columbus’ act of obedience over 500 years ago. Today however, there are countless people throughout our country who do not know the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. Has God given you a passionate burden in your heart you can’t seem to break free of . . . a vision to reach people with His truth? Is it the children in your neighborhood . . . your coworkers . . . the government officials in your city, state or country . . . your friends . . . your family? What skills, talents and training have you received to carry out the vision?

God loves you and is counting on you to be His *Christ-bearer* to the people He will send you. Don’t let fear paralyze you. Where God guides He will provide. In the words of Christopher Columbus: “No one should fear to undertake any task in the name of our Savior, if it is just and if the intention is purely for His holy service. The working out of all things has been assigned to each person by our Lord, but it all happens according to His sovereign will.”<sup>12</sup> Press in to Jesus . . . press on in service . . . and carry out the vision!

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(1) Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1977), p. 39. (2) Bill Bright and John N. Damoose, *Red Sky in the Morning* (Orlando, FL: NewLife Publications, 1998), p. 44. (3) William J. Federer, *America’s God and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations* (St. Louis, MO: Amerisearch, Inc. 2000), p. 113. (4) See note 2, p. 44. (5) See note 2, p. 45. (6) See note 2, p. 44. (7) See note 3, p. 115. (8) See note 2, pp. 44, 45. (9) See note 2, p. 45. (10) See note 3, p. 119. (11) See note 3, pp. 132, 133. (12) See note 3, p. 114.

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