

Provisions for Disappointment Island

It is called "Disappointment Island". There are actually 7 of these islands, but one of them is more notable than the others. They are located about 180 miles south of New Zealand, and just five miles off the North coast of the Auckland Islands. If that area sounds confusing to you, they are down near Antarctica, so you can imagine the frigid weather and the potential strong winds. There are a couple of stories as to where the name "Disappointment Island" came from. The first, is that Ferdinand Magellan discovered it on his way sailing to the Philippine Islands (by way of sailing around the Cape of Good Hope below South America), and because he found no water, he named it Disappointment Island. The other story, is that, British explorer John Byran (1765) named it thus, because of the hostile natives on the island. They are both probably true, the one affirming the other one. But the primary reason they have been called the Disappointment Islands, is that survivors from shipwrecks found it almost impossible to survive on the island. And a shipwreck capital of the world it has been! There have been at least 11 known shipwrecks there, two of them with no survivors. Two of the larger shipwrecks were the General Grant, where 68 people drowned and 15 made it to Disappointment Island. They waited 18 months for rescue. The other notable shipwreck was Dundonald (since made famous in a book), where 12 men drowned and 16 survivors made it to shore, where they waited 7 months for rescue.

So how does one survive on Disappointment Island, especially for months on end, and in an inhospitable climate and landscape? The answer to that question is that the New Zealand Government decided to send steamers to Disappointment Island to set up Provision Depots. So in 1867 they began to set-up these depots on the island. They still would be uninhabited, but these depots – several buildings – would house the necessary provisions for survival. These sheds included boats (if they tried to make it to the larger near-by Auckland Islands), clothes, blankets, compasses, tools, matches, preserved foods, cooking utensils, fishing gear and rifles. Suddenly the survival rate grew greatly. It was still a shipwreck, and it was still Disappointment Island, and the survival would be grueling on occasion, but survival was now possible. Someone had made provision for that to happen.

I am pretty confident that none of us will ever be shipwrecked off of Disappointment Island (although I recently sat next to a man who flew over those islands on his way to work in Antarctica). But I think many of us have visited Disappointment Island at various times in our lives – that is, the disappointment that we often encounter as Christians. As the word sounds, disappointment comes when appointments (hopes, plans and expectations) we made, do not come about. It can be in relationships, health, jobs, ministry, promotions, dreams and, any of a number of things. Believers found in the Word of God struggled with disappointment. Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, Elijah, Moses, and just about any of the heroes profiled in Scripture. Their disappointment often bordered on despair. David, Job and Jeremiah often cried out to God, wondering why something happened and where was God during this. But for each of these individuals and for each of us today, there is hope in disappointment. God does not

abandon us and He will eventually rescue us. But the point of what I want to make here, is that, though we may crash on Disappointment Island, we will find that God has gone before us and has made provisions for us on this island. These provisions will last until He comes to rescue us. What are these provisions? His Word; "If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction." (Psalm 119:92), His prayers for us – both the Holy Spirit's prayers and Christ's prayers; "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us." (Romans 8:26); "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them." (Hebrews 7:25), His comforting presence; "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." (Isaiah 43:2); "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort." (II Corinthians 1:3), and one more provision, our brothers and sisters in Christ; "We are all one body; each part should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." (I Corinthians 12:25-26) So this day, be reminded, that during those times when you find yourself on Disappointment Island, help is on the way – "The Lord knows how to rescue godly men [and women] from trials." (II Peter 2:9); but in the meanwhile, He has set-up daily provision depots for you, you are not alone and at wits end on your island.