

# ABSTRACT



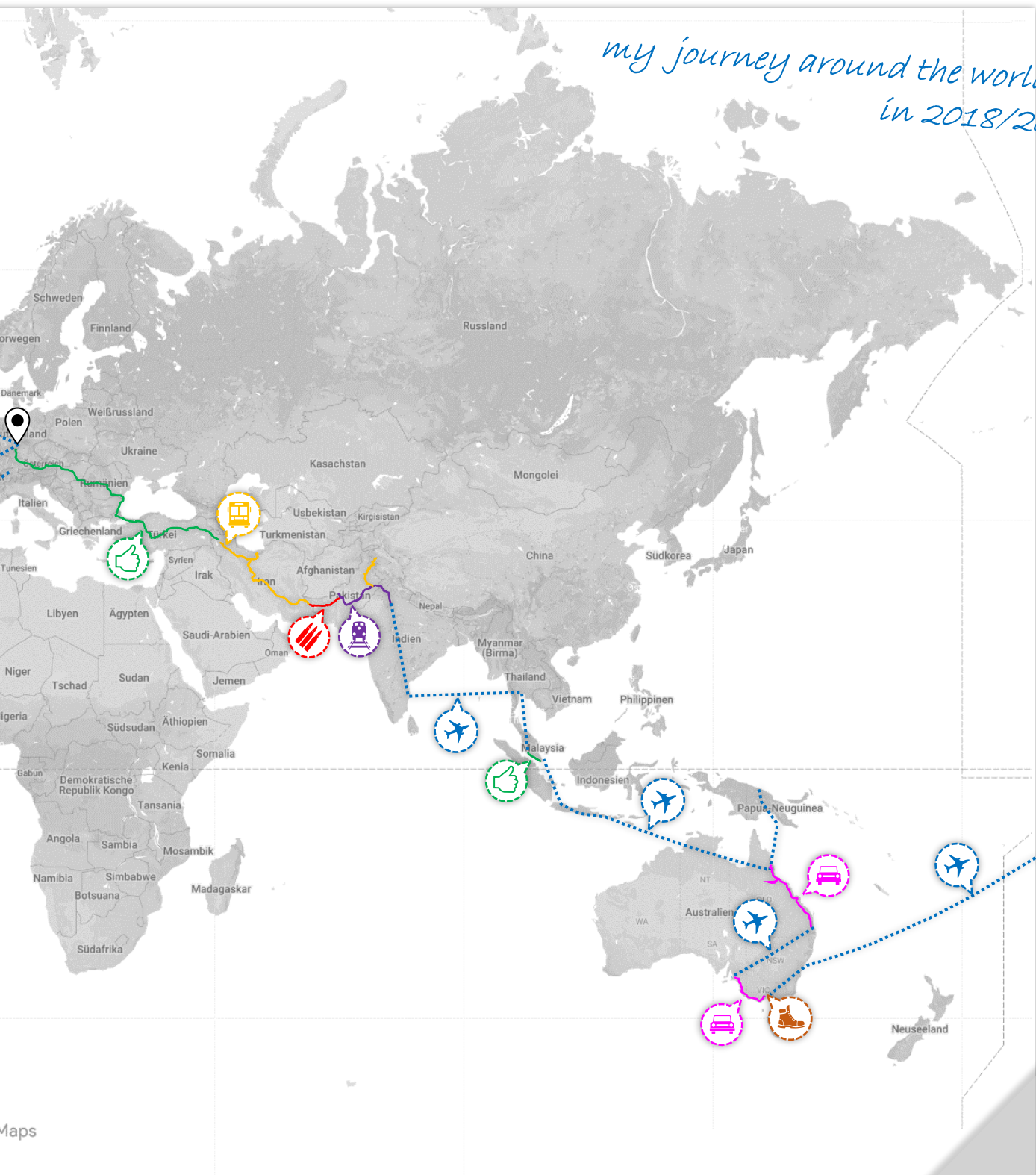
## **destination unknown**

chapter 01 - Germany

*by*  
*Matthías Kahle*



my journey around the world  
in 2018/2019





## 01. Germany

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It's early in 2018. I had been at work for about 3.5 years in the German automobile industry in the field of crash safety. It was - and still is - an interesting line of work, and it is most certainly a good thing to ensure by your work, that people, who might be involved in an accident with "your" car, have the best chance possible to walk away from it to tell the story. However, interesting and good are not the most important attributes of a job for some people, including me. A purpose, going beyond the lifespan of a car, and passion are the aspects of a job most critical to me. I sincerely believe, that an individual can only become extraordinarily good in his or her job, when the line of work matches his or her passion. Since I have the desire to be good in everything I do in life, and since cars and crash safety were not my passion, choosing this line of work was not the best choice to begin with. Well, life does not always turn out the way you want it to: Bills want to be paid, and following my studies for mechanical engineering and six months of applying in vain within the industry I was passionate about, things had to move forward. At least this was my conviction at that time. On top of not being passionate about my line of work, it became harder and harder for me to endure my work life since it was taking away most of my time and most of my energy. Besides all of those reasons to change something, life moved on and I kind of settled in for the ride. Since my salary allowed for a convenient life style, including my own apartment, my own car, leisure activities like flying small general aviation aircraft, it became hard to make a move. Together with the missing vision for the future, this made it necessary for the driving factor to finally break out of my status quo to be quite significant. In early 2018 this significant, driving factor arrived: Desperation, primarily caused by severe overload at work.

A new project constellation had put me into a position, in which I was given the responsibility to ensure, that the calculations necessary for structural crash safety were done within a team of one: Me. On top of the practical aspects of my work, which I was used to up to this point, administrative duties and seemingly endless meetings became part of my working life as well. Since there were only so many hours in a working week, including multiple hours of overtime, the situation got worse and worse: Work was piling up on my desk with no hope in sight that this situation would sort out in a reasonable amount of time. When my appeals to the top did not provide the solutions which I deemed necessary to get back to a normal workload, I knew that I had to quit. If I refused to admit defeat, I would end up in a year or two like many colleagues in the field of engineering have already: Burned out and replaced with the next one waiting in line. In fact, I already showed the first signs of a burnout.

The problem was: What to do? My little hamster-wheel would keep on turning, and should I stop working, without something in sight to replace it, the logical consequence would be, that no money would come in to support my lifestyle, including a place to live and food to eat. After weeks of wrestling with this issue and praying, I remembered at some point a dream which I had during my studies: Hitchhiking to Australia. Back in those days the idea of hitchhiking was born out of the sheer lack of financial resources. The money I earned with working besides studying I spend entirely on living costs and paying for the not quite cheap pilot's license I was acquiring. Now I had the money. I had paid off my debts from my studies as well and could actually afford a ticket all the way to Australia and back. But what then? Spending my hard-earned money for traveling to and around Australia, only to end up back home a couple of months later with the same problem at hand, did not seem to make much sense. This led me to stick with the original plan to go out and just try it: Hitchhike - if possible - all the way down to Australia. This journey would have multiple benefits besides seeing this beautiful planet and experiencing different cultures. First of all, it would buy me time to think about what to do with the rest of my life. An important decision which I did not want to make again out of the lack of options, but rather out of the conviction that the choice I am about to make is the right one. Second: I would find out whether this entire *"seek first his [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things [that are necessary for life] will be given to you"* ([Matthew 6:36](#)) can be taken literally or not. I planned on traveling with a budget which would not allow for the use of public transportation or amenities like hotels along the way. So God would have to come through like his word promises. Furthermore, I hoped to finally see some fruit in my life in terms of people hearing the Gospel from me and responding to it in a positive way. The Bible talks about fruit being an important mark of a disciple, a follower of Christ ([John 15](#)), and up to that point I had not seen much. And finally: Well, I did not mind the thought of somebody putting a gun to my head and pulling the trigger. On a journey through countries, which are certainly not the safest ones for a Christian to be in, there was certainly the possibility of this happening. If this entire Christianity thing is true: What better way to leave this world while confessing Christ? Of course, the process of dying was something I was not looking forward to (like probably every other person on this planet). However, death itself was nothing I was afraid of: I had surrendered my life to God, had been what the Bible calls *"born again"*, and I had tried to the best of my abilities to be a faithful servant with what God had entrusted to me. So I believed that I was good to go.

I guess this last point kind of brings home the condition I was in: Batteries running low, close to empty, exhausted, desperate to know how life should go on. Sometimes you have to hit rock bottom before things start to get better. In any case, I could only win with this endeavor: Either lose my life to find it ([Matthew 16:25](#)), or find it to live on.



## 01.1 The beginning

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Following weeks of insane workload at my working place to ensure a smooth transition for my colleagues, selling the majority of my possessions, researching the countries I would probably travel through, and a couple of test runs with hitchhiking, the day finally arrived when I would have to make the big step from theory to praxis. My route, as planned, would lead through Europe and Turkey, followed by the only three countries for which I deemed it necessary to acquire the visas beforehand: Iran, Pakistan, India. From there I planned on either taking a boat towards Thailand (also via hitchhiking), or to travel on land via Bangladesh and Myanmar. After that I would hitchhike through Malaysia to Singapore, followed by Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and finally Australia. Everything after that was a big, bold question mark, tucked away inside a black box buried deep in the ground in a place unknown to me. I would have to improvise. But with more than six months to go until my arrival in Australia, I figured that something might come up.



*My journey around the world (which pretty much matched the planned route)*

Everything was good and ready. Everything except me. I was so not ready to step out into the unknown. As an engineer and pilot, I had developed the mindset that I had to plan ahead: In aviation, a plan (a) and a plan (b) is mandatory. Not optional: Mandatory. You never go flying without a plan and a backup plan. There is also the saying, the rule that a pilot has to stay at least five minutes ahead of his aircraft. Also in engineering, planning ahead is crucial. I pretty much always had a plan (a) ... and a plan (b) as well. Now, on July 13<sup>th</sup> of 2018, I was standing at a fuel station close to Frankfurt am Main, not knowing where I would be, where I would sleep in the evening, let alone how I would get to this unknown destination. All I knew was: General direction south-east, budget 5\$/day, and the certain time frames for my visas. That was it.

At noon I started to ask people whether they would drive in my general direction, and whether they would be willing to give me a ride. The day went by fast without any success. Late in the afternoon, when I was already thinking about returning to my brother's place to spend another night in comfort and security, I finally got my first ride: A young, nice guy raced me in his silver sports car to a motorway service station near Darmstadt. Not too far, but I had finally made the first step, was now better positioned for the consecutive rides, and most important: The bridge of going back for the night to my brother's place had been burned. There was only one way to go, which was forward. On arrival I immediately searched for a good spot to continue hitchhiking when a young woman approached me. She asked whether I would like to join her and her family for supper. Baffled and curious I accepted this nice invitation after thinking about it for a few seconds: *Why not, the next ride can wait!* While having bread, pancakes, meatballs, cucumbers, cheese, water, and some apricots on a metal bench, the question arose what I was doing. I guess wearing one of the biggest backpacks money can buy kind of gave it away that I was not on my way home from work. We talked, I could share my testimony and explain, why I was doing what I was doing. Good times! Considering the thought *First ride – First free meal*, this nice evening was also kind of my first perceived confirmation that God might be in on this journey. Up to this point I did not have a single clear confirmation from God that this entire endeavor was His will.

About an hour later, I got my second ride: This time an engineer dropped me off at an off-ramp close to Karlsruhe. When we arrived the darkness of the night had already fallen. After fifteen to twenty minutes trying in vain to catch another ride to the east, I finally accepted that this was it for today. First day: Two rides, about one hundred fifty kilometers, a couple of nice talks, and a delicious supper with the leftovers even lasting until the next day. Not too bad for the start. After wandering into the direction of the city center, I finally settled down in a big parking area behind a service building for the night. Tired, but satisfied, I went to sleep, not knowing, that the perceived confirmation from God being in favor of this journey would not carry me for even two days.

## **01.2 Karlsruhe - First Trial**

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The following morning, I woke up in quite a good mood. The night on the street had not been too bad: Warm, dry, on the self-inflating sleeping pad quite comfortable. Almost perfect, leaving aside a couple of drunk guys early in the morning deeming it necessary to shout from afar that I should wake up. After collecting my stuff, I prepared the leftovers from the day before for breakfast. And made coffee. Of course: What would a day be without a cup of coffee in the morning. However, making this coffee included: Searching firewood, breaking it into small pieces for my foldable stove, boiling water, brewing the coffee, and cleaning up. All of this would take me about forty-five minutes. This pretty much convinced me that this pleasure would not be an everyday routine. After reading my Bible, I set out towards the main railway station in Karlsruhe from where I would try to get my next ride. The spot, where I had tried the night before, did not seem too suitable

for cars to stop. I also had the impression that God was leading me to the train station. While looking for a ride, I would be able there to talk to people all day long. In the end, this would pretty much summarize day number two of my journey: Asking for a ride, talking, resting, and then some more. The attempts of hitchhiking were just not fruitful that day. Even though there were people going into the direction where I needed to go, they either had no room for me or they simply did not want to take me.

Early in the evening I called it a day and started to walk towards the home of Roman, a brother in the LORD. We had gotten to know each other about a year earlier during an outreach. After me calling him, he and his wife Annina were so kind to open up their home for me, even though we hardly knew each other. On the way to their home, I had lunch/supper, and I realized, that living of 5\$ per day would not leave much room for fancy eating habits: Bread, cheese, vegetables and/or fruit and water. That's pretty much what you could get back then in southern Germany for that kind of money. It was hot, I was sweating like crazy, but I was happy after a hard day on the street, lots of talking, and lots of rejections, that I could finally spend the evening and the night with brothers and sisters in the LORD. Some things in life you cannot put a price tag on! Also priceless: The cool shower after two days in the heat. At this point I did not worry too much that the second day on the road had been a zero in terms of ground gained towards my destination.

When the afternoon turned into evening on the following day with me still being stuck in Karlsruhe, this changed. I switched locations, just to realize, that the previous one had been better. My conviction from the first day, that God was with me on this journey, was gone. Three days on the road, in total not even 200km covered, while ahead of me lay a journey of over 20,000km. Pretty grim statistic as I would call it. Extrapolating this pace, it would take me over a year just to reach Australia, not to mention that I would probably miss the validity windows of my visas for Iran and Pakistan. My thoughts started to revolve more and more around this subject; they became louder and louder, more and more dominant. Even if this pace worked out from a schedule point of view, this was not something which I could endure for a longer period of time: At some point it would break me. Being all day on the street, talking to people, praying for people, getting rejected by people while not moving forward was something which I could handle maybe for a day or two, but not longer.

At some point I settled down to have a serious talk with God. I told him that this was not the way that I would like to continue this journey; that I would rather quit right here and now if this was to be going on for the remainder of the trip. Then I asked Him to give me a clear sign. A sign which would go beyond a nice supper and a couple of rides like on the first day. If this journey was His will, I wanted to know it unmistakably. Otherwise I would quit. Before I finally got up again to walk back to my original hitchhiking spot, I checked my phone on which I found a message from my brother Johannes. In this message my brother wrote to me that a brother in the LORD had told him to relay a message to me. It was a passage out of the Bible, from the prophet Isaiah, which reads as follows:



*To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again.*

Isaiah 54:9 [NIV]

I had met this brother in the LORD, who had sent my brother the message for him to relay to me, only once about a week prior to my departure. We had spent an evening studying God's word and praying for one another. He pretty much knew nothing about me, besides of the fact that I was about to make this journey. After reading this message I thought to myself: *Well, thanks! But what does this have to do with my situation?* It did not mean a lot to me, if anything at all ... until later that day.

Arriving back at the main railway station in Karlsruhe, I again started to ask people for a ride. Again, nothing for about an hour. Then a young man arrived in his car. The plate number gave it away that he would probably drive into the general direction in which I needed to go as well. So I went over to him and asked whether or not I could ride along. He first looked at me; puzzled might be the best word to describe it. Since hitchhiking is not the most common means of transportation in Germany, this was understandable. After weighing back and forth the pros and cons, he finally smiled and said that I could join the ride. I would have to wait for a little while though since he was getting somebody from the train station. *Of course, take your time!* At this moment he could have told me to wait for an hour and I would have been happy with that as well. Finally, I was moving again. *Thank you, God!* When he finally came back it had started to rain again. The entire day had been a back and forth between rain and sunshine.

As we started the ride towards the east, we did the usual small talk which pretty quickly led into a deep, meaningful conversation. While we were driving along on the motorway A8 close to Pforzheim, the rain got lighter and lighter, until the sun finally broke through the clouds. Suddenly a *rainbow* was standing right above the motorway; like a big gate which we had to drive through. Not only was I fascinated; my driver was so as well. This was one of the brightest *rainbows* which we had encountered so far in our lives. As soon as the *rainbow* appeared over the motorway, I remembered the message which my brother had relayed to me earlier that day. It did not mean much to me in the beginning, but now I remembered one thing: The person of *Noah* was mentioned two times in the passage. This is me: Patterns in a text, in a drawing, or whatever the means of language might be, register with me. They get my attention. The story of *Noah* is one of those stories known by many people around the world, regardless of whether or not they have read the Bible. For those who might not know the story of Noah, let me give you a brief summary. It is necessary to understand the unfolding of that 3rd day of my journey:



In [Genesis cha. 6](#) we read that God at some point, after having created the earth, looked at His creation only to see that everything man thought, said, and did was evil. Only one person with his family God found to be righteous in His eyes: *Noah*. He decided to destroy the entire world with a flood in order to make a fresh start with only *Noah* and his family. He commanded *Noah* to build an ark, a huge ship, in which he, his family, and animals after their kinds would survive the flood. What God had told *Noah* came to pass: God erased all life from earth, except for those who were on the ark. After the flood waters had receded and everybody had left the ark, God made a promise to *Noah* and mankind: He would never again erase all life from earth through a global flood. The *rainbow* in the sky would mark this promise as a *sign* for all generations to come.

Seeing this *rainbow* immediately reminded me of the story of *Noah* and subsequently of the message I had received earlier that day. In combination with my request towards God to give me a *sign*, that this journey was His will, this was remarkable to me. Of course, this could be interpreted as merely coincidence. However, a nice coincidence at least. I kept this thought to myself as we slowly made our way through the usual traffic jam in the evening.

The conversation went on. I shared parts of my testimony and we talked about God. At some point I asked the young man where he was from. Since his skin color was significantly darker than mine, I presumed that he originated from another country. He answered that his family was from Armenia. Before I had planned the route for my journey around the world, I had no clue where Armenia was located on a map. But since my route would lead me very close to this country, it now registered with me. Not only would my route lead me close to the Armenian border with Turkey; it would also lead me very close to Mount *Ararat*. This mountain is not just any mountain. For once, it is a very important mountain for the Armenian people. Secondly, this mountain is also mentioned in the Bible, again in the context of the flood story and *Noah*:

*At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down, and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.*

Genesis 8:3-4 [NIV]

When my driver mentioned to me that he was from Armenia, a bell went off in my head: The entire story had just changed from interesting to significant. Earlier that day, I had asked God for a clear *sign* that this journey was His will. Following that, my brother relayed to me a Bible verse which mentioned the person of *Noah* two times.



*Mt. Ararat as I would later see it on my journey*

Then I finally got a ride which would take me in the direction I needed to go. Then we would see this intense *rainbow* which towered over the motorway like a gate, and now I had just learned that this young man was from the country which bordered on Mount *Ararat*. The mountain which, like the *rainbow*, is closely connected to the story of *Noah*. The mountain, which was so close to my planned (and traveled) route, that I would actually see it on my way through Turkey. For me this was no coincidence any more: This was a distinct, significant *sign* from God.

After processing through my mind what I had just heard, I talked to this young man and shared with him, what I had prayed for earlier this afternoon and what had just happened. He understood. After a while he said (his words as accurately as I can recall them):

*"You know what, not only that: My name is Noyan. It is directly derived from the name Noah."*

Having said that, he turned his back towards me: His Arsenal London football jersey had his name printed in bold letters on the back. Today I would like to smack myself at times for not taking a picture of this. In that moment I just did not think about that. Whether he had mentioned his name to me when we first met at the train station in Karlsruhe? Maybe. Probably. I can't remember. What I know is that his name had not registered with me up to this point. Now, I think that it is important at times to summarize some things so that the fullness of its meaning can be appreciated:

1. In the afternoon I had prayed in desperation, that God might give me a *sign*, that it was His will that I make this journey. I wanted to know that He was with me.
2. Following that, I received a Bible verse from somebody who barely knew me. This verse from the prophet Isaiah contained the name *Noah* two times which registered with me since this is the way my brain operates.
3. Shortly after that I got a ride; somebody who was not only willing but also able to drive me after being stuck for almost two days. On the ride the following things happened:
  - a. The *rainbow* arching over the motorway like a gate through which we had to drive. The *rainbow* which God classified as a *sign*. The *rainbow* through which God promised *Noah* and all future generations in Genesis 9 that He would never again destroy the earth by a flood.
  - b. The guy who drove me originated from Armenia. Mount *Ararat* is very important for the Armenian people, and Mount *Ararat* is located right at the border between Armenia and Turkey. Mount *Ararat* which, according to Genesis 8, was the place where the arc of *Noah* stranded. Mount *Ararat* which lay so close to my planned route that I would actually see it with my own eyes.
  - c. The driver's name was Noyan, a name directly derived from the name Noy (Armenian for *Noah*).

There might be people out there who say that all of this was coincidence. I would sincerely question whether those people would apply the same thought process, the same level of skepticism to other examples in life which are not religiously “tainted”. As an exercise: Let’s take this story, remove God from it, turn it into a criminal case, and put this kind of evidence before a jury for a guilt/not guilty verdict of a criminal <sup>[2]</sup>. I am convinced, that this circumstantial evidence would convince every jury around the globe for the verdict, that the charged person is guilty. For me there is no doubt whatsoever that God spoke to me that day. He not only answered my question, whether this journey was His will or not, with a clear “Yes”: He even confirmed the route I was about to take, and He ensured me that He would be with me according to the word which was given to me. Along my journey around the world, I would see the *rainbow* again and again and again, reminding me of God’s faithfulness and that He was with me. This meant the world to me, and it would give me strength and courage through many difficult situations which I had to go through. Knowing that the creator of the universe is with you and that He even answers your prayers: Nothing in this world can compete with that.

Noyan and I had a good, long talk in which I explained the gospel to him. In the end I could also pray for him. He knew that there was something going on. He knew that this was not coincidence. He stayed with me for a long time after he had dropped me off at a railway station from where I would continue my journey. At some point he left, only to return after about half an hour with a bag full of Vietnamese food. I love Vietnamese food! He just did not want to leave and we talked some more. He knew that God had not only spoken to me, but that God was also reaching out to him. He was not ready to make a decision then and there. So I shared with him the parable of the four grounds ([Matthew 13:1-23](#)) and left the rest for God to do His work in him. Since I have not been able to reach Noyan after this day by phone, it is good for me to know that he is in God’s hands and that His word will not return void ([Isaiah 55:9-12](#)).

Since I was very close to the town where I had lived for four years as an engineer, I made a couple of phone calls and got a place to sleep. The day before, a woman in Karlsruhe had given me some money (without me asking for it and even with me refusing at first to take it). With that money I could now afford a train ticket to the village where I would spend the night. I could not wait to share with my friends over a glass of wine the things that had just happened to me on the first days of my journey.

After a good night sleep and breakfast, my friend and brother in the LORD Simon drove me to a motorway service station from which I would start to hitchhike again. The spot was perfect with good chances of getting a ride further to the east. Not too long after I had started to ask people for a ride, a young couple with an Austrian number plate agreed on driving me every single one of the 600km to Vienna. Amazing: God had just provided me with a ride which would make up for the two days in which I had been stuck in Karlsruhe.

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<sup>2</sup> In [Appendix 1](#) you will find a fictitious criminal case which tries to parallel the events of this story as closely as possible without involving the background-question whether or not God exists, and whether or not someone experienced God’s guidance.

I was back on “schedule” again. The conversations on the ride to Austria were great. This is what made hitchhiking so rewarding throughout my entire journey: Open people and good conversations outweigh by far the waiting times and the discomfort of asking people for a favor. In the evening of the fourth day, I already was in a different country. I could not have imagined a better start into this one-year journey.

God is good!

## Appendix 1) “Guilty” or “Not Guilty” – Your decision

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### Notice

The following fictitious criminal case - of course – cannot and does not parallel 1:1 the story which I experienced in chapter [01.2 Karlsruhe - First Trial](#), and which I reported as accurately as possible. However, the parallels should be close enough for a person to find out whether or not he or she would come to a different conclusion only because this fictional story is not religiously “tainted”.

Like satellites orbiting the earth, the news of the last few weeks had revolved solely around this one topic: The murder of Henry Straightpath. In his election campaign, this young politician, who had already become a member of parliament in his mid-thirties, had pointed out time and time again the necessity to put an end to the organized drug trafficking in his country. This and many other points from his election program had obviously resonated with the common people, and so he had been elected to parliament about six months ago. What happened next was hard to believe: Straightpath kept his campaign promises to the letter and began to crack down on the organized drug scene. Bills were introduced and passed, raids were carried out, dealers and middlemen put to jail. The damage he thus inflicted on the country's drug cartel ran into the millions. It was not difficult to imagine that Straightpath made not only friends among the population this way, but also enemies. Rich and powerful enemies. And so, what many had suspected and feared finally happened: On a Thursday afternoon, Henry Straightpath was killed with six shots at close range on the steps of the parliament building. The killer, who attempted to flee on foot, was stopped by police only minutes after the crime and arrested.

Weeks went by while the public held its breath as to how the Straightpath murder investigation would progress. It seemed as if the fate of the entire country and the outcome of this court case were inevitably linked together.

At last, the time for justice finally came: The district attorney's office had done its job and issued arrest warrants. In particular one arrest warrant against a drug lord, who simply called himself *the Baron*, had caused a stir since he had been considered untouchable up to this point. There had been similar incidents before: ‘Accidents’ or murders that benefited *the Baron*. However, it had never been possible to conclusively link these incidents to him, because witnesses suddenly disappeared or changed their minds overnight. Apparently, something was different in this case. You, dear reader, have been summoned to observe the trial together with eleven other jurors, and to come to a final verdict in the end. Like a huge part of the population, you might have already asked yourself the question what might be so different about the Straightpath case, and why *the Baron* had remained in custody this time.



Monday morning, three and a half weeks after Straightpath's murder: The trial begins. A short introduction by the judge is followed by the opening statement of the prosecutor, who passionately presents the indictment against *the Baron*. He discloses to the audience that in this trial not only the murder of Straightpath, but also many other crimes from the past in connection to *the Baron* would be brought to light. After the prosecutor has finished his opening statement, the defense follows. The lawyer, with an outwardly radiant self-confidence and trained rhetoric, carries his arguments into the field: As everyone would know by now, there had been many false accusations against his client in the past few years, and therefore this continual harassment by the jurisdiction could only be interpreted as an institutional crusade against an innocent private person. His client would consider whether or not to file a discrimination claim with the state's higher courts. According to your observation, the judge follows both pleas without showing any signs of emotions. The prosecutor, on the other hand, had not been able to suppress a slight smile on his face when the defense had spoken of "*baseless allegations*". It seems that this is going to be an interesting trial with some unpredicted twists and turns for the defense.

The first witnesses are called by the prosecution. Each of these witnesses presents fragmented information about *the Baron*, painting a picture of a man who had been repeatedly upset in the past about politicians in general, but particularly about Straightpath. He would have made no secret out of the fact, that he wished him a slow and suffering death, and that he - after Straightpath's death - had dropped several inappropriate and sadistic comments. Interesting, all together consistent and credible statements of those witnesses, but - as the defense rightly pointed out during cross-examination - not conclusive enough to prove *the Baron's* involvement in this murder. His client would be a very temperamental person, and therefore, from time to time, a careless word or two would slip his tongue, as it would with many other people as well. The juror to your right leans over to you and whispers, "*I hope the prosecution has more to offer than that. Making a decision solely based on these statements is impossible.*"

The wish of your fellow juror is granted about an hour later when the prosecution calls Mr. Coldheart, the assassin of Straightpath, to the witness stand. Since Mr. Coldheart had resisted his arrest, he had been gunned down by the police, and had subsequently only survived through a life-saving surgery. In the weeks leading up to the trial, only fragments of information about the assassin and his physical condition had reached the public, and many had already speculated that he had not survived. Now, however, a limping and pale, yet alive man is led into the courtroom bound by chains and two guards on each side. After the witness has been sworn in, the prosecutor takes a lot of time to introduce the witness. In the course of the questioning, the young prosecutor, who could not have led many trials up to this point, becomes more and more confident, while the lawyer for the defense seems to become smaller and smaller, *the Baron* paler and paler. The prosecutor gives the assassin great latitude to present his answers in detail. Only occasionally he interrupts to repeat details, to refine them, or to hold up mentioned pieces of evidence for the jury to see.

The assassin starts at the very beginning: How he had become an assassin, how he had first gotten into contact with *the Baron*. Over the course of several years, he lists chronologically and in detail one assignment after another which he had carried out for *the Baron*. It becomes increasingly obvious that the assassin has made a deal with the prosecution: A deal which would probably spare him of the death penalty in exchange for revealing information about the Straightpath case. Due to the volume of information which Coldheart discloses, the Straightpath case is barely touched upon on the first day of his examination. This would change the following day.

Early the next morning, the trial continues, and after a short recapitulation of the previous day, the prosecutor again gives free rein to the assassin and his testimony. Mr. Coldheart begins by stating that things changed for him and his cooperation with *the Baron* in the aftermath of Straightpath's election into parliament:

*"We always had to assume that we were being tapped. Even though the Baron could rule out the possibility of agents infiltrating our ranks by not accepting anyone new into his inner circle, there was still the possibility of getting into trouble through microphones or similar means. For this reason, something like a secret language developed over the months between the Baron and those employees who were supposed to take care of his 'dirty work'."*

What this secret language would have looked like, the prosecutor intervenes.

*"Well, messages like 'Terminate this person on this day in this location' were broken up into smaller sub-messages which were sometimes even delivered by different people. In the case of Straightpath's murder, it looked like this: It had been clear to me for a long time that my boss wanted Straightpath dead. There was no doubt about that. Accordingly, I had already tuned my ears for news from this particular direction. On the day of the assassination, somebody knocked on the door of my apartment at 5:30 in the morning. When I moved from my bed to the door and opened it, nobody was there. However, there was a postcard on my doormat. Not too much was written on the back of it: Only a reference to 'John 11:47-50'. The motive of the postcard: A sunset at a beach with palms. At first I wasn't really sure what this message was supposed to tell me. However, I remembered from my confirmation class as a young boy that John was a book in the Bible. I closed the door and went back inside my apartment where I opened an old and dusty Bible to the referred passage:*

*Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. 'What are we accomplishing?' they asked. 'Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.' Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, 'You know nothing at all! You do not realise that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.'*

*There were two aspects about this message which caught my attention. First, the way in which the card was delivered to me: Early in the morning when usually no postmen are around in our neighborhood. Second, there was neither a return address nor a stamp on the card. For someone, who knew where I was living, it was apparently very important that I received this message, and therefore this person had brought it personally or by means of a courier right to my door. With regards to the scripture quoted on the backside of the post card, it is important to mention that I am not a religious person. I also interact in parts of the society where people tend to make fun of God and especially of those people, who are foolish enough to belief in him. Accordingly, the message of the postcard was something which I could not really relate to at first. Only the name Caiaphas, which is a very uncommon name in our society, stuck with me.*

*I had bought a new handgun the days before, and I wanted to practice with it on the shooting range on the day of Straightpath's assassination. As I was putting on my coat, the doorbell rang. When I opened the door, a man I had not met before was standing right in front of me. The man didn't seem to know me either. 'Mr. Coldheart?', he asked. When I confirmed that it was I, he continued: 'Your taxi has just arrived, sir.' Since I had not ordered a taxi, I replied: 'I didn't order a taxi.' The stranger did not seem to mind that answer and repeated: 'Your taxi has just arrived, sir.' As he spoke those words, he looked at me calmly and expectantly, as if it was absolutely clear how I would react now. With my mind trying to figure out this awkward situation, I eyeballed the man and immediately noticed his colorful Hawaiian shirt, which was covered from top to bottom, left to right with palm trees. After a few seconds I asked the stranger: 'Where do you intend to take me?' He answered: 'Exactly where you need to go, sir!' I nodded in agreement. Since I was already carrying my handgun, all I had to do was to shut the door behind me. I was still not quite sure what was going on, but it seemed to me that this trip had been organized for me 'from the very top'.*

*While the taxi, which didn't really look like a taxi, meandered with me and the driver through the urban canyons, my senses were focused on picking up any further clues which might be sent my way. Suddenly the driver stopped at a large poster which had been pasted on an advertising pillar. He didn't just pull over to the side of the road: With lots of momentum he entered the sidewalk with all four wheels, where we came to a stop with screeching tires. The poster was now right outside my window, life-size. It was from an environmental organization stating that something needed to be done against the pollution of nature: 'Walk shorter distances' and 'avoid plastic wherever possible' were given as examples. 'It may be a sacrifice for you, but think about the environment, your fellow human beings, and future generations.' These phrases had been put into the mouth of a beautiful actress with a speech bubble, and this actress on the poster was now standing life-size on the other side of my window, directly in front of me. While ignoring the complaints of the pedestrians, who had to avoid the car on the sidewalk, the driver turned to me and said: 'Wouldn't you agree with that? Don't you think that the sacrifice of a few, maybe even just the sacrifice of ONE PERSON is*

worth it if it serves the common good?' The question had the effect it was intended to have. I was now on standby, looking for more information about my target. Surely someone would die that day.

We drove on in the direction of the city center. After a long period of silence, I asked the driver an in itself trivial question which should animate him to give me more information. I asked him where he came from and what he was doing for a living. He replied that he was from the southern states, that he used to work as a piano builder, but that he had recently become a politician to ensure law and order. As he said these last words, he looked at me through the rear-view mirror with a malicious smile on his face. The information I had just been given obviously did not correspond to the truth: Neither did the driver have the skin color or the accent which are typical for the southern states, nor was this man a politician. After all, he was just driving me through the city disguised as a taxi driver. In addition to that, his arms, which were covered with prison tattoos, revealed something about the man's past and supported the assumption that he was just playing a role.

I finally began to piece together the big picture of that day: In the morning I had received a postcard out of the blue with a Bible verse on it, in which a certain Caiaphas is supposed to have said, that it is better that only one man dies for the well-being of a whole people. The motive of the beach, which for many people is the epitome of paradise, underlined this statement: Some people just have to die so that many can enjoy the benefits of paradise. Then a strange person appeared at my door, pretending to be a taxi driver. That man told me that the taxi, which I had not ordered, was now ready for me. On the way, the driver very insistently drew my attention to a poster advertising for the acceptance of personal sacrifice on the part of some people to serve the greater good of all. And now the taxi driver had very clearly described Mr. Straightpath: The politician who came from the southern states. The politician who had been a piano builder in his former work life. The politician who wanted to ensure law and order.

When we finally came to a stop in front of the parliament building, the driver turned around, looked me directly in the eyes and said: 'By the way, my name is Caiaphas ... And today is the day when my prophecy will come to pass.' After a pause and an intense, piercing look, he finished by saying: 'Now get out of my car!' I knew what I had to do. I briefly observed the area and formulated in my mind a plan for retreat. After taking a few deep breaths, I got out and shot Mr. Straightpath, who was giving a speech on the steps of the parliament building before the assembled press."

After a pause, Coldheart adds:

"I have nothing to gain here: I know that my life is forfeit, and that I will spend the rest of my life in a cell. The last three weeks of fighting death in a hospital bed have taught me a couple of things, and I want to get one of those things off my chest. I know that I

*have made many mistakes in the past, huge mistakes. And I would like to take this opportunity to express that I am truly sorry."*

With these words, Mr. Coldheart's gaze wanders from the jury box towards Mrs. Straightpath, who is watching the proceedings from the stands.

After Mr. Coldheart's testimony, it is now the defense's turn. After attempting to challenge the credibility of the star witness, the lawyer calls its own witnesses. Primarily the argument is based on the fact that there is no direct evidence for *the Baron* ordering the murder of Straightpath, verbally or in writing, apart from Coldheart's testimony. His client would therefore be innocent.

Fast forward: After less than a week, the evidentiary hearing is now concluded. The main subject of the evidence has been the testimony of Coldheart, and everything stands or falls with his credibility. You and the jury retreat to an adjoining room of the courthouse. An adjoining room of the courthouse in which you have already spent the last days isolated from the outside world. The prosecution deemed this to be necessary in order to prevent the jurors from being influenced by means of threats or bribes. Now it is up to you as part of the jury to convict *the Baron* or to acquit him for lack of evidence. A far-reaching decision which might have massive implications for the lives of many, perhaps even your own. How will you decide?

*" Greater Love has no-one than this:  
to lay down one's life for one's friends. "*

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John 15:13 [NIV]



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