



SHEKINAH

(Heavenly Glory)

You are the light of the world. Matt. 5:14a

April 2007

Inking my thoughts ...



Pastor Daniel Israel

“O Fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Him.” Luke 24:25,26

ONLY BY FAITH

Recently, there is an ongoing attack against anything that concerns Jesus! Many strange questions are being raised about His life! Was Jesus truly a historical person, or a mythical figure? Did He indeed die on the cross, and that too for our sins? Did the resurrection really take place? Did He marry Mary Magdalene and have children, as Da Vince code suggests? Have the archeologists found the grave site of Jesus with His wife and child? Lot of questions to answer! Some Christian apologists have bravely attempted to answer these questions, but the skeptics are not convinced!

One day, I was watching a news channel concerning the controversy over “Holocaust”. There were some who denied vehemently that the Holocaust ever happened. In that same show, they showed some survivors of Holocaust, giving eye witness testimony of such a horrible act. But the opponents never were convinced! As I was watching this heated debate, something suddenly dawned on me! If people have tough time believing about something that happened between late 1930’s and early 1940’s, how could they believe Jesus’ death and resurrection which happened close to 2000 years ago? It is very hard to prove our point through intellectual argument. Only by faith, we can come to a conclusion; but this faith is not some blind faith. It is a kind of faith that shapes its belief on certain facts, logic, and reason. Jesus wants us to have faith that is based on concrete evidences concerning His death and resurrection. Let us see how Jesus Himself presents these evidences to convince His own disciples!

First of all, Jesus uses Scripture as a “proof” of His death and resurrection! In Luke 24:25-27, Jesus points to the Old Testament prophets who spoke about His death and resurrection 400 to 1500 years before Christ was born! (e.g. Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 etc). In our human history, there was only one person who could claim this kind of death and resurrection, and that was Jesus Christ alone! Jesus calls them, “O fools” because they did not have faith in what their Scripture was saying. Do you have strong faith in the Bible? There could be variance in various translations, and manuscripts, but there is absolutely no variance in the main story of the Bible: The main story is very simple. Adam and Eve were created, but they fell down. God sent His own Son to redeem the lost by making His Son pay the penalty of sin for us. He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and as many believed in Him, He gave the power to be the children of God. This story never changes in any manuscript or translation. There is a unified theology from Genesis to Revelation, as far as the main story is concerned. It is time, we believe our Scriptures. If we believe the Scripture, we will not have any problem believing Christ’s death and resurrection also! (1 Corinthians 15:3,4)

Secondly, Jesus wants us to believe the “eye witnesses” who actually saw resurrected Christ! Jesus rebukes Thomas for his unbelief (John 20:24-29). In Mark 16:10-14 also, Jesus rebukes the disciples for not believing the eye witnesses.

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ONLY BY FAITH!

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Paul tells us that at least 500 plus people saw the risen Lord (1 Corinthians 15:5-11), and many of them were not afraid to die for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus Christ! What do they gain out of such martyrdom in this world? How can we reject such a large number of witnesses? When we reject them, we are indirectly telling them that they are liars! Here we can see the dilemma which is very similar to holocaust. It is only by faith, we choose to believe in the apostles' testimonies. It is high time, we read their epistles with fear and trembling, and believe their report by faith, as commanded by our Lord Jesus Himself.

Thirdly, Jesus wants us to believe in the "Witness" from heaven: the Holy Spirit! "He shall testify of me..." (John 15:26). "It is the Spirit that bears witness because the Spirit is truth." (John 5:6). "He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in Himself" (1 John 5:10). The Holy Spirit does not speak about Himself. But He will constantly point to Jesus' teaching, His life, death, resurrection, and His return! God indeed dwells within the believer's heart to testify and witness about His Son! If we abide in the Spirit, we abide in the resurrected Christ also! Through the Spirit, we have fellowship with both God the Father, and the Son. What a great Witness, Helper, Counselor, and our eternal Companion! The same Spirit that quickened Jesus Christ is telling us now, that He is risen indeed! Whether we believe in Him or not, He cannot deny Himself! How can we receive this Heavenly Witness? By accepting, and receiving Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior by faith!

We are surrounded by a vast cloud of witnesses. But only by faith, we can believe in these witnesses. Only by faith, we can believe the prophecies of the Scripture, and therefore believe in Christ's death and resurrection. It is only by faith in Apostles' testimonies, we can positively believe that Jesus was indeed risen. It is only by faith in Jesus Christ, we can receive the "Heavenly Witness of the Holy Spirit". If we could only believe in these witnesses, we could receive Christ in no time! Paul says, "The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart; that is, the Word of Faith, which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised from the dead, you shall be saved! For the Scripture says," whosoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed! (Romans 10: 8-10) Faith in Scripture leads to faith in Christ. Only by faith in Apostles' testimonies, we are strengthened in Christ. Also, faith in the Holy Spirit, and our obedience toward Him takes us to the very presence of God the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ!

If we truly believe in these three (Scripture, Apostles' teaching, and Holy Spirit), we will become very powerful witnesses for Jesus Christ! We will live for Him, and die for Him and become His mighty witnesses! "We having the same Spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak!" (II Corin. 4:13) If we really believe, it is real easy to witness to anybody. But why is it that some of us are very afraid to witness about this Resurrected Christ? It is because our belief in Scripture is shaky, our confidence in Apostles' witnesses is not very sure, and also, our experience in the Holy Spirit is very limited and powerless. Abraham believed in the spoken Word of God, and he reaped so many blessings because of it. How much more blessings we should be able to reap, if we can only believe?

Let the worldly wise men dig out and expose more graves of Jesus. Let the heretics promote more phony stories of Jesus. Let the false prophets deny Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Let them produce part 1,2,3....part 28 of Da Vince Code, and try to rip the Christian faith apart. Nothing can shake us. We know whom we have believed! Our belief is in the solid foundation of God's Word, in our faithful apostles, who died for this resurrection message, and in the all powerful Holy Spirit! We cannot be moved at all. Let us not be troubled by these attacks. If they do not believe the Holocaust, how are they going to believe a message that is 2000 years old? I can still hear the words of Jesus being spoken to such people, who willfully reject all the witnesses of God: "O fool!"



Who Did? Who did...

Youth & Kids Corner

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Built an altar and called it Jehovahnissi (The Lord is my banner)? | 7. Jacob (Gen 28:18) |
| 2. Built the first temple? | 6. Gideon (Judges 6:24) |
| 3. Built the city of Ramases in Egypt? | 5. Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:1) |
| 4. Built an altar unto the Lord in Mt. Ebal? | 4. Joshua (Josh 8:30) |
| 5. Built an idol 90 feet tall? | 3. Israelites (Gen 47:11) |
| 6. Built an altar and called it Jehovahshalom (The Lord is peace)? | 2. Solomon (1 Chron. 22:6) |
| 7. Set up a pillar with the stone he had placed under his head for the night? | 1. Moses (Ex 17:15) |
| | Answers |

Toward an Active Church

Part 1: Let there be excuses!

I was challenged by a book I read about a year ago, *God's Politics* by Rev. Jim Wallis, to conduct an informal survey. I randomly asked a few dozen Christians to name a Bible verse about the poor. As Wallis accurately predicted, almost everyone I spoke with said "The poor you will have with you always," or some variation of that. Only one person invoked another of Jesus' sayings, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, and has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor." One said Jesus became poor so you can become rich. Not surprisingly, no one said "Sell all your possessions and give everything to the poor!"

It's fascinating to me that so many of us immediately think of the statement "The poor you will always have with you," but don't automatically come up with other statements referring to people with little or no material possessions. Sure we know about the poor in spirit, but what about the poor in finances? The Bible has plenty to say on the subject! Here's just one passage: The prophet Isaiah's indictment of his nation Israel in Isaiah Chapter 1, verse 23:

Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them. (NIV)

It's clear God hates it when a nation forsakes its least fortunate citizens. So why do our elected leaders of both parties treat the widows and orphans as secondary? The answer is the same today as it was in Isaiah's time. They love bribes and chase after gifts! The last time I checked, widows and orphans didn't have much to give to election campaigns.

Jesus had some rather terse things to say about how the religious people of His time prioritized helping those who needed it:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. Matthew 23:23 (NIV)

Obviously, God did not think the government and faith communities were doing enough in the areas of justice and mercy centuries ago. But what about now? The poorest city in the United States is New Orleans. How would God grade our national response to that city's crisis? According to the U.N., half of the world's starving people live in India. How would God evaluate our collective response to that? How would He grade our personal responses to the poverty most of us encounter every day?

Let's look more closely at what seems to be everybody's favorite Bible verse about the poor. Most of us seem to think it means something it doesn't even mean! I have heard some people say, and I suspect many more think, that because Jesus said we will always have the poor with us, there is little point trying to tackle poverty aggressively. We see the verse as an unchangeable fact of life.

And because our hearts are not very compassionate about the poor anyway, this verse becomes an excuse. If we always have the poor with us, why get our hands dirty trying to help? Let's just write a couple of checks so we feel less guilty. Is that really what Jesus meant? I think we all know the answer.

How do so many of us come to such a ridiculous conclusion? The same reason so many of us get a lot of other things from the Bible messed up. We take the verse out of context. The whole verse says:

The poor you will always have with you, and you may help them whenever you want. But you will not always have me. Mark 14:7 (NIV)

In my next writing: What "The poor you will always have with you" really means.

Pastor Andrew O'day



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Vision of our Church

- ✠ To reach out to all people for Christ .
- ✠ To reach out to all children and lead them to CHRIST.
- ✠ To help out the mission work in the Indian subcontinent.
- ✠ To be a light to this country and be a blessing to the needy people in the USA.

Directions From Route 29

Merge onto Baltimore National Pike (US 40) West
At the 5th traffic light, turn Right onto Pine Orchard Lane (0.1 miles)
Turn Right onto Corporate Ct (<0.1 miles)

Schedule for the month

Sunday Worship Service - 11 am
Children's Sunday School - During the service
Adult Sunday School - Sundays at 10:15 a.m.
Prayer Session every Tuesday 7:30pm—9pm
Women's Fellowship - Second Saturday at 2:30pm
Kidz Bible Club - Second Saturday at 4:30pm

Summer Activity Schedule



Calling all agents to VBS 2007!



Where

COI

When

July 9 — 13

Time

8:30am to 4:00pm

Who

4 - 12 year olds

Registration

FREE



*Eastern Conference '07
Mark your calendars
August 17-19
Refreshing Mountain Camp, PA*

WORD for the month....

Discretion will protect you , and understanding will guard you.

Proverbs 2:11

Let us reflect the Light of our Lord Jesus Christ