

THE PASSION SERIES – THE GOSPEL OF JOHN CHAPTERS 12-21

For the next six weeks or so until Easter we will look at John's account of the final week of Jesus' life. It also coincides with the release of the movie "The Passion of the Christ". John's gospel is profound and I am sure this will be a life-changing series so please tell your friends to subscribe to Eternity-DBS.

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John 12:37-43 But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they did not believe on Him, (38) so that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (39) Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again, (40) "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." (41) Isaiah said these things when he saw His glory and spoke of Him. (42) Still, however, even out of the rulers, many did believe on Him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; (43) for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.

THE COST OF BELIEVING

It is hard for many people to believe. They are blinded and hard of hearing and ensnared in their sins and hardened in their hearts. We often under-estimate the intransigence of selfish people. In His parable of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16 it Jesus makes the following point:

Luke 16:27-31 And he said, I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, (28) for I have five brothers, so that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment. (29) Abraham said to him, They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them. (30) And he said, No, father Abraham, but if one should go to them from the dead, they would repent. (31) And he said to him, If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded, even though one rose from the dead.

Miracles, healings, and the raising of Lazarus did not convince the unbelieving Jews. Neither did Jesus' exceptional character and teachings convince them and neither has two thousand years of Christian witness has not persuaded them. They seem determined not to believe!

Paul explains their stubbornness thus:

Romans 11:25-27 For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise within yourselves; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the nations has comes in. (26) And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. (27) For this is My covenant with them, when I have taken away their sins."

Israel and the Jews are hardened, and will not believe, until "the fullness of the nations has come in". Their stubbornness is a supernatural stubbornness ordained by God – and their own will, their own choice. This does not predestine all Jews to unbelief – my great-grandmother was a Jew, who believed and even became a missionary in China. In fact she

was a Cohen and a cousin of the Rothschild family and was disinherited from a large fortune for her faith.

When Jews do believe they are rejected for it. "Still, however, even out of the rulers, many did believe on Him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God. " Even to this today the WORST thing a Jew can do is to become a confessing active evangelical Christian. The state of Israel will recognize Muslims and Buddhists of Jewish descent as Israelis – but not Christians of Jewish descent. If a Jew becomes a confessing Christian they leave the embrace of the Jewish community.

We see this in the Jewish reaction to films about Jesus such as Cecil B. De Mille's "King of Kings" and Mel Gibson's "The Passion" both of which were accused of being anti-Semitic. Any strong depiction of Jesus arouses the same Jewish reaction that Jesus did in His own day. Jesus spells the end of their system - the last prophet before the destruction of the Temple and the Great Dispersion.

Many Jews did believe – even from among the believers – and these became Christians. Those who did not believe became the forefathers of the Jews today. Judaism today is the unbelieving remnant of the Jewish faith.

Why then is faith so difficult for Jews, Muslims and countless other people? Why are there areas that are "hard" and resistant? Why is the parable of the four soils – the hard path, the shallow soil, the soil with weeds and the good soil –so true of humanity? There are perhaps four or five reasons:

The work of Satan:

2 Corinthians 4:4 in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving ones, so that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ (who is the image of God) should not dawn on them.

An inner veil that comes from trying to be saved by works of the Law:

2 Corinthians 3:14-16 (But their thoughts were blinded; for until the present the same veil remains on the reading of the old covenant, not taken away.) But this veil has been done away in Christ. (15) But until this day, when Moses is read, the veil is on their heart. (16) But whenever it turns to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

Vanity, Ignorance and Lust:

Ephesians 4:17-19 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should not walk from now on as other nations walk, in the vanity of their mind, (18) having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. (19) For they, being past feeling, have given themselves up to lust, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Hatred:

1 John 2:11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because darkness has blinded his eyes.

Greed, Materialism and Covetousness:

Matthew 6:20-23 But lay up treasures in Heaven for yourselves, where neither moth nor rust

corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. (21) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (22) The light of the body is the eye. Therefore if your eye is sound, your whole body shall be full of light. (23) But if your eye is evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Revelation 3:17 Because you say, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

Thus faith is not just a matter of evidence and intellect or of a convincing testimony. Faith is rooted in the inner man and in spiritual and moral issues such as spiritual pride, lust, ignorance and materialism. How many refuse to believe because they know they will have to give up some sin or make a major lifestyle change?

Think of the five brothers of the rich man – what would faith have meant for them? Obeying the Law and the Prophets and being kind to the poor. Too much, too hard, too big a change. We will finish with a section from the parable of the rich young ruler:

Matthew 19: 21-26 Jesus said to him, If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven. And come, follow Me. (22) But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. (23) Then Jesus said to His disciples, Truly I say to you that a rich man will with great difficulty enter into the kingdom of Heaven. (24) And again I say to you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. (25) When His disciples heard, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? (26) But Jesus looked on them and said to them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

Blessings,

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