

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.

(To subscribe send a bank email to: eternity-dbs-subscribe@strategicnetwork.org)

John 12:24-36 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. (25) He who loves his life shall lose it. And he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. (26) If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant shall be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. (27) And My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this cause I came to this hour. (28) Father, glorify Your name! Then there came a voice from the heaven saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again. (29) Then the crowd who stood by and heard said that it thundered. Others said, An angel spoke to Him. (30) Jesus answered and said, This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sakes. (31) Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. (32) And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to Myself. (33) But He said this, signifying what kind of death He was about to die. (34) The crowd answered Him, We have heard out of the Law that Christ lives forever. How do you say, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? (35) Then Jesus said to them, Yet a little while the Light is with you. Walk while you have the Light, lest darkness come upon you. For he who walks in darkness does not know where he goes. (36) While you have the Light, believe in the Light so that you may become sons of Light. Jesus spoke these things and departed and was hidden from them.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

This whole passage derives its intensity and meaning from it being just five days before the cross. This is probably the Sunday or Monday before the Passover Friday. Jesus has entered with triumph. There is tension in the air – the popular question was "Will the Messiah win and take over from the Jewish leaders or will they kill Him first?" Jesus enigmatic answer is that He will win by being killed!

Jesus declares His death in no uncertain terms – as the seed of a new eternal world order. He says He will die, and that it will be by being "lifted up" - signifying both the cross and the later ascension into Heaven. This death would "bear much fruit" and the Christian martyrs who would follow Him in this would gain eternal life: "He who loves his life shall lose it. And he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal."

Jesus loved life and healed people. He was not morbid or suicidal – but he knew that life in this world is "passing away" and that at times there can be a higher, eternal priority, for which the Christian should lay down his or her life. And when such a choice beckons, to play safe, to love one's life here and now too much – is actually to die spiritually. (v.25)

In the midst of the call to martyrdom Jesus makes clear the reward: "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant shall be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him." God will honor His servants – even if the world dishonors them and kills them. The

condition is to go where Jesus goes – to urban slums and mission fields and hospitals and classrooms. The servant who goes where Jesus goes will find Jesus with him or her all the time.

“Where I am, there also My servant shall be” – not only on the cross but with Him in glory! 2 Timothy 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

Today I received an email from a fellow-missionary who trains young people to witness directly to Muslims. The young folk went out to share the faith and were terrified of persecution (in this nation they could easily have been killed) – but came back rejoicing at what God has done through them and the many believers from a single day’s sharing! They “laid down their life” – at least in their own hearts –and bore much fruit!

Yet Jesus also speaks of a successful spiritual revolution: “Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” It’s the end of the Devil being in control. In the cross the whole “kosmos” –the spiritual world system aligned in defiance of God, and its kings and its machinery of fear and oppression – will be judged. Paul tells us that the cross tripped Satan of his weaponry:

Colossians 2:13-15 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, (14) blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. (15) Having stripped rulers and authorities, He made a show of them publicly, triumphing over them in it.

The cry of Jesus is not for His own protection but for God’s greater glory: “(27) And My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this cause I came to this hour. (28) Father, glorify Your name! Then there came a voice from the heaven saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again. “

Jesus was prepared to die that His Father might be glorified. These were His reasons for the cross – the Father’s glory, the Devil’s doom (1John 3:8) and our salvation (John 3:16).

A voice came from Heaven – just as it did at His baptism, and it was audible and loud and those around thought that it thundered. This was similar to the audible voice that spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:4-7). In this case it seems that Jesus and the disciples heard it but the Jews misunderstood it as either thunder or an angel. This leads into a short discourse on their lack of spiritual perception.

(30) Jesus answered and said, This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sakes. (31) Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. (32) And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to Myself. (33) But He said this, signifying what kind of death He was about to die. (34) The crowd answered Him, We have heard out of the Law that Christ lives forever. How do you say, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? (35) Then Jesus said to them, Yet a little while the Light is with you. Walk while you have the Light, lest darkness come upon you. For he who walks in darkness does not know where he goes. (36) While you have the Light, believe in the Light so that you may become sons of Light. Jesus spoke these things and departed and was hidden from them.

The voice was not for Jesus’ benefit but for theirs –a clear attestation to His Messianic identity. It was to help them believe, and they seemed to get to the point that He “might be the Christ” but immediately question this as soon as He speaks of the cross: “The crowd answered Him, We have

heard out of the Law that Christ lives forever. How do you say, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"

Jesus presses them to believe – and to do so immediately: “While you have the Light, believe in the Light so that you may become sons of Light.” There is a chance for a new nature – as a “son of light” as an eternal being. It was a fleeting opportunity a moment when the Truth could be grasped. After this they would go back to stumbling around in darkness.

This tells us that such faith is not merely doctrinal - because you can believe a doctrine any time you like! Rather it is revelatory and personal faith and involves a transforming connection to God in a holy moment of grace. It is the sort of faith that changes the person into a “son of light” – that is a living, saving faith that makes a difference! As Colossians says:

Colossians 1:12-14 giving thanks to the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. (13) For He has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son; (14) in whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins.

The faith of the Christian takes us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light and redeems us. This is more than knowledge – it is grace!

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Blessings,

John Edmiston johned@aibi.ph

To donate online go to: <http://aibi.gospelcom.net/aibi/donate.htm>

The Life And Ministry Of Jesus The Messiah : <http://www.aibi.ph/aibi/messiah/>

A step by step journey through the life and ministry of Jesus - 25 bible-teaching articles that examine His birth, childhood, temptation, ministry, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension and Return.

Visit the Eternity Daily Bible Study Archives - <http://www.aibi.ph/eternity/>

Study at the Asian Internet Bible Institute- Free online non-formal, in-service, bible and ministry training: <http://www.aibi.ph>