

January 13, 2005 ©Homer Kizer

## **Commentary — From the Margins**

### **No Miracles at Nazareth**

When Jesus began His ministry in Galilee, He taught in the synagogues and was initially glorified by all (Luke 4:14-15). But when He came to the synagogue at Nazareth, He read from the prophet Isaiah. He read about proclaiming good news to the poor, liberty to captives, recovering sight to the blind, and the year of the Lord's favor. He told those in the synagogue that the words of the Prophet were being then fulfilled in their hearing. And those who heard Him spoke well of Him. But Jesus pushed those in the synagogue out of their comfort zone: He went on to say that no prophet is accepted in his hometown, that there were many widows in Israel when God sent Elijah to a Phoenician, that there were many lepers in Israel but Elisha cleaned only Naaman the Syrian. Those in the synagogue who minutes before had spoken well of Jesus were now filled with anger, and they drove Him out of town and to the brow of a hill where they could cast Him to His death. But He passed through the midst of the crowd and went to Capernaum, where He taught in their synagogue.

The synagogue in Nazareth expected Jesus to heal the sick, the lame, the blind, and to set at liberty the poor and oppressed through miracles similar to those He had performed at Capernaum before He went to Nazareth. But He told them in language they understood that there would be no miracles at Nazareth. His words angered the synagogue. Those present seemed to believe that they had a right to be healed. They had spoken well of Jesus because of what they had expected from Him. Jesus, however, wasn't about to produce miracles upon demand as if He were a circus act. The purpose of miracles isn't to cause belief through evidence. Faith that Elisha was a man of God brought Naaman to Israel. The Sidonian widow had no evidence that if she baked Elijah a cake that there would be enough oil and flour for another cake. She baked him a cake because he asked. Miracles occur in the absence of evidence. The notion that a person can expect a miracle, or has a right to a miracle is contrary to what Jesus told the synagogue at Nazareth.

But miracles upon demand is, today, part of the carnival marketing of Jesus to television crowds. Parades of ailing disciples traipse onto stages where they fall backwards when touched by the man (or woman) of God. Miracles upon demand has become big business, but Jesus isn't a commodity subject to market research, targeted advertising, and focused sales appeals. He isn't a hip pocket deity who performs tricks on demand. He doesn't cause disciples to fall backwards when touched.

Advertising doesn't produce faith, or belief based upon faith. Miracles do not produce faith, or the crowds would not have left Jesus when He made the hard-to-be-understood statements about Him being the bread of life (John 6:35). Only those who were drawn by the Father (John 6:44) and chosen by Jesus (John 15:16) remained with Him. So it is this drawing and calling process that

ultimately causes disciples to remain when confronted by those difficult words of Jesus that can only be understood typologically, not analytically.

The walk of every disciple is from Egypt to Judea, where disciples will live as Judeans. If a disciple will not make this journey of faith, the disciple will not enter God's rest. Salvation is just this simple. Jesus said that if descendants of Abraham will not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced by someone who has been raised from the dead (Luke 16:31). Yet it is the words of Moses and the Prophets that greater Christendom have erased from the hearts and minds of spiritually circumcised descendants of Abraham. Christendom has caused the firstborn son of promise to adopt Hagar as its mother, thus causing this son to be a descendant of Ishmael rather than a spiritual Israelite.

The Christian who will not faithfully live by the laws of God that have been written on his or her heart and mind through receipt of the Holy Spirit and birth-from-above will not enter the kingdom of heaven. His or her righteousness does not exceed that of the Pharisees (Matt 5:20) who were hypocrites, having the law near to them but not living by it (John 7:19). This Christian has been spiritually poisoned by Satan's disguised servants of righteousness (2 Cor 11:15). These teachers of iniquity that Christ will deny knowing when judgments are revealed (Matt 7:21-23) make arguments that would cause born again disciples to practice lawlessness. These self-identified mighty men and women of God, like actors on a stage, teach the witnesses to the great works they perform in the name of Jesus to commit spiritual suicide—they would have these witnesses erase the laws of God written on hearts and minds. Using the epistles of Paul like sandpaper, they scour smooth the hard words of Jesus while polishing their delivery of words about disciples being the righteousness of God. They buff their words until not a scratch can be seen, until their words will slip into hearts and minds without a question being raised. They seem to perform miracles on demand as they transform *Jesus the Christ* into the highlighted name on a marquee, visible even in heaven. These entertainers sell salvation. They barter with the crowds that come to hear Christ preached to the world. They take up offering after offering under the guise of sowing seed in heaven before closing their performances with due piety and repeated *amens*, as if God were hard of hearing. They have built for themselves tax exempt houses, and they haven't spared the appearance of prosperity.

Even the Sabbath-keeping churches of God expect miracles from its teachers, but there will be *no miracles at Nazareth*. The endtime churches of God are like Israel of Isaiah's day, like Israel of Ezekiel's day, like Nazareth of Jesus' day, in that they have eyes that no longer see the things of God, and ears that cannot hear the words of God. This is especially true when one of their own proclaims the good news that all who endure to the end shall be saved, for what miracle supports this unadorned proclamation of patient [endurance](#)? These churches, like a team of horses with bits between their teeth, stampede through their own houses, crushing disciples that want miracles on demand, that want evidence of where God is presently working. And they will be quick to cast Jesus off a cliff if they don't sit out the [Tribulation](#) in a place of physical safety. They believe they

are spiritually wealthy, but they are, instead, many kingly priests who parade without clothes through the streets of Babylon.

The firstborn son of the last Eve, [revealed](#) when the seven years of tribulation begin, will die spiritually and physically, or physically. The greater Christian Church will rebel against God 2300 days before Jesus returns as the Christ. The disciple who then seeks to save his or her physical life will lose his or her spiritual life. Those disciples who are today in one of the churches of God will not sit out the Tribulation in a place of safety, but will be sacrificed as Jesus was. The servant is not greater than his (or her) Master. It is a false teacher who would have servants believe that they are.

The problem with prophecy is what's disclosed: the last Eve will give birth to three sons, a spiritual Cain and a spiritual Abel at the beginning of the seven years of tribulation, and a spiritual Seth halfway through these seven years. Cain will rebel against God when the man of sin is revealed 2300 days before Jesus returns as the Christ. He will die spiritually when God sends a great delusion over him so that he cannot repent. He will then murder his righteous brother, and for doing so, he will take upon himself the [mark of the beast](#) when Satan is cast from heaven and comes as the true antiChrist. Righteous Abel will lose his physical life, but will save his spiritual life as the Sabbath identifies who is of God. Seth, born-from-above when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28), when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and His Christ (Rev 11:15), only has to endure to the end to be accepted before God. But this last third of pre-Tribulation humanity that comprises a spiritual Seth will still have to mentally defeat Satan through faith. This third of pre-Tribulation humanity will be refined as silver is refined and tested as gold is tested.

The fields are white for harvest, but before being offered to God, the sickle must be taken to the fields, and the sheaves thrashed and winnowed, and the grain beaten into fine flour. Except for a spiritual Joshua and a spiritual Caleb [churches or fellowships, not individuals], none of the spiritual Israelites that begin the Tribulation will live into the second half of these years of thrashing and winnowing. There will be no need for them to do so, for they will have been beaten into fine flour. They will no longer be as they are, blind and deaf, with exceedingly stiff necks. And the miracle that they would today demand of Jesus will be their salvation.

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