

Articles and Sermons :: The Great Need for Discernment by Zac Poonen**The Great Need for Discernment by Zac Poonen - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2014/6/20 20:45**

Imagine that you were in Palestine over 1960 years ago and that you heard of the ministry of someone called "Jesus of Nazareth" who was healing the sick. Not having seen Him yourself, you are delighted when you come across a large crowd attending a healing meeting in Jerusalem, with someone called 'Jesus' as the speaker.

As you draw near, you find that up on the platform, along with 'Jesus' (the speaker), Pilate and Herod, and Annas and Caiaphas are also seated. 'Jesus' then comes forward and addresses the crowd saying how honoured they all should feel that day because the two greatest secular rulers of Palestine, "the most honourable Herod and Pilate had graciously come to honour the meeting with their presence". And not only that, but "two great men of God, the Right Reverend Annas and Caiaphas were also there to bless the gathering".

Having spoken these words of introduction, 'Jesus' then invites Herod and Pilate to inaugurate the meeting and to speak a few words. Herod and Pilate both praise 'Jesus' by saying what a lot of good he is doing to the community by his ministry and that he deserves the support of all people. "The Right Reverend Annas and Caiaphas" are then invited by 'Jesus' to say a few words and to "open in prayer". They also praise 'Jesus' highly and invite all the people in their denomination to support 'Jesus' ministry wholeheartedly.

Then 'Jesus' invites Judas Iscariot to say a few words about the financial needs of the ministry. Judas speaks about the tens of thousands of denarii needed to meet all the needs of the ministry. He states that 'forms' are available with the ushers for those who contribute more than 1000 denarii saying that 'Jesus' has promised to pray special prayers for such people (it does not matter whether they are believers or unbelievers - all the rich are welcome, and the richer the better!). Herod then gets up and offers to give a tax deduction to all those who contribute to this ministry. The collection is then taken. Then 'Jesus' gives a brief message, demonstrates a few of his miraculous powers that astound the simple people, and heals a few sick people. And then before anyone can meet him, he rushes off with Herod, Pilate, Annas, Caiaphas and Judas Iscariot (and the bags of money) in the royal Roman chariot to the archbishop's palace in central Jerusalem to feast with them.

Somehow, at the end of all this, even though you are only a new convert, with little discernment and experience, you still feel a bit uneasy. All that you saw does not seem to fit in with the accounts that you had heard about Jesus from some of His apostles like Matthew, Peter and John.

Satan, however, is nearby to whisper in your ears, "It is written, 'Do not judge' (Matt. 7:1). But you tell him, "It is also written, 'Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world'" (1 Jn. 4:1). Finally, you come to a definite conclusion: "This is not the Jesus that I heard about. This is certainly 'another Jesus' (2 Cor. 11:4). And you are right. It was another 'Jesus'. How did you come to that conclusion? Because the anointing within you told you the following facts (1 Jn. 2:19, 20, and 27):

1. The real Jesus would not seek any sponsorship from secular rulers or any recommendations from unconverted religious heads for His ministry. Neither would He flatter any of them. When a bishop once came to Jesus, He told him that he needed to be born again (Jn. 3:1-10). Jesus called King Herod 'a fox' (Lk. 13:31, 32) and even refused to talk to him when He met him (Lk. 23:8, 9).
2. The real Jesus would never ask for money from anyone - not even for His ministry. He made His needs known only to His Father. The Father would then move the people or even a fish (in one instance) to supply Jesus' need (Lk. 8:1-3; Matt. 17:27).
3. The real Jesus would never 'sell' His prayers for any price. Simon the Samaritan magician once offered money for Peter's prayers and Peter rebuked him for such wickedness as to imagine that a divine gift could be bought with money (Acts 8:18-23). Simon repented immediately. But his unrepentant followers have been many through the centuries. The Roman Catholic Popes (claiming to be the successors of the Peter who rebuked Simon) have always sold their prayers for money. Martin Luther stood against all this wickedness in his day, like Peter. But some of the successors of Luther (today's Protestants) have again gone back to selling their 'prayers' and their 'prophecies' for cash; and alas, many like Simon are willing to pay for them!

Jesus specifically warned us that in the last days, deception would be so subtle that even the elect would almost be deceived - particularly through signs and wonders (Matt. 24:24). If there is any ministry that the elect are to beware of and examine most carefully today, it is the 'sign and wonder' ministry. Jesus told us not to believe it when people say that He came to their room to talk to them (See Matt. 24:26). The resurrected body of Jesus has never left the right hand of the Father in all these (more than 1900) years since His ascension. Paul and Stephen saw Him only there (Acts 7:55; 9:3). Even John did not see Jesus' physical body on Patmos but only symbols representing Jesus (Rev. 1:13-16). When Jesus does leave heaven, it will be for His second coming to earth.

Therefore, when they say today that He came to their rooms, do not believe them.

Living in the midst of gullible believers, we must not remain without discernment. The Word of God gives a clear light for all who desire it in these last days. If we follow that light alone, we will never be deceived.