

HOW WELL DO WE KNOW OUR JESUS?

@ Concord Church on 5th November 2023

Christmas is round the corner and therefore, the season to overload us with house -decoration, tree lighting, cookie-baking, and many other things for almost all types of Christians, whether nominal or born-again followers of Jesus Christ.

The holiday hype and the feel-good mantra “Christmas is a time for miracle” ignores the real miracle that occurred more than 2000 years ago, when God became man, born of a virgin in a humble state and circumstances in a stable in Bethlehem of Judea, to a young Jewish couple descended directly from King David of Israel.

It seems that Christmas is becoming less & less about Jesus and more & more about almost anything else. To make matters worse, people try to construct/fabricate/convert/propose and give Jesus, their own image/title and association. The truly uninformed think He was a Roman Catholic. The Palestinians ludicrously & stupidly claim He was a “Palestinian freedom fighter”. Wikipedia calls him “a first century Jewish preacher and religious leader “whom Christians say was God incarnate”.

But what did Jesus say? What did He say about Himself, about life & death and salvation and the end-times? Sadly, most people don’t know. Even sadder, many Christians also don’t know.

In August 2021, a publication known as relevantmagazine.com discussed the results of a study that found, “Of the born-again Christians between the ages of 18-39 surveyed, 60% agreed with the statement’ Buddha, Muhammad and Jesus are all valid paths to God”. Yet Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

This Christmas season, when the Church is waiting for the 2nd advent of Jesus Christ, I thought to put the question to ourselves “HOW WELL DO WE KNOW OUR JESUS?”.

Do we know Jesus said, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore”?

Do we know He acknowledged being God and the Messiah?

Do we know He said, “Salvation is of the Jews” and “You must be born again”?

Do we know He promised to return to Earth in a stunning, visible display of splendour & majesty that every eye will see? “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

I trust and hope these few questions will help us know Jesus better If we know about Him and DO NOT know HIM as per Romans 13:11-12 & 13-14. We-the church must be so united & identified with Christ that we imitate His example as our pattern for living. This means that we adopt HIS Values and Principles, Obey HIS commands, and become like HIM. This calls for complete rejection of immoral behaviour and the acts of the sinful nature.

True Christians MUST demonstrate outwardly the spiritual changes that have taken place inwardly. Let us go deeper and look at some important and relevant Scriptures for our edification (instruction, teaching, guidance, cultivation, improvement, and training).

Job 29:1-15 (Reading in Urdu).

Here we read & see that Job never lost his desire for the close relationship with God that he had once known. He longed for:

1. God's special care and protection (cf. Num 6:24-26; Ps 91:11; 121:7-8).
2. God's light to show him the way through dark & difficult circumstances (V3)
3. God's intimate fellowship and love (vv4-5; cf. Proverbs 3:32)

4. God's power to help him do good (vv12-17)
5. God's wisdom to share with others (vv21-25)

These things that Job desired are available to all who accept Jesus Christ as the Forgiver of their sins and the Leader of their lives (John 15:5; Rom 8:1, 31 & 33; 2-Thess 3:3 and 1-peter 3:13). This same desperate desire for God should characterise all true believers. "As the deer pants for the flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps 42:1-2& Ps 63:1).

Ephesians 4:22-24 (Put off the old-self...put on the new-self)

Apostle Paul uses two key phrases here: (1) The "old-self"—this refers to a Christian before he or she was spiritually "born again" as per John 3:3-7 and restored to right relationship with God. This old-self that stood against God has been crucified. The person becomes a new spiritual creation in Christ. (2) The "new-self" refers to believers "born again" state in which, the believers must not allow their old form of existence and their old way of doing things to rule or control their lives & bodies. {without the new-self, Jesus' statements in Matthew 7:20-21 & 24:35 will come into fulfilment}.

Colossians 3:8-11 Xref: Romans 12:1-2

Apostle Paul brings out several things in these passages for the growth of the church:

(1) There is a very real pressure to conform to this world and be squeezed into its likeness on many different levels. True & real Christians must firmly resist the temptation to accept and imitate the world's way of thinking & behaving.

(2). The reason we must resist adopting the world's way is because it is evil (Acts 2:40; Gal 1:4); it is under Satan's rule (John 12:31; 2-Cor 4:4; 1-John 5:19); it is hostile to God and His people (John 7:7; 15:18-21; James 4:4) and is built on human wisdom & values. The

world holds a worldview that Christians cannot accept because it rejects God and His standards (Romans 1:18-32; Col 2:8).

(3) Christ's Kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). This world's kingdom is full of spiritual darkness, deception and seduction (compare Matt 5:14-16; John 3:19; 1-Cor 6:9-10; Eph 2:1-3; 1-Peter 2:9 and Rev 12:9). Christ's followers are called to be a light in the midst of this darkness (Matt 5:14-16; Eph 5:8-11). Our lives should reflect a positive difference that those in the world cannot help but notice. This includes resisting the temptation to conform to the varied types of worldliness common in society, including greed, selfishness, humanistic thinking, a desire for power, envy, hate, revenge, filthy language, impurity, ungodly entertainment, fashions that are immodest & seductive, relationships that do not honour God.

(4) Instead of conforming to the world's values & lifestyles, believers' mind must continually be renewed and transformed and changed to God's way of thinking (1-Cor 2:16 & Phil 2:5). This can only happen as we spend time reading & meditating on God's Word. This will allow our visions, values, behaviours and plans to be directed by God's eternal truth—rather than by the world's temporary & deceptive pattern.

Let us take these things seriously and experience this year, a true Christmas miracle—one that will carry us, all the way to heaven.