

THE FRUIT OF THE CROSS



[Image by Christopher]

This post arose from past notes in my journal:

11 April 2000

The congregation we were members of at the time, had been characterised by a spirit of division and confusion over the preceding few weeks. Our pastor had been given a video entitled *The Hiss of the Serpent*, which was radically and very expressively critical about prominent ministries in the USA. The pastor's preaching changed direction so drastically from one Sunday to next, that there was an immediate drop of more than two thirds in service attendances. There was also an immediate decline in the children's ministry and its effective closure followed soon.

When the pastor asked the congregation during that direction changing sermon to stand and repent with her that the congregation had been following "the wrong Gospel", my wife and I and a friend remained seated. For us there was and is only one Gospel, which is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God preached

by Jesus of Nazareth and His apostles. The repentance turned out to be one about the prosperity doctrine the pastor had been following and teaching and not the Gospel. It was not long before the congregation, one where it was not uncommon for people to remain seated after the service, quiet and not wishing to leave the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit, closed down.

My journal entry noted that the issue which remained not negotiable to me was the truth and in the early morning hours of 11 April 2000 I prayed: “**Father, what is the truth?**” The clear answer that came to me was, “**Look at the fruit my son. Is it the fruit of the Cross?**”

In my heart I knew that the first part is often heard, but I had never heard the latter. I realised there are many unbelievers or non Christians who are friendly, generous, humble, etc. (Gal 5:22) and therefore reflecting what Paul described as the fruit of the Spirit. The question of the fruit of the Cross was new to me and consequently stood out. At the time I understood it to ask whether the fruit we see brings people to the Saviour? Are we seeing a permanent lifechange taking place, or just a brief emotional high, something one so often found for the duration of evangelistic conferences?

21 February 2014

Reconciliation with God had been completed in Christ.

Fourteen years later I felt the unction to read through part of my journal again. In the process I came to the above entry and thought about the concept of the fruit of the Cross. “**What is it really, Father?**” I prayed. The answer came in the words of John 19:30 – “**It is finished.**” Reconciliation with God had been completed; it is not something that still was to take place (2 Co 5:18).

How sad it is that such a great part of the Christian community is still waiting for Jesus to come when He is already with us and has been for a good 2000 years?

Robbed

I have often said the traditions we have been raised in have robbed us of so much of the Kingdom life which Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed had arrived with Him. With the ‘Kingdom of God’ I am not referring to the Western-minded concept of what the kingdom should be, but to the ancient Hebraic understanding of the Kingdom as the observable manifest power of God working through His people. By saying this, I am not supporting the many abuses that have sadly characterised some Christian ministries. I am saddened, however, by the many believers who resist the biblical Kingdom of God in exchange for many philosophised teachings and fiction dressed in biblical terminology.

The word of God to the Jewish religious leaders through the prophet Hosea rings loud and clear again this very day as I am writing the post – Good Friday 2015, the day on which the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth is called into remembrance by Christian congregations and denominations across the world: *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will reject you from serving as My priest.*” (Hos 4:6, Holman Christian Standard Bible). And was it not the soon to be crucified Christ himself that cried out against the religious leaders of Jerusalem: “*Hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when he said: These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is*

far from Me. They worship Me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commands of men” (Matt 15:7-9)?
They did not heed Him then and far too many are not heeding Him today!

That we have been robbed in our lifetime of so much of the manifest Kingdom life is one thing. The saddest thing is that God has been robbed of the honour and glory that would have been His if we, the believers, had been living the Gospel life in its fulness, the Kingdom life that He came to die on a cross for. He said it was finished and completed on the Cross. The Law and the Prophets had been completed in Him on that Friday. The “church” of today says it is not so, Jesus is coming soon, they say. Like the religious leaders of Jerusalem who were praying inside the Temple for Moschiach to come while He was passing by on a donkey outside, too many religious leaders today are doing the same. Instead of preaching and demonstrating that He is here and that He brought the Kingdom of God to all people, many are essentially praying for a great tribulation to fall upon the world as it will supposedly bring (the already present) Jesus to earth. They even call it the Gospel, the Good News!

Simply look at the governments and societies of this world we live in and then dare to tell me I’m wrong! Christian authors such as Andrew Murray have been sounding the trumpet of warning over a long time. Murray concluded that the world had lost its fear of the church, but that the world’s indifference was more to be dreaded than its hatred. A Christianity of mere form, in the sleep of indifference, was just as inaccessible as an openly resisting Judaism (1982: 77-78).

So I repeat the messages that fell into my *neshamah* (the part of the human soul that is closest to God, Prov 20:27) when I asked our Heavenly Father what truth was:

- **Is it the fruit of the Cross My son?**
- **It is finished!**

He entered the holy of holies once for all, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb 9:12, HCSB).

Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, but look -- I am alive forever and ever... (Rev 1:17-18, HCSB).

It has been completed on the Cross! We celebrate the Cross today, but where is the fruit? And yes, you’re so absolutely right – I need to look in my own mirror too! Daily!

Personal lesson

A lesson I personally took from the events in our former congregation was that Christian leaders first need to call together the elders in whom the various ministry gifts (so-called five-fold ministry, Eph 4:11-13) are known to truthfully manifesting and discuss such radical changes with them. With discuss I do not mean simply informing them, but affording them time to seek the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Only then can they go forward in unison, assembling an informed assembly behind them in doing so. According to Paul these gifts of the ascended Christ were intended for

- 1) the training of the saints in the work of ministry,
- 2) to build up the body of Christ, until

- 3) all reached unity in the faith and
- 4) knowledge of God's Son,
- 5) growing into maturity
- 6) with a stature measured by Christ's fulness.

It had nothing to do with the status and titles religious leaders are so fond of today. Paul was addressing the ecclesiae of his generation, but it remains a truth that today's believers cannot afford to continue either ignoring, or abusing in the way we all too often see in the Christian environment at large.

**In this regard too,I have no doubt Abba Father is asking: is it the fruit of the Cross
My son, Mydaughter?**

17 October 2015

REFERENCE

Murray, Andrew. 1982. *Divine Healing*. Springdale, PA: Whitaker House.