

No One Can Corner Jesus

The Apostle Paul gave his defense before King Agrippa and Governor Festus,

and "as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, 'Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!' But he said, 'I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner'" (Acts 26:24-26 NKJV).

1. To those then living after Jesus, this was "not done in a corner." Notice that concerning the impact of Jesus Christ upon that time, place, and even Christian persecutor Paul, himself, Paul argued that the openness with which all this had happened was a strong defense of its truthfulness. It allowed Paul to "speak freely," King Agrippa to know "these things," and Governor Festus to be aware of all the wide-spread witnessing to it ("not done in a corner").

This argument, alone, wipes out commentary critics who attempt to minimize the Gospel and make Jesus Christ a local legend. The King did not dispute this, the cities from Rome to Damascus where Paul had preached believed its universality, and Governor Festus questioned Paul's excited state but not his message's outreach. None of those living when it happened wrote what scoffers have written since it happened.

2. To all students of Old Testament prophecies, this was "not done in a corner." When Paul appealed to "the prophets" (Acts 26:27), he was bringing in long-standing statements from God that should have alerted the world to the time and place of these events. The fulfillments of these promises are only in the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

- a) The clear description of a "virgin birth," involving the seed of woman only (Genesis 3:15), meant without the seed which normally comes from a male; when it occurred, it would stand out as a "sign" (Isaiah 7:14); and it never was fulfilled in any sense until Mary was with child of the Holy Spirit without male contact (Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25)! Neither before nor since, in human history, has this occurred!

- b) When the one-time only "star" led wise men to ask Herod where the Leader of the Jews was to have been born (Matthew 2:1-10), the only passage in the Old Testament the chief priests and scribes could turn to was Micah 5:2: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting." The focused eyes of prophecy centered on the little village of Bethlehem.
- c) Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt with the child, Jesus, (Matthew 2:13-15), which pointed to the prophetic spotlight of God's centuries-old statement in Hosea 11:1, "And out of Egypt I called My son" (Hosea 11:1). God's only begotten Son came back from Egypt, exactly as God predicted, to live in Nazareth with His mother and Joseph (Matthew 2:16-23).
- d) Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus into the hands of His enemies for the prophesied price of "thirty pieces of silver" (Zechariah 11:12), the replacement price of a slave (Exodus 21:32). Then, when tormented Judas tried to give back that money into the Jewish treasury, it was used instead to buy a cemetery for strangers called "the Field of Blood" (Matthew 27:1-10), exactly as God had predicted (Zechariah 11:13)!

3. To eyewitnesses of His life, this was "not done in secret." There was nothing secretive or mysterious about Jesus' life on earth. He said: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5), and that His followers "are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14). Christians "were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:7-8). Jesus even claimed that in His day, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing" (John 18:20).

Thus, nothing done by Jesus Christ or His disciples/Christians is shrouded, secretive, or seductive. This completely cancels all attempts to make Christianity like a fraternity/sorority, secret society, mystical brotherhood, coven, or some other realm of darkness. There are no monasteries or nunneries, crypts or vaults, cellars or dungeons, excommunications or purges in the churches of Christ! Jesus' life was

an open book (literally! Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) and so were Christians under the direct leadership of the Apostles (Acts-Revelation). Jesus was manifested (clearly revealed):

- a) At His baptism, He was publicly declared both by God (Luke 3:21-22) and John the Baptist (John 1:29-34);
- b) By His miracles before multitudes of people:
 - 1) His first of changing water to grape juice (John 2:1-11);
 - 2) His second of healing a son from a distance (John 4:46-54);
 - 3) Feeding a great multitude starting with little food (John 6:1-14);
 - 4) So many that the world wouldn't hold the written books containing them (John 21:25).
- c) Whether teaching many (Mark 10:1; Luke 5:3) or one (John 4:1-29), His fame spread far and wide (Matthew 4:23-25). He was so effective, that when "the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him" they returned without Him saying, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" (John 7:32, 46).
- d) And His resurrection from the dead was so well-known, that His disciples could not believe there was even one "stranger in Jerusalem" who did not know about it (Luke 24:18). Peter, with the 12, publicly proclaimed Jesus' resurrection in Jerusalem, where it occurred (Acts 2:22-32) without any successful contradiction! Peter in preaching the Gospel of Christ to the first Gentiles, said that "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly" (Acts 10:40).

4. Religious practices of the churches of Christ, whose members are called "Christians," are "not done in a corner." The Gospel of Christ was first preached in its completeness on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection in the city of Jerusalem. That occasion, and its 3000 baptisms, were not hid (Acts 2), and the Jewish council admitted the Apostles had "filled Jerusalem with your doctrine" (Acts 5:28). That "open" doctrine was that everyone should:

- a) Believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, thus declaring Jesus to be His Son (Acts 2:29-32; Romans 1:1-4), and repent of sins and be baptized in His name in order to obtain forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38);

- b) Be added to the one and only church Jesus built (Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20; Acts 2:41, 47);
- c) Walk in the light of Christ in fellowship with others of "like precious faith" (1 Peter 1:1; 1 John 1:7-2:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:14-4:6).
- d) Preach and teach only the doctrine in the New Testament. To the Corinthians, he said: "For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:17). He later added: "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33). Paul's teaching was equal to, and the same as, all the other Apostles: "For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed" (1 Corinthians 15:9-11). This doctrine was designed to be preached "everywhere" (Mark 16:20; Acts 8:4; 21:28; 28:22), and its commands are for "all men everywhere" (Acts 17:30; 1 Timothy 2:8).
- e) Work and worship before God with completely open hearts and lives that will stay connected to God (Romans 12:1-21). This is carried out in home and work relationships, and clearly distinguished from what Christians were before their conversions (Colossians 3:1-25).

Every effort to paint Jesus Christ and His church into a corner fails when Scripture is carefully weighed and accepted. All are invited to be as Thessalonians were: "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Let no one even try to "corner" Christ

with denials of Scripture, perversions of His Gospel, traditional man-made churches and doctrines, or compromises with the world.

-----John T. Polk II

www.jjttjii@aol.com