

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Wallace
Sheila
Ophelia

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 10:00 a.m.
Assembly 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Elders:

Brad Behrens - bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com

Michael Odom -

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This Week's Question:

Who ran into the midst of the Israelites carrying incense to stop a plague?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

The priest Eli - 1 Samuel 4:12-18

Published by the church of Christ which meets at 755 Pinole Valley Road, Pinole, CA 94564, Phone (510) 724-1994, (Mailing address: church of Christ, P.O.

Pinole Tidings

www.pinolechurchofchrist.com

Vol. 15, No. 07 - December 1, 2013

THE GOSPEL AS ITS OWN APOLOGETIC

Read 1 Corinthians 1, and note especially these statements:

“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (vs. 18).

“For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (vv 22-25)

Think about the essence of the story of the Gospel. An uneducated Jewish peasant from a small, obscure town in Galilee claims to be the Son of God, works miracles, and teaches with authority, thereby silencing His opposition. His enemies, prominent Jewish leaders from Jerusalem, manage to get Him arrested, charged, and crucified as a criminal by Roman authorities. Three days later He is risen. His disciples soon after begin to proclaim the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and from this point the disciples grow and spread to the rest of the world.

A crucified Jewish, uneducated peasant from Galilee is the Savior of the world? Many reject the Gospel story precisely because it sounds so foolish to them. Again, think about the above account. Even in the first century the Jews stumbled over it and the Gentiles thought it foolish. Detractors will point to the silliness and unlikelihood of the idea that a man who was crucified on a Roman

cross could be the savior of the world. After a good laugh at all those naive fools who believe such a story, unbelievers can then go on their way confident that reason has served them well. Yet it is here that they may fail to think it through.

Let's take another look, and consider this:

1. There is no question but that the Gospel story arose during the early part of the first century. The story is claimed as historical (Luke 1:1-4), with the recognition that if it didn't happen, Christianity as a whole is fallacious (1 Cor 15). Everything hinges on its historical truthfulness. The real question is, where did the story come from?

2. Would the story have arisen from within the Gentile community? Who could think that the pagan Gentiles of the day would concoct a story about a Jewish peasant who would have condemned their religious practices and whom they killed as a criminal? No, the Gentiles of the day wouldn't have come up with it. Further, the charge that the story of Jesus was mirroring pagan stories falls flat when we consider that early non-Christian writers accused Christians of new, mischievous and superstitious beliefs. Why would Romans have a problem with a religion that mirrors their own beliefs? Why would they invent that kind of story? No, that won't work.

3. Then it must have arisen from within the Jewish community. But which Jewish community would have invented a story about an uneducated, Galilean Jew from an obscure family who turns out to be the Son of God and long-promised Messiah? Which Jewish community was expecting their Messiah to be crucified on a Roman cross? Why would they invent the story of a man who condemned their attitudes and traditions as well? Keep in mind these points, also: a) to claim to be the Son of God was considered blasphemy, so they condemned Him to die for it; b) to be crucified on a Roman cross was to be cursed; c) He was put to death at the insistence of His own people while His handful of disciples scattered for fear; and d) the Gospel accounts contain a number of embarrassing facts, including the way the disciples acted, making it unlikely that the later disciples just invented these things to the embarrassment of the apostles and early leaders.

You see, critics and legend-theorists have a problem here. The story of Jesus would not have come from a typical Jewish community who were expecting their long-awaited Messiah, only to

tell a story about His being put to death, cursed, and committing blasphemy. It certainly couldn't have come from the wealthy, ruling classes who despised what Jesus stood for, and the poor, uneducated Jews wouldn't have been able to write about it so eloquently. Jesus was not a Messiah expected by any Jewish group, so which group would have invented Him to be such?

Yet, the story is there, and the irony is that those same details that critics think make the story foolish also make the story that much more unlikely to have arisen from within any typical Gentile or Jewish community, unless it really happened as described. The only alternative is to think that a bunch of uneducated fishermen, in conjunction with a very educated Jewish Pharisee were able to sell a fable that condemned all of them alike, gave them no cultural advantage, and had no other particular benefit (if untrue) except for false hope. Oh, and they had to be willing to stake their own lives on this lie while knowing all along they are lying about it all. All made up, right?

What best accounts for the Gospel story? Paul answers in 1 Corinthians 1, in a work written less than 25 years from the events described. The story of Jesus was a stumbling block to the Jews, and it was foolishness to the Greeks. The answer is that the story came about by the power of God, and the historical resurrection is the final piece of evidence that gives it its full strength. All of the details of the Gospel are best explained, not by an appeal to any particular Jewish or Gentile community, but by the simple recognition that it is what really happened. Sometimes, the simplest explanations are the best. The Gospel is indeed its own apologetic.

"Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." (Vv. 20-21)

The Gospel is what it is in part because God didn't want anyone boasting that they could have ever come up with such a plan to save mankind from sin. We won't know God from our own wisdom, but only through His wisdom as displayed through the death and resurrection of the Son of God.