

## Following Christ and His Word

John 1:35-51, January 9, 2011

Sunday after Epiphany

Beloved of the Lord.....True disciples of the Lord follow Christ the Lamb of God, and His Word. In His Word, Christ the Living Word reveals Himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. As soon as this Gospel faith is kindled in the heart by the Holy Spirit, true disciples of Jesus trust every Word of Scriptures as an infallible guide in our life. We know "this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. 1, KJV No man then dare privately interpret the Bible any way he likes, for God threatens to punish all who transgress His commandments.

With this background it was very disappointing this week to see an article in Reuters, on the day of Epiphany January 6th. They reported the pope as declaring "God's mind was behind complex scientific theories such as the Big Bang." (Reuters, January 6th, www.reuters.com). For years now the papacy has denied the literal Genesis account of the six days of creation. They teach Genesis is an allegory, not literal history. In doing so the present pope is denying one of the most basic truths of the Scripture, that God created the heavens and the earth in six literally 24 hour days. Genesis 1:31 says, "And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, *it was* very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day." Of Jesus the New Testament says similar, "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." When men therefore teach evolution or the Big Bang, they are denying Genesis one and calling God a liar. Shall they not be judged?

While it is easy enough to prove by simple logic that there must be a divine Creator of all things, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made", likewise many scientists know there must be a divine Creator who created all this order, our faith as disciples of the Lord is not derived by arguments of men, but by the Word of God whose authority rests in Himself. Therefore woe to the man, be he pope, cardinal, priest, pastor, minister, or layman, who rises high and mighty above the sacred Word of God and in his fallible mind declares God's Word to be fallible. How thankful we can then be dear Christian in this blessed week of Epiphany, that the Gospel Light of Christ has shined upon us, so that we see and behold Christ by faith, the blessed "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!"

I. True disciples follow Christ. In our lesson John and Andrew were the two disciples who first followed John the Baptist and then Jesus. Just one day before having seen Jesus walking near, John the Baptist had loudly declared for the sake of His disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." This was the Gospel witness of John the Baptist, repeated more than once for John's disciples. With the advent of Christ, John's ministry was coming to an end. It appears not only that John and Andrew were the disciples of the Baptist, but also Peter and James. There are two sets of brothers here, Peter and Andrew, James and John.

In the repetition of John's testimony concerning Christ, we see the true zeal of this Gospel minister. John's disciples were to stop following John, and follow Jesus alone. While we can be sure four disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John did such, John had other disciples which did not follow Jesus. Well into the public ministry of Christ, after His first public miracle of changing water into wine, after the scouring of the moneychangers in the Temple, when the disciples of Jesus are baptizing, we find more disciples of John upset (even jealous) of the baptism. At this point John the Baptist again testified of Jesus saying, "He must increase, but I must decrease" and "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

These words still ring true today, and our world still has the same problem. Instead of following Christ and His Word, false disciples follow false prophets, or false prophets lead the true disciples to become false. How many will follow the pope and his words regarding evolution and the big bang? If the pope denies Genesis one, what will the faithful do with John 3:16? And while we may not be so foolish as to believe such an obvious doctrine of man which contradicts God's infallible Word, we dare not be high-minded thinking we cannot be deceived! The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Even Peter, the stone, was not a stone when he sunk into the water, or denied Christ three times. Peter was only a stone, when he rightly confessed Christ saying, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." In like manner we too are a stone only when we build our faith upon that Rock of Christ who guides us through this wilderness of sin. He is the only Rock who gives His people Living waters for the thirsty soul. Dear Christian.....do not then let anyone shift your faith to fallible men when God alone is your infallible guide by the Word. For "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be

justified in His sight". We are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Truly Christ is both the Life and the Light of the Holy Scriptures. He alone is the Bright and Morning Star all men should follow if they are to be wise. When we open our Bibles or hear His Word in Church, Christ the Light is shining into our hearts, declaring His free salvation. We then do not need a priest or pastor to interpret the Bible for us. No matter how simple minded we may be (and I include myself in this category), since God desires the salvation of all, He has written our Bible in a simple way even children can understand. "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." Is this so hard to understand? Even a child could rebuke the pope with this passage. Moreover I Corinthians 15 says, "Christ died for all". The details of His crucifixion are also simple. We understand the bleeding, the blood. Clearly this was the Son of God. Yet the Bible also declares, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" and "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "The just shall live by faith." His love toward a world of sinners is evident in His words, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" and "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." Why would we have trouble with that?

The Holy Ghost then alone is the true Teacher of the Word. It is He who through the Word comforts our hearts with Jesus. Who He was, why He came, for whom He died and rose again: these answers all come from the Holy Spirit, and "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Through Christ, His great sacrifice on the cross, the gates of heaven are open before us, hence "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Faith sees, knows, and understands that God through Christ continually sends His angels from heaven to guard and protect us here on earth. We too shall ascend to heaven. Likewise through Christ our Mediator, our Heavenly Father hears every plea, ever sorrow of heart, every confession, every burden. Psalm 37 says, "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass."

II. True disciples invite others to Christ. In our discipleship by faith we must then be like John the Baptist, who continually pointed others to Christ saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away

the sins of the world." We invite others to Christ and speak of Christ. Notice in our text the progression and order. John the Baptist directed John and Andrew to Jesus. John and Andrew went to their brothers and told them of Jesus. Jesus went to Galilee and found Philip. Jesus said, "follow me" to Philip. Philip found Nathanael who said "Can any good thing come from Nazareth?" Yet to this Philip replied "Come and see."

There is a nice and patient faith in these words, "Come and see." We can use all our powers of persuasion, we can pray and pray and pray, even quote passages left and right, but only the Lord can turn the heart inside from sin to salvation. Yet if they are to be saved we must preach both law and Gospel. We also know to our infinite sadness, not all will believe, but we cannot let that rob us of the desire that all believe, that all be saved, for Christ is the Savior of all, and the Lord is not willing that any perish. And while we do indeed hurt when the ones we love refuse to listen, refuse to repent, and refuse to believe in Christ, Jesus also knew this sorrow of heart, for Jesus wept over Jerusalem. If they turn their back on their own Savior, it is their own fault. Nevertheless we should not give up or stop trying because God's word is quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword.

Finally, let us not make "mission work" more complicated than it is. It is really very simple: speak the Word, tenderly invite and say "Come and see", and let God do the rest. The Holy Spirit does the real work and we are just spokesmen. "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Some of John's disciples followed Jesus, and some didn't. Thus as long as we live in this world let us not neglect this important duty, to point again and again to Christ, the only Savior of this world, yet the perfect Savior in whom our heart rejoices. Though we be simple folk, even a child can say "Come and see." One way or another, if we trace our faith back to our spiritual forefathers, be they relatives acquaintances, friends, or even strangers, there was someone in our past who said "Come and see", and by God's grace alone, we came, we saw, and we beheld Christ to be the Lamb of God who came to take away our sins. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Amen.