

Sermon – 03/09/2006 am

Divine Witness

Study Text: Deuteronomy 31:14-29

In a recent speech Justice Michael Kirby made reference to the Bible as an ‘ancient religious text’ which must be revised and updated in the light of science and modern thought. Actually he would like to see the Bible totally destroyed, never to be heard of again. He hates the Bible. Why you might ask? Because the Bible condemns the lifestyle in which he wants to live. He is a homosexual.

Lots of people hate the Bible because it speaks against the sin which they love. They may not burn it as men did in the past; rather they ridicule its teaching as ancient and out of date. Calling themselves scholars, they seek to undermine the authenticity and infallibility of the Bible as the word of God.

The Bible is the word of God, and it stands as God’s permanent witness to the world. Some love it, as I hope you do, because it is the truth, it is divine wisdom and instruction in righteousness. In the Bible God tells us how to live in this world – how to live meaningful and fruitful lives. Life will not always be easy, but those who walk with the Lord will not fall.

*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,
and he delights in his way.*

*Though he stumble he shall not fall
for the Lord upholds him with his hand* (Psalm 37:23).

Moreover, in the Bible God tells us about life after death, he tells us about the resurrection and eternal life in Jesus Christ.

But there are many like Justice Kirby who hates such instruction. They hate the truth and prefer lies. They hate what is good and prefer evil. The words of the Bible condemn those who walk according to the dictates of their own hearts. They may close their eyes to all divine revelation, and shut their ears when the Bible is read, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

Witness of Tent of Meeting

Joshua was not only commissioned as the new leader by Moses, but by the Lord himself. The Lord called upon Moses to bring Joshua to the *tabernacle of meeting that I may inaugurate him* (31:14). Initially this tabernacle or tent was set up outside the camp as the place where the Lord would come down and meet with his people. Whenever Moses entered the tent all the people watched as *the pillar of cloud descended and stood above the door of the tabernacle and the Lord talked with Moses* (Exodus 33:9). *His servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle* (Exodus 33:11).

So as Moses and Joshua entered the tent of meeting for Joshua to be divinely commissioned, the Lord appeared in a pillar of cloud above the door (31:15). This cloud was visible to all the people. It was a divine witness that Joshua was God’s choice as their new leader. Joshua would lead them in destroying the Canaanites, and giving them their inheritance in the land.

Men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know (Acts 2:22). At Pentecost Peter reminded Israel of the miracles which Jesus had done among them. His mighty works stood as a visible witness to the divinity of Jesus. The Pharisees sought to discredit these miracles, but they stood as a witness to God the Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus himself pointed men to his works as a witness to the truth which he spoke. The very works which I do bear witness of me that the Father sent me (John 5:36). These works of Jesus were recorded for us to read today – recorded that we might believe in Jesus Christ (John 20:31). They still stand as a witness to Jesus Christ as God the Son.

Creation itself stands as a clear witness to the eternal power and divine nature of God (Romans 1:20). The Bible declares that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Those who hate God and his word seek to attribute creation to some other power or force; but despite the claims of evolutionists, none can be found. Still today the creation stands as a witness to the power and majesty of God.

Witness of Song

There in the tent of meeting the Lord told Moses what the people would do in the years after his death. The scenario was not encouraging. The people would play the harlot; they would turn away from God and worship the gods of the Canaanites. They would break the covenant that the Lord made with them at Horeb, the covenant which Moses led them in renewing on the plains of Moab.

Those who broke the covenant would be subject to the covenant curses. Their provider and protector, the Lord their God, would hide his face from them. Without his blessing they would be troubled by drought and famine, by pests and disease and by hostile enemies. Eventually they would realise that our God is not among us (31:17).

To help them realise sooner rather than later why trouble had come upon them, Moses wrote these words down as a song. This song was to be a witness for the Lord against the children of Israel (33:19). It was as if the Lord was saying ‘I told you so’ – ‘I told you that if you grew fat and forgot me I would bring disaster upon you’. Actually it was not a matter of ‘if’ but ‘when’ according to the word of the Lord to Moses.

One year after being devastated by a hurricane, much of the city of New Orleans still lies in ruin. The streets of this city that were once filled with Mardi gras revellers lie deserted. Is there a song that the people of New Orleans should have heard? Is there a song that the people of Sydney should hear? *Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?*

This song of Moses was to be taught to each succeeding generation. It was not something that was in their heart or mouth from birth. Like all human beings they were born in sin. It would be taught to them preferably by their parents or by someone else. They would come to know this song and it would *not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants* (31:21).

It is intriguing how some songs stick in the mind. Old people will remember songs they learnt at Sunday school even though they have not heard them since their youth. I can still remember Hindi songs that I have not sung or heard for ten years. I found it easier to learn the

language and to teach the gospel through song. Songs in the language of the people and in familiar melodies are a powerful witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Witness of Book of the Law

Creation witnesses to the power of God but not to his redemption. God has spoken in the past through the prophets of this great redemption. The Israelites learnt about this redemption from the words written in the Book of the Law. As Moses spoke the words the Lord gave him so he wrote them down on a scroll. This scroll was to be kept beside the Ark of the Covenant in which was kept the stone tablets of the Decalogue.

As we have seen this book was to be read to the whole assembly every seven years. This book *was there as a witness against you, for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck (31:27)*. Moses was a realist when it came to matters of the heart. He knew the natural inclination of man's heart. He knew the depravity in the heart of every person because of sin. These people had rebelled against him and against the Lord time and again. So *how much more after my death*, said Moses (31:27).

The word of God stands as a witness today against men like Michael Kirby who live in rebellion against God and his commands. It stands as a witness against each and every human being who prefers evil to good, and who follows Satan rather than the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus like Moses was a realist when it came to men's hearts.

Jesus did not go around telling everyone that they could go on living as they liked because he would accept everyone in the end. He called upon people to repent, to turn from sin and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15). Jesus said *I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6)*. Remember these words, and do all you can to make others remember them also. They are the words of the Lord and they will not pass away. They stand as a witness to all.

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