

## REASONABLE FAITH AND DEALING WITH EVIDENCE

### *I.*

#### *Introduction - the world of faith*

We accept majority of the things in our life by faith. We would have to be eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, all knowing to be witnesses and have first hand knowledge of all things, all events and all processes that have ever happened in whole universe. But we are very limited, therefore we have to work with faith everyday. We accept by faith that we are the children of our parents and they are our parents, or that the building we are in right now will not collapse on our heads, or that the water in the water line is not poisoned, etc. In other words, we accept by faith the things of the physical nature, that pertain to our physical life.

#### *Reasonable faith required by Jesus*

Likewise we accept by faith that there is God, that God's Son Jesus Christ is our Savior and the only way to eternal life with God and that God will punish those who do not submit themselves to Jesus, etc. In other words, we accept by faith the things of the spiritual nature, that pertain to our spiritual life.

What does Bible say about faith? Heb 11:6, John 20:29 We have to have faith to please God. Jesus expects our faith in Him. However, He does not require from us a blind faith, but reasonable faith based on evidence that He offers to us.

What is Jesus' evidence?

1) Firstly, fulfilled prophecies: Lu 24:44

Jesus claims that certain things were written about Him in the Scriptures and that these things were fulfilled. Is that the truth? The only way one can find it out is to go in the Bible and search whether and what was prophesied about Jesus as well as testimonies testifying who and how fulfilled the prophecies. If there is such evidence in the Bible, then it requires evaluation and faith - either one accepts the evidence or rejects it, either believes Jesus fulfilled prophecies or does not believe that.

2) Secondly, Jesus' miracles: John 20:30-31

Jesus and NT writers claim that Jesus performed miracles and some of them are written that we may believe that Jesus is Christ and we may have life in His name. Is that the truth? The only way one can find it out is once again go in the Bible and search whether there are testimonies of Jesus' miracles. If there is such evidence in the Bible, then it requires evaluation and faith – either one accepts the evidence or rejects it, either believes Jesus performed miracles or does not believe that.

Jesus expects from us reasonable faith and He offers us evidence that can be examined by reason. Reasonable faith is the only kind of faith which can make our life happy and fulfilled.

#### *The danger of unreasonable faith*

**The opposite to reasonable faith is unreasonable faith, which is one of the greatest dangers for humans. It's origin is with Satan, it is based on deception, stirred up by desires of flesh and ego. First time it occurred in garden of Eden. The result of unreasonable faith is sin and the**

**consequence is separation from God, or spiritual death. Ge 3:1-6, 13, 23**

Unreasonable faith in easy profit makes gambler to waste away family possessions and consequently his family is deprived of means and home. Unreasonable faith that happiness can be gained by possession of material things or bought for money throws one into a pit of materialism. Unreasonable faith that nothing bad can happen to them makes people to engage in alcohol, drugs and all kinds of evil. Unreasonable faith makes a Muslim to believe that he can buy his ticket to paradise by blowing himself up and killing as many non-Muslims as possible. Unreasonable faith makes other Muslims believing in Q'ran to approve such murder as an act of godliness. Man acting upon unreasonable faith can ruin his life as well as lives of other people. Unreasonable faith is blind and irrational. It can have terrible consequences not only for this short life here on earth but most importantly for eternity.

### ***What makes the difference between reasonable and unreasonable faith***

What makes the difference between reasonable and unreasonable faith is one's attitude toward evidence and evaluation of evidence. There is a story in NT with an example of different people having opposite attitudes toward the same evidence, opposite evaluation of the same evidence and their subsequent reasonable or unreasonable faith. The lessons taught by the story are well applicable for our lives. The kind of faith we have will determine what our eternity will be like – whether eternal bliss or eternal torments. The story itself is recorded in John 9, but the introduction to it is in John 8.

## ***II.***

### ***Jesus makes His claims - people reject His words***

1) Firstly, let's read about dispute between Jesus and pharisees in Jerusalem's temple:

John 8:12-13

Jesus claims: I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall have the light of life.

X

Pharisees respond: "You bear witness of Yourself; Your testimony is not true."

In the beginning of the 1. century AD, Jews based upon Old Testament prophecies were expecting the coming of the Savior from God. When Jesus claimed that He was the light of the world and people should follow to be saved (to receive eternal life), He actually claimed to be that Savior who came from God. However, religious elite of Jewish nation imagined the Savior to be a political king, who will restore the political kingdom of Israel. A carpenter from Nazareth did not fit their imaginations. The Pharisees didn't recognize that Jesus had the authority to ask people to follow Him. Their objection was that Jesus testified of Himself and such evidence was not sufficient for them. This objection would be valid in case that Jesus would only make verbal claims about His authority without providing any evidence. As we shall see, this was not so in Jesus' case.

2) Secondly, even some of the Jews, who recognized there was something about Jesus challenged His message and rejected His ultimate authority. Let's notice 3 points of the next dispute:

a) John 8:31-33

Jesus claims: If you abide in My word, you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

X

Jews respond: We have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, "You will be made free"?

b) John 8:51-53

Jesus claims: If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.

X

Jews respond: You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets. Are you greater than our father Abraham?

c) John 8:58-59

Jesus claims: Before Abraham was, I AM. Another words, I am God, I was before Abraham.

X

Jews respond: Took up stones intending to stone Jesus for blasphemy.

Both, the Pharisees and the other group of Jews rejected Jesus. Had Jesus during His earthly ministry offered people only His words to prove His authority and truthfulness of His message, He would not have been different from Muhammad, Budha, Joseph Smith, Charles Russell or other spiritual leaders who offer only their words for their claims. But Jesus is unique, because unlike any other man, He offered people evidence that He is the Son of God and our Savior.

### ***III.***

#### ***Jesus proves His claims - most people ignore the evidence***

Now, let's read our story in John 9, beginning with verses 1-2. On the way from Jerusalem's temple, Jesus accompanied by His disciples, saw a man who was blind from birth. At that time Jews believed a superstition that someone had to commit a terrible sin against God for a person to be born handicapped. Jesus' disciples believed that superstition as well.

Let's read John 9:3. Jesus refuted the superstition. The man wasn't blind because someone had sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. We shall see later what Jesus meant by these works.

Now let's read John 9:4-7. Jesus repeated His claim from John 8 that He is the Light of the world, which was something that people couldn't check out for themselves. But then Jesus provided an evidence for His authority to make such claim that people could check out for themselves. He made clay, put it on the eyes of the blind and told him to go to wash in the pool of Siloam. The blind person did exactly what Jesus had told him and he was miraculously healed in physical sense.

I knew a blind man in Prague. I used to meet him on the street from time to time. Had I met him and saw him seeing, I would have been absolutely amazed and I would have rejoiced with him and I would want to know what happened to him. I surely would want to know of a physician who was able to treat his untreatable condition. Likewise, the healing of the blind person from our story did not escape attention of the public.

Let's read John 9:8-10. Some people recognized him, others doubted that the seeing person was the former blind beggar, but he gave them testimony of his identity. Now, people asked him: "How were your eyes opened?"

Let's read John 9:11-12. We can sum up his answer as following: Jesus told me what I should do, I did it and I was healed.

These people brought the healed person before Pharisees and he that used to be blind gave them testimony of Jesus' miracle. Let's read John 9:13-17.

The Pharisees now had not only Jesus' claims that He is the light of the world and people who follow Him shall have eternal life, but they were also given evidence – the miracle proving Jesus' authority to make such claims. However, some of them decided to reject the evidence because of their unreasonable belief that Jesus is not from God. They concluded that Jesus breached Sabbath by making miracle! If Jesus acted in direct contradiction to God's Word, how come that God gave Him power to do such miracle? If you ever get in a situation when your faith is in direct contradiction with evidence, then you have a problem - your faith is not reasonable.

Pharisees were divided as sincere of them pointed out that a sinner could not do such signs. They found themselves between the rock and a hard place. If they accepted evidence, they would have to evaluate it, recognize Jesus' authority, they would have to obey Him and give up their own authority. Were they, the educated intellectuals, the religious and political elite of the nation, to be submitted to Messiah that is a mere carpenter from Galilee??? Based on what grounds? Based on a testimony of a beggar who claimed he had been blind??? This just did not fit their belief that Messiah should be a political king like David.

So, how did they resolve the problem of the evidence versus their faith? Simply. They held on to their unreasonable faith and rejected the evidence. Their excuse was that no miracle had happened and the beggar must have been lying. All they needed was some kind of evidence to prove that. Thus they summoned the beggar's parents.

Let's read John 9:18-23. The parents testified that he was their son and that he used to be blind.

Now, Pharisees faced not only one, but a growing pile of evidence proving Jesus' claims and authority which were in direct contradiction to their belief that Messiah should be a political king:

- 1] The testimony of Jesus that He's from God and he who follows Him shall have eternal life.
- 2] The testimony of the people who brought the former blind beggar to the Pharisees.
- 3] The testimony of the former blind beggar that Jesus had healed him.
- 4] The testimony of beggar's parents.

How did the Pharisees deal with all this evidence? How did they resolve the conflict between the evidence that Jesus is the Messiah and their unreasonable faith in political Messiah for which they did not have any evidence? Let's read John 9:24-34.

As we have read, Pharisees:

- 1] Ignored all the evidence, because it did not fit their belief.
- 2] Justified for themselves, why they ignored the evidence. If Jesus made a miracle on Sabbath, then in their eyes He is a sinner and that's it!
- 3] Cast out trouble making healed person. If he was really born blind, surely he must have been born in utter sin and he is not going to teach them, the disciples of Moses!
- 4] They held to their unreasonable faith despite of evidence.

Pharisees dealt with the evidence in such way that they would not have to change anything on their faith and in their lives. There is no hope for anyone whose attitude is such that he ignores the evidence, when it does not fit his believes, whose evaluation of evidence is unreasonable and who does all that to keep his unreasonable faith.

#### *IV. Human fashion of ignoring evidence*

The Pharisees' way of dealing with evidence is very popular even today:

- 1] Whether with atheists who ignore God's creation work as the evidence of God's existence. Most of people in the Czech Republic are atheists.
- 2] Whether with people who are engaged in human religions or philosophies and ignore Jesus' resurrection as the key evidence for the truthfulness of Christianity and the judgement day (Acts 17:30 – 31). -- Why Jesus? Why not Muhammad, Budha, Joseph Smith, Charles Russell or any other spiritual leader? Muhammad, Budha, Joseph Smith, Charles Russell and other spiritual leaders lived, died, were buried. If you follow them, you will end up in the grave without any hope. Jesus Christ is the only person in the entire human history of whom we have evidence that He rose from the dead after being scourged, nailed to the cross, pierced with a spear, put in a tomb guarded by soldiers. The evidence is testimonies of the eye witnesses of resurrected Jesus and His empty tomb, establishment of Christianity among Jews with Jesus' resurrection in its core, fulfilment of numerous prophecies of the OT on Jesus.
- 3] Whether with people who call themselves Christians but believe or practice something different from what Bible teaches, thus ignoring the Word of God.

My Christian friend Serghei from former Soviet Republic of Moldova, who was educated under communist regime at Moscow State University and became a scientist in microbiology says that in past he divided people in two groups, the simple-minded who believed in God and intelligent who did not believe in God. After he became a Christian he divided people in different two groups, those who are Christians and those who ignore evidence.

#### *V. The works of God*

Let's return back to our story to answer the question in John 9:3. What did Jesus mean by saying that works of God should be revealed in the blind person?

The physical healing of the beggar was a work of God not of a man. At the same time it was a piece of evidence that resulted in reasonable faith of the beggar himself. He believed in Jesus whom Father sent which is also the work of God, and the will of Father for any such believer is to have an everlasting life, salvation. Both these works of God were revealed in one person. His physical healing – physical sight and his reasonable faith – spiritual sight were manifested to other people. Thus he became a living evidence testifying of Jesus' power and authority to others in his time. John 9:35-40, John 6:28 - 29, 40.

The story of the beggar is a part of the testimony of apostle John who was an eye witness of this and many other miracles of Jesus, including that he saw Jesus after His resurrection. There were many other witnesses of Jesus' miracles in 1 century AD and therefore no one could reasonably reject these miracles as groundless back then. And because no one could do that back in 1 century AD when all these things took place and all eye witnesses were alive, no one can reasonably reject the same miracles in 21 century when all the eye witnesses of these events are dead and no one from back than can testify the contrary.

Evidence offered us by Jesus requires response of every individual. From those who have not believed that Jesus is Savior, the evidence requires reasonable faith put in action of belief, repentance,

confession, baptism and life in obedience to Jesus. From those who believe in Jesus, the same evidence requires the reasonable faith put in every day action of Christian life.

## ***VI.*** ***Invitation***

God did marvelous works to fulfil the plan of our salvation. He sent His Son Jesus to die for our sins. He provided the evidence that Jesus is our Savior.

That is all He could do for us should He respect our free will. The rest depends on whether the result of our attitude to and evaluation of evidence is reasonable faith and how is it put in action.

If you are out of Christ, I would like to encourage you not to ignore the evidence that Jesus is your Saviour. I'd like to encourage you to do the work of God, that is to believe in Jesus whom Father sent and put this faith in action of repentance, confession, baptism for remission of your sins and everyday life with Jesus as your King. If you will do that, the will of Father for you is to have an everlasting life. The only other alternative is eternal separation from God.

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