

Coffs Encourager

Newsletter to the Coffs Coast area
Nambucca, Port Macquarie,
Saphire Beach & Woolgoolga

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Coffs Coast church of Christ
www.coffschurch.org.au

CWA Hall, 3 Dalley St. Coffs Harbour
Worship-Sunday 10am, Study-Tuesday 6pm

BULLETIN: AN AMAZING DEATH

by Sam White

In the last few years we have lost some amazing people, people that made a huge impact on the world around them, not only in their circle but globally. Their faces and their lives were familiar to most of the population of the world if not all. Their lives affected millions of people and their deaths affected millions more.

I think of people like Princess Dianna, Michael Jackson and on smaller scale Australian icons like Peter Brock and Steve Irwin, personally we may have even lost people in our lives that has affected us and changed our lives forever.

I want to pose a question, and I in no way mean to insinuate that these people either famous or normal people special only to those that knew them, will ever be forgotten or missed. But I want to ask how long their death continues to make changes to our lives? How long is it before we are able to function normally now they have gone? How long is it before we can go an hour without thinking of them, then a day or week, how long is it before we sometimes go a couple of months before thinking about them?

I realize that this depends on how close they were to us, how much a regular part of our lives they were. It depends on the individual mourner and in some cases maybe a day does not go by for the rest of our lives that we don't think of the person lost.



Why am I talking about this sad subject? The reason is Jesus, but to highlight my point I want you to think about the immense outpouring of grief and loss that we have seen or heard on the TV or radio over the last few days in regards to Michael Jackson's death.

People who have never met Michael Jackson are weeping as though they have lost a close family member, their lives on pause, distraught and inconsolable. All for a talented man that most saw as strange and some considered as the lowest of low if allegations against him were true, but he moved people with his music and became part of people's lives through it.

Correct me if I am wrong, but besides the sadness of a person's death and loss to their family and friends, what will his fans miss out on? In my opinion it is any chance of new songs and the chance to see him perform in public anew. We still have our memories of him; we still have all his music, but what has really been taken from us that will make our lives day to day any better or worse. Yet the whole world mourns, it has been moved.

If I am right and there is no more loss or gain from his death than what I have mentioned, what benefit has his life produced to improve ours? Would we have felt a loss or felt as if we had missed out on something if Michael Jackson had never sang a song and we hadn't even heard of him?

On the other hand Jesus life and death brings benefits and rewards for every person that ever lived even those little babies that never had a chance at life, every person who has lived, is living and will live has been blessed by Jesus life and death if they accept his offer.

No other life has given as good of an example of how to live; no other life has been as honest, loving, giving and self sacrificing for others than Jesus life. This is true, yet we live in a world that either denies, ignores or forgets the most precious but most beneficial and valuable life than any other.

Jesus life and death is the only one that will free us from the bondage of sin and death, show us how to find true peace and contentment and restore us into a loving relationship with our creator and the one and only God.

He is

"the stone you builders rejected,

which has become the capstone, Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:11-12

Jesus answered, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"*. John 14:6

If there is no other person or life and death we must never forget, no other life and death that should have a changing effect on our lives every day, it is Jesus life and death.

SHADRACH AND THE CIRCUS by Marvin Ancell

One of the great stories which really fills me with courage is that of three men named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. This is the story of the young men who had been taken captive and lead off to a far land to serve a king who was neither their king nor their friend. He owned them, body mind and soul, supposedly. They were asked to bow down to a statue of the King, a man named Nebuchadnezzar, and to worship it as if this king was really God Himself. The problem was, was that this was against the law that these three young men honoured above all things. They were being asked to go against the law that they continued to obey, even in their current state of slavery. They understood that they were to obey their God, before they obeyed the king, even if He took their life. They were found in violation of this law of the land and were sentenced to be burned alive.

Now that point is the crunch statement. They believed they were to obey God, even though they were forced to choose between death and life. That is a very big choice to have to make, for anyone, in any circumstance, at any age, yet that was the challenge that they faced. With the courage of real conviction, they opposed the law of the land and followed the law of God, all the way to the furnace.

Today, we are called on to make many sacrifices, but seldom are we called on to actually deny our faith or face the real prospect of losing our life. It is not the challenge that we normally face at all.

But we are called on, rather frequently, to belittle our faith, to forget it for the moment and to do things that are just not right. It is all too common a call in the business world of our day. We are asked to “look the other way”, to make allowances for the ‘rules benders’ because it is all good for business. For an example, we can seek ways to avoid taxes legally, and we can be very tempted to find ways that exceed the wavers that are legally allowed. We can, and we should, use the tax laws to help us pay less tax, but we should not lie. That is the essence of the dilemma. But for an accountant to knowingly falsify a tax assessment is not right, not right at all. What do we do? Do we bow down to the statue of ‘black business law’ or do we stay firm and do that which is truly legal, moral, and ethical.

In the Roman world, you were expected to worship Caesar. It was a small thing, and you did not even have to mean it, but you were asked, from time to time, to enter a Roman temple, purchase incense, go to the cauldron with the priest and say, “Caesar is Lord, Caesar is Lord, Caesar is Lord.” It was just a ritual. If you did this you were duly noted as having fulfilled your civic responsibility, and were exempt from any persecution by the religious police of the day. Many did not and chose the path of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Some of these people died for their faith and the fact that they would not compromise the way, nor the truth of the supremacy of their Lord. They too would not bow down to a false God, or a false morality. God promised them that even in

the depths of their prisons and persecutions He would be with them, and He was. They marched into the Circus Maximus, knowing their fate, and their God's promise.

The courage that I can take with me from both of these factual glimpses into ancient history is the knowledge that God did not abandon those three young men. He did not abandon the first century Christians. And He will not abandon us, today, either.

Those three men went through the fire and they came out on the other side of their challenge, un-burned and un-singed. We too may have to face our own challenges. But God is not going to let His children be forgotten nor defeated. There will be a victory, a great victory, in the times yet to come. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, went to the fire, and God walked with them in that fire. Likewise, He will not forget us. He will not leave us as abandoned refugees nor as orphans. I take great courage from the fact that God, will be with us, through every trial and every mini-trial. He said so, and He proved Himself true to His word.

No other world religion has a promise like this from their god. That is amazing in itself. The followers of God are eternally promised the loving hand of their God.

PSALM 103

“For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
Just as a father has compassion on his children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.
For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.....
But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting
to everlasting on those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children's children,
To those who keep His covenant And remember His precepts to do them.”

PSALM 103

