



August 30th

THE NEW SHOFAR

Jesus is The Saviour of all peoples

In Jesus we know the Father and live in Him

Get behind me Satan!

The truly extraordinary element in this statement is how it is directed towards Peter, the very same apostle to whom the very opposite promise had been made – *you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church*. So, what is he? The Rock or the Devil? What has changed? And such a massive change in a few short verses? It was all over the question of whether Jesus was the one, true Saviour of the world, the Saviour long promised by God.

Jesus is the Saviour of the World – the one and only Saviour

When I was growing up, this statement was not a problem. It was presumed to be true. Believed to be true. If it was not true, then what was the point of having Jesus as a Messiah? If He limited God's salvation to a few and left others to find an alternative

Way to the Father: why we follow Jesus

The Bible makes it clear how Jesus is not just one Saviour among many possible Saviours. In a world where truth has become a flexible concept, the idea of having an immutable Truth, one that was unassailable and irrefutable is anathema. However, that is precisely what has been revealed to us by the Father. It is not only about how Jesus is a significant human being. He is that but He is more. That is the crucial element with which Peter and many others had to deal. Jesus *is fully* human and at the same time He is The Divine Son of God... *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

As Jesus himself declared, He is the ***way, the truth and the life***. He revealed to the world that He is not just one way among many alternative ways. They will all prove to be ineffective in empowering men and women to achieve those life goals. Because there is only the one, single God, there can only be one, single salvation history. This includes even those who do not believe in Christ and those who have never even heard of Jesus. He is their Way as well. All those who are saved by the free-gift of God are saved by Christ, by what God Himself did for the world and for humanity in Jesus His Christ.

To know Christ is to know who we truly are

Jesus came into our world as the Son of God. In himself He revealed to the world the face of God and the love the Father has for us. He also led us deep inside of ourselves, so that we could understand the meaning of life and the fullness of our identity. To know the Son is to know the Father. To know the Father and the Son is to know who we are, why we are here and why we are precious in the eyes of God.

The Father revealed to us by the Son is not simply the Creator, the One who brought the cosmos and our world into existence. He is certainly those things but He is also a whole lot more. The God of Jesus is the God who is intimately present to us in the gift of His Son. He is the *Hound-of-Heaven-God*; *God-in-search* of His children; *God-in-human-history*. The Father of Jesus is a participant in the drama that is our daily lives. He is the God who is going before us as Yahweh the God of Israel went before the Hebrew peoples making their way to freedom and a new life of milk and honey. God is not just a God enthroned in heaven. He is our divine Companion on our pilgrimage through life, the God inviting us to share divine love with Him for eternity. He is the God in whom Peter should have placed his trust and hopes.

In Christ we are precious in the eyes of the Lord our God

Who then are we? At our very core? We can affirm how we are a great deal more than just an accident of chemistry, biology and physics, mere results of a spontaneous process of evolution. We are not some-*thing*. We are all some-*one*. And to continue that kind of language, we are some-*one* who is proceeding to be some-*where*. The Creator God imbued us with an innate dignity that comes with who we are and not by what we might do or achieve. We have a destiny, a future revealed to us in the life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of the Christ. These are two magnificent statements – we are all precious to God and all destined for a life of abundant blessing in the divine presence.

Salvation is all about something Jesus is doing for us and through us

There is a further exciting aspect to this revelation. Jesus was not revealing to us something that will happen in the distant future, in a world beyond the grave, a time after the End of the earth. These realities are accessible in the present time as well. They are accessible in Jesus himself. Through the depth and intimacy of our lives in Christ, we have access to the love of the Living God in our world, in our present historical situation.

Being a follower of Jesus involves much more than being a member of an association of like-minded believers who want to do good in the world. Baptism in faith involves us in living in anticipation of the Kingdom of God that is to come. It means living under divine rule now as we prepare to live in the eternal reality of that Kingdom. The followers of Jesus know how history will unfold and they have been given knowledge of the future and fate of all things. They live now according to what they know will be. This truth revealed to them in Jesus the Christ, is what gives them hope and peace.

We have a dignity no human source or activity can supply

Because we know our origins are in the divine and our future is in the same divine reality we have been given gifts for life and are called to be gifts for the world. This belief is a part of the very bedrock of our faith. Much as unbelieving critics in the Western world today might want to see this kind of thinking as being a way of enslaved to fantasies, the truth is we are liberated by this revelation. Jesus has freed us to be fully human and fully alive.

Our dignity as men and women is not dependant on what we can do and achieve, by the way we are evaluated in the eyes of the culture in which we live. We have a dignity and a destiny in God that comes from the moment of conception. Nothing can take this away from us. This is the counter-cultural aspects of faith. We reach our fulfilment as humans, not by our own self-assertion but by self-giving. Dignity is the gift of the divine within.