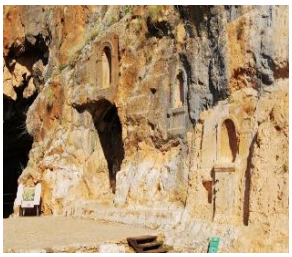

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THE NEW SHOFAR

Without God's goodness as a plumbline for right and wrong, we have no framework with which to judge the clear evils that exist in human behaviour. So, they have settled on a simplistic moral standard that boils all sin down to a single category: oppression

The Gates of Hell will not prevail!

What is the ***Rock*** on which Jesus promised his Church would be built? This exchange took place at Caesarea Philippi, a thoroughly pagan city, the perfect place for Jesus to be asking his followers to commit to the one true God. While false gods promised prosperity and happiness, they all fail to deliver. The city was located at the source of the Banias River which gets its name from the ancient site of a temple complex carved into the cliffs and dedicated to worshiping the Greek god ***Pan*** and the ***Nymph*** goddesses. Both were associated with fertility and were worshiped amidst the worst kinds of debauchery, prostitution, and sacrifice, both animal and human. **An annual festival** was held here and during its abhorrent worship, victims would be thrown into the "bottomless" gaping cave filled with turbulent water fed by an underground spring. The name of the pagan festival was ***Pandemonium***. The name of the cave was ***The Gates of Hell.*** Gates were defensive structures in the ancient world. By saying that the **Gates of Hell** would not prevail, Jesus suggested that those gates were going to be attacked by those of the Kingdom of God.

It is quite reasonable to suggest that it was this pagan precinct that Jesus had in mind when he spoke of the ***Gates of Hell*** being unable to withstand the onslaught of the Good News when it is **1**. faithfully lived and **2.** proclaimed. Jesus has in mind the intent of Satan (and his minions, Pan and the other gods along with false gospels and harmful philosophies that come and go down through the ages). Standing as they were at the very "**Gate of Hades**," the disciples understood how He was commissioning them to a huge task: to challenge evil, and to build the church in the very places that were most filled with moral corruption. He wanted them to storm the gates of hell with the Good News. He warns our world is filled with those who have "gained the world" but lost their souls and if we hide our faith, they may never find the salvation they need and for that all Christians will be called to account.

What is this *Rock* on which an authentic Church is built?

The biblical answer is clear: *Jesus is The Christ, the Son of the Living God*. What storms out from behind the **Gates of Hell** to deceive our world goes by many names. The sneakiest and most cunning of these satanic deceits can be gathered under the broad heading of contemporary **social justice** theory (woke). Despite using Christian language and the priority of ***justice*** that shapes Christian living it delivers anything but. Most of us remain blissfully unaware of its deceit as it proclaims itself to be the only reliable, guaranteed "rock" on which we can built to find peace, meaning to life, and the happiness for which we all yearn. It is a powerful contemporary tool for Satan, the Great Deceiver and his success is measured by the number of Churches and individual Christians who become devotees.

Christian build their lives as directed by the God of **Genesis 1:1,** on the revealed Truths found in the Scriptures and the works of the Spirit down through 2,000 years of grace and mercy. The new "reality" declares that we no longer need to listen to established rules as ***we*** now make the rules. ***We*** establish what is real and are responsible for nothing outside ourselves. To quote Jeremy Rifkin ***we*** *are the kingdom, the power and the glory forever.*

We are told there is now no God to whom we are answerable, no natural laws to which we must conform (eg: trans theory) no reality apart from the ones ***we*** created. The biblical worldview is radically different. Reality for Christians is the reality as created by God. Nothing exists apart from him…*for in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together (**Col 1:16-17**).* The two worlds thus stand in complete antithesis to each other. Not just different views but ways of living in the world that produce radically different results.

Much of "woke" is the contemporary tool of the Evil One

Really? Yes! **Social justice** (woke as an umbrella term) views human beings as creatures whose identity is wholly determined by group affiliations, particularly those based on race, sex, "gender identity" (e.g. LGBTQI^{+}). There is no shared humanity, just identities that have been created for us by society. Individuals no longer exist. We are nothing more than avatars of our group. Our personal history, life experiences, choices or deeply held beliefs do not matter anymore. The only thing that now matters is our "identity", that which defines us and the group to which we belong. It matters not what we do, only who I am.

Not so the Bible. For God, all lives matter, all are precious because all are created in the divine image and likeness. God raises up individuals – Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Elijah, David, Peter, Paul, Mother Theresa, you, me and millions of others. The bedrock of human identity is our common creation, and all have equal value and dignity and open to God's redeeming love. All have sinned but God has opened a way for all people to be saved. Once restored to God through faith in Christ (our Rock), we regain our true identity, one that transcends all group identities (gay, black, white, trans, race, etc)…*for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26-28).*

Compare this to the view of one of the bastions of social justice theories – **Ta-Nehisi-Coates**, a view that is a social justice "gospel"…***the*** *fundamental human problem is "whiteness"* and this "whiteness" has brough humanity to the edge of oblivion…*The power of dominion and exclusion is central to the belief in "being white" and without it "white people" would cease to exist for want of reasons*. **Other luminaries** trace all evil in the world back to *the Judeo-Christian sexual ethics.* The **feminist activist** sources all evil to "masculinity" and the "patriarchy". Their "rock" is seeing the world in terms of power and oppression, people are abusers or the abused, the privileged or the victims. And these are the antithesis of the Good News of Jesus Christ. God forgives sinners but social justice does not. Despite the best intentions of its adherents – and many do have good intentions, - ideological social justice destroys civil, humane society, replacing it with hatred, division and tribalism. Jesus is the only Good News for the world, the only enduring Rock and it has within it all the grace and power to smash open the very **Gates of Hell** and bring Light to *those who live in darkness under the power of the shadow of death.*