

TAKING UP THE CROSS - 21st CENTURY STYLE

A tale by Barry Chant

Large crowds were following Jesus. So He turned to His disciples and said, 'Let us find an air-cooled auditorium where the people can sit down in comfort.' And the disciples searched until they found a suitable venue. They hung large signs outside reading, 'Salvation-Healing Crusade here this week. Hear Jesus of Nazareth. See signs, wonders and miracles. Bring the sick and suffering. All welcome.' About five thousand men, plus women and children, attended the opening rally.

There was a large stall near the entrance where people could buy autographed scrolls of Jesus' teaching or togas and scarves inscribed with the words 'Jesus of Nazareth Ministries Inc. © AD 31.'

Then Jesus called the chief musician to direct the singers and other players. They played loudly on harps, lyres, timbrels and flutes. And the people stood to their feet and sang psalms many times over. They clapped their hands and made a joyful noise to the Lord.

Then Jesus said -

If anyone comes after me and does not love his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple.

And if you do not put on rich garments and the finest raiment and believe that you shall have whatever you say, you cannot be my disciple

For he who follows me shall have rings on his fingers and bells on his toes and he shall have music wherever he goes.

For he who follows me must have a good self-image and see himself as worthy of the kingdom of God.

In the same way, any of you who wants to be my disciple must realise that by following me, you will have the best of everything. You will certainly ride in the latest model chariot and have all the denarii you need. You will be dressed in fine linen and live in sumptuous palaces.

Indeed, whatever you desire you shall have, just as whatever I desire, I have.

Do not worry about providing for your family or future. Just name it and claim it, confess it and possess it, blab it and grab it, believe it and receive it and all will be yours. For God wants you to be healthy, wealthy and wise.

You have a unique destiny. You must fulfil your potential. Only believe.

And the people rejoiced to hear His words, for He spoke as one having much wealth and prosperity, and they longed to go and be likewise.

And Jesus continued to teach them, saying,

Anyone who follows me must lay down his cross and go before me. For suffering is the result of sin and my way is a sinless way.

Blessed are you when all men speak well of you, when they praise you and support you, for so they have always spoken of the prophets of God. Therefore, if any man come after me, let him take out his wallet, get all that he can, and follow me.

And again the people wondered at the gracious words that proceeded from His mouth for they sounded too good to be true.

Then the musicians began to play a sweet maskil of a daughter of Israel, saying, `Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, for the gospel is free, but as it is written in the volume of the book, Just as I am, I come to Thee.'

And Jesus said to His disciples, `Tell the people to close their eyes and bow their heads.' And the people did so.

And Jesus said, `If you would like to make a decision to give your heart to me, I beseech you to raise your right hand. Fear not, for no one can see you.'

There were some who were afraid, but at the words of Jesus, they raised their hands.

Then Jesus said, `I see those hands. Is there another?' And it came to pass that when all the people had responded, Jesus asked them to stand to their feet, and behold, there were some who did stand.

Then Jesus said, `While the music is playing softly and the choir is singing, this is my commandment that you step out here to the front, so I can pray for you.'

And as some of the people hesitated, He continued to instruct them, saying, `Do not be afraid. I will not keep you long. Only the heathen think they will be heard for their empty repetitions. The prayer will be brief and there are some disciples here who will talk to you for a few minutes and give you a little scroll. Your friends will wait for you. You will be home in time for dinner.'

And lo, some of the people did come, and they took the little scroll.

But He did not tell them that it would be sweet as honey in their mouths but that it would turn their stomachs sour (Rev 19:9).

And He did not tell them that to follow Him they would indeed carry His cross.

And He did not tell them that it was only by losing their lives that they would find them.

So they went away happy.

For a while.

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About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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