

## Will the Poor always be with us?

“The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them at any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could do. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare me for my burial.” (Mark 14: 7, 8, 9)

When one applies the *Historical Method* (*See: “Historical Method” in CD 1 of the 2 Olive Trees at <http://greatest1command.com/>*) to the above texts, as oppose to the *Grammatical Method* used by the reformers and contemporary Christianity, one will come to a new understanding of our world’s misunderstanding. Many Christians and non-Christians believe, because of these very texts, that the poor are supposed to co-exist with the rich and they say, “Jesus himself said we are always going to have poor people.” With this kind of negative thinking, its only obvious that people with a zeal for the letter of the Bible are not going to go against what Jesus (in their minds) is allegedly instituting. Yet, in the true “Historical” context, Jesus wasn’t saying poorness and poverty will always be with us (which for centuries is the result of this belief) but that he was foreseeing his soon departure in conjunction to the poor, who would not depart.

Furthermore, if Jesus had made the issue of the poor a minor one and unsolvable, and if the poor will always be with us (and we can’t do anything to remove this problem even if we try, as many believe) Jesus would not make it a priority at the Judgment. However, the very foundation of the judgment is the poor. For example, in Matt. 25: 31- 46, Jesus judges negatively those who did not reach out to the hungry, the thirsty, and the naked, which obviously are poor individuals. In addition, St. James states, “Religion that God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress...” (St. James 1: 27) Also, the Apostles were very eager to consider the poor. (Gal. 2: 10) St. Paul was always collecting contributions for them. (Rom. 15: 26) Finally, the first generation of Christians would not have sold their homes, resulting in no needy (poor) people if Jesus had told them that poor people would always exist. Were they more optimistic then Jesus? (Acts 4: 34, 35)

However, after attaining Jesus’ vision of heaven on earth through his “Greatest 1 Command” (St. John 13: 34), sadly, the flicker of light was trampled. (Matt. 4: 16 & Luke 2: 32) A major contribution to this mishap was the lack of participation from others, especially the Jews who were first given the message. This lack was mainly caused by a misperception that all the negative prophecies in the Old Testament must be fulfilled to the letter “before” earth could transform into heaven. Specifically included were the negative punitive prophecies. One great punitive prophecy was the ‘abomination that causes desolation’ spoken by Daniel (the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple) Daniel 12: 11. Unless this prophecy was fulfilled, many in the Apostle’s generation could not see poorness being abolished and the arrival of God’s rule. But, these types of prophecies are for encouraging and admonishing people, so they do not necessarily have to occur if one repents, even in a generation centuries later (i.e., such as Jesus’ which came after Daniel’s) for which the predictions could be applicable. This can even be applied to the book of Revelation. (2 Peter 3: 9)

On the contrary, only through a continual adherence to Jesus’ “Greatest 1 Command”, followed by repentance and a changed heart, could they have relinquished poverty and averted the foretold destruction. Therefore, Jesus recalled the generation of Jonah as an example for them, because that generation repented, then God relented and the punitive prophecy was not fulfilled. (Jonah 3: 9, 10) (Luke 11: 29- 32) Unfortunately, like Jonah, who was more concerned with the fulfillment of prophecies rather than with compassion and the well being of the city of Nineveh, likewise were the people of Jesus’ time. In the end, the “Abomination that causes Desolation” was fulfilled in C.E. 70 by Titus. (Luke 21: 20, 32) Most likely, Jonah learned from his ordeal with the scorching wind and blazing sun, but surely, Jesus’ generation did not, because not one stone was left on the Temple (Matt. 24: 2); and the issue of the world’s poorness continued, with the Jews becoming poor and homeless themselves.

In conclusion, the prophecy book for the Jews in Jesus’ generation was the book of “Daniel”, which pointed exclusively to their dispensation and not beyond. On the other hand, for Christians, “Revelation” becomes the new prophecy book and points to the future from where the book of Daniel concluded. The question remains, are we in the present going to be more concerned with seeing the book of Revelation’s punitive end time prophecies being fulfilled, rather than the eradication of poverty? The curses in Revelation can be averted if humanity, specifically Christianity, repents as the city of Nineveh did long ago. Jesus posed the question, “When the son of man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18: 8) Does this faith include finding no poor people, or, will the poor always be with us?