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Report Three of Four Concerning the Resurrection of Daniel Ekechukwu

By David Servant

One year after my interview of Daniel Ekechukwu, I returned to Nigeria again, as I have every September of the past four years. I hoped that I would once again be able to locate and interview Daniel, as I would be teaching at a pastors' conference about three hours away from the city where he lived. (I should say, "Where I thought he lived," because I later learned that Daniel had move to Lagos, a six to seven-hour drive from where I would be in Port Harcourt.) I also hoped to interview his wife, as well as the doctor who pronounced him dead and the mortician who partially embalmed him, in order to find out first hand if the facts of Daniel's miracle that I had previously reported were accurate. I had received some e-mail correspondence from some hostile and not-so-hostile "discernment ministries" (as they call themselves), who all attempted to discredit my reporting, saying I had not done a thorough investigation. (If you have not read my first two reports, you may want to read them at my website: www.shepherdserve.org)

My first stop was in the city of Owerri, Imo State, in Eastern Nigeria. There I located the Umezurike hospital, the Federal Medical Center, and St. Eunice's Clinic, the three final medical facilities where Daniel's wife took his body on the night of November 30, 2001 (all of which I mentioned in my first article). They were all in the same general vicinity of Owerri. When I arrived at St. Eunice's Clinic, Dr. Jossy Anuebunwa, who had pronounced Daniel dead, was temporarily out, but I videotaped an interview of his personal assistant, Peter Chinedu Anele. Peter told me that he had known Dr. Anuebunwa for over twenty-two years, that Dr. Anuebunwa had received his medical degree from the University of Nigeria, and that he had been practicing medicine and gynecology for about twenty years. St. Eunice's Clinic was indeed a real medical clinic, with a real nurse and real patients waiting to see Dr. Anuebunwa.



From there, I drove to the village of Ikeduru, to try to find the Ikeduru General Hospital Mortuary, which I discovered is now known as Inyishi Community Hospital Mortuary. There I interviewed on video Mr. Darlington Manu, the mortician who had partially embalmed Daniel in the very early morning hours of Saturday, December 1, 2001. He is the chief mortician in Imo State, and always has between twenty and fifty bodies in his

mortuary that are awaiting burial. His father was a mortician before him, and he has embalmed thousands of corpses. He showed me many photos of corpses in various stages of the embalming process.



Mr. Manu showed me his ledger where he enters important information concerning every corpse that is brought to his mortuary. It contained hundreds of entries. He showed me Daniel Ekechukwu's name listed there, and the date his corpse was received was recorded as November 30, 2001. The date recorded that the corpse was taken by the relatives was December 2, 2001. Mr. Manu related to me the story of the arrival of Daniel's family with his body, and how he injected embalming fluid into Daniel's fingers in order to keep them straight. He also related how he had twice attempted to cut Daniel's inner thigh to inject embalming fluid, and the shock he twice received. The second time his arm became partially paralyzed, and remained so through the night. He told me about the worship music that emanated from his mortuary during the first night Daniel's body was lying there, and the light, "something like little stars" that floated above Daniel's head when he searched for the source of the music in the mortuary. He told me how he located Daniel's father the next morning, and urgently requested that he remove Daniel's body from his mortuary because of the strange occurrences. He told me how Daniel's father came early Sunday morning, December 2, with Daniel's wife to take the body to Onitsha. He said that he had dressed Daniel's body in a white suit, stuffed his nose with cotton, and laid his body in a coffin that the family had purchased.

Then he told me something I hadn't known. Mr. Manu had gone in the ambulance with Daniel's wife, son and father to the church in Onitsha. He was in the room when Daniel came back to life, an eyewitness! Mr. Manu was not a Christian, and Daniel's resurrection so unnerved him that he immediately left the room and the premises! He told me that he soon after repented and is now serving the Lord. His wife, a long-time believer, had been praying for him for years.

Incidentally, something I learned during practically all of my interviews is that Nigerians, particularly rural Nigerians, are not nearly so conscious of the time of day as most Westerners. Most don't have wristwatches or clocks. So when you ask them what time something happened, they can only tell you if it was early or late morning, afternoon or evening. If they wake up in the middle of the night, the next day they can't tell you what time it happened, because they don't know. Mr. Manu was a perfect example of this. So when "discernment ministries" attempt to discredit the story by showing slight time discrepancies, it only exposes what they don't know about rural Africans.

Mr. Manu also gave me a tour of his mortuary. I saw about twenty-five corpses in the rear portion of his building, and he showed me exactly where Daniel's body had laid. Some of the corpses he showed me had been in his mortuary for many months, yet the smell you might expect was very faint, and none of the bodies were bloated, all having been emblamed. (As I said in a previous report, Nigerians don't bury their dead for weeks and sometimes months as they collect money from relatives and prepare for elaborate funerals.) Mr. Manu showed me one "unclaimed" corpse that had been lying in his mortuary for five years! There were no cold storage facilities.

That evening, I stayed overnight in the Best Way Hotel in Owerri. The next morning, I journeyed back to the St. Eunice's Clinic in Owerri. On my way there, I called Daniel Ekechukwu by cell

phone. I knew he might be preaching outside the country or anywhere in Nigeria, but I hoped he would be at his home in Onitsha, about an hour away. If he was in Onitsha, I was intending to tell him that I would be coming there that afternoon, and to ask if I could meet him at his home.

When I reached him by phone, he asked me if I was in the U.S. I told him I was in Nigeria. He asked me if I was in Lagos. I told him that I was in Owerri. He told me that *he* was in Owerri, and had been staying in the Best Way Hotel---where I had just left minutes before! I could hardly believe it. I had come to Nigeria not knowing if Daniel would even be in the country, and thinking he was still living in Onitsha, when in reality, he had moved to Lagos (a seven-hour drive away). However, he just *happened* to be in the Owerri area for his sister's wedding that weekend. Because his father's house was so crowded, he and his wife had decided to get away for one night and drove forty minutes to stay in one of many possible hotels in Owerri, a city of a two hundred thousand people. The hotel he had chosen was the same hotel I had randomly chosen, and we were both there the same night. It was another amazing coincidence or wonderful providence.

In any case, Daniel and his wife agreed to meet me at the St. Eunice Clinic, where I was going to interview Dr. Anuebunwa. Once we all arrived, Daniel invited me to join him later at his father's house in the village of Amaimo, about a forty-minute drive away, once I had interviewed the doctor who wrote his death certificate.



I videotaped Dr. Anuebunwa as I interviewed him. He is a Christian man who gave me the same answers that his personal assistant had the day before to my questions about his background. He stated that during his seventeen years of practicing medicine, he had pronounced hundreds of people dead. I asked him what were the chances that Daniel was only unconscious the night he pronounced him dead. He said that there was no chance. Daniel had no heartbeat, no respiration, no pulse, and his pupils were fixed and dilated.

From there I drove to Daniel's father's house, taking a dirt road to the village of Amaimo, and actually arrived before Daniel and his wife, Nneka. So I spent time interviewing Daniel's father on video. His story collaborated perfectly with the details I had heard from everyone else. He told me how he fell to the ground in anguish when his son's body was brought to his home, crying out to God and asking, "Why have You punished me like this?" He told me about the mortician's desperate request on Saturday morning for him to remove Daniel's body from his mortuary. He told me about Nneka's dream, and Daniel's resurrection. He was in the room when Daniel came back to life. I asked him if he believed that Daniel would come back to life. He admitted that he only took Daniel's body to *The Grace of God Mission* in Onitsha to please Daniel's wife, because he feared she would hold it against him for the rest of his life if he didn't. (I later learned that according to their social customs, Nneka would have had to remain a widow for the rest of her life, living at her father-in-law's home. Her only option to remarry would have been if one of Daniel's brothers had proposed to her.)

When Daniel and Nneka arrived, Daniel told me what had been happening to him during the year since I had last seen him. He had traveled to Austria, Finland, Estonia and the U.S. to preach. He had been giving his testimony all over Nigeria at Reinhard Bonnke's crusades. He had relocated to Lagos to be closer to an international airport and a domestic airport that serves all of Nigeria. Someone had given him a large sum of money to purchase a nice house in Lagos, but he had used

the money to purchase a generator, a sound system, platform, and a truck to facilitate his own evangelistic crusades in every state of Nigeria. He said that earthly things now mean nothing to him.



I videotaped a twenty-minute interview with Daniel's wife, Nneka, the true heroine of the story. Her details harmonized perfectly with what everyone else had told me. She never lost faith in her heart the entire two days of her husband's death, although she faced incredible emotional challenges. She was in the room when he came back to life. I asked her if it was possible that God have her a gift of special faith (see 1 Cor. 12:9), because her faith seemed so extraordinary. She said yes. However, I must say that it seemed to me that she had stretched her own faith about as far as she could right from the time she learned of her husband's accident. She told me her faith had been strengthened during a number of previous trials.

I asked her if her two boys knew that their father had died. She said that the oldest one, a five-year old, did, and was always weeping bitterly over the loss of his father. He rode with his mother in the ambulance that took his father's body to *The Grace of God Mission*, knowing that his father's body was in the casket. Nneka said, however, that she "deceived" her younger son into thinking that his father was in Onitsha. When Daniel came back to life, his oldest son met him with laughter in the sanctuary of *The Grace of God Mission*.

I asked her if the Federal and State security police had literally flogged her when she insisted that they permit her husband's body to be taken into the church. She said yes, they beat her unmercifully with wooden canes. She said that in Nigeria, they have an expression that applied to what they did to her: "They beat the hell out of me!" (I had never heard such an expression in my life.) I asked her how much time transpired between her arrival at the church and her husband's resurrection. She estimated that it was about four hours. I have never met anyone in my life with such persistent faith.



Finally, I videotaped an interview of Daniel himself for almost one hour on his experiences in heaven and hell. He is a passionate communicator. There is no doubt that he believes his experience was from God. He elaborated in much more detail than he had with me the previous year. As I listened to him, I had the continual sense that Daniel found it very difficult to describe to his own satisfaction what he heard and saw because the spiritual realm is so different than the material realm, and there is nothing to use as a comparison to provide an explanation. (I get that same sense when I read any of the prophets or John's Revelation.) I also had the sense that he himself could not understand everything he experienced while he was out of his body, and he was still contemplating them and trying to figure them out. He would tell me his speculations about certain things he did not understand. For example, Daniel said that the angel who escorted him always used the word "we," speaking of himself and at least one other person whom Daniel didn't see. Daniel thinks that perhaps there were other angels around him of which he was not aware. I suggested that perhaps that angel was speaking on behalf of God, as we read in Scripture that angels often do, and God was using the word "we" just as He used the word "us" in the first chapters of Genesis. Daniel wasn't sure.

Daniel again told me that his whole experience out of his body seemed like only fifteen minutes to him, and that when he was resurrected, he thought his experience had just been a powerful dream. However, his wife eventually convinced him that he had been lying in a mortuary the previous two nights between two other corpses. If Daniel's experience was just a dream, it was a dream of amazing detail and revelation.



I also learned that Nneka had *begged* Daniel to forgive her for slapping him prior to his departure from their home on the morning of November 30, 2001. But he had refused. He said such a thing (a wife slapping a husband) is never done in his country. It is an "abomination." His intention was to wait until after church on Sunday to ban her for one year's separation from him to his father's compound in the village of Amaimo. (Women's liberation has not reached rural Nigeria yet.) After his resurrection, however, Daniel

told his wife that his forgiveness is like bread in the refrigerator---if she wants it, she can come and get it anytime she wants!

Daniel also gave me some information about the difference between Paradise and Heaven, and hell and the lake of fire. For example, he said that many people think that hell and the lake of the fire are the same, but they are not. Hell is just a temporary holding place, and eventually everyone in hell will be judged at the Great White Throne of Judgment, and then will be cast into the lake of fire. I already knew that, as it is contained in Scripture. We read in Revelation 20:14 that death and hell (or as the NASB more accurately says "Hades") will be cast into the lake of fire. Daniel said that prior to Jesus' death and resurrection, the saints who died went to a place in Hell. (I would prefer to say "Hades," as more accurately translated by the NASB. Hades is the Greek word that is equivalent to the Old Testament Hebrew word "Sheol"; compare Acts 2:27 with Psalm 16:10. Sheol/Hades was the Old Testament abode of the wicked and righteous after death, apparently consisting of a place of torment and a place of comfort; see Luke 16:19-31.) Daniel said that after His death, Jesus took the righteous with Him to Paradise. I have heard the same doctrine taught many times in America by conservative Evangelicals.

I asked Daniel about the sign he saw over the gate of hell that he saw which said, "Welcome to the Gate of Hell." I told him I had a hard time believing that God would put such a sign there, as it would seem to be a sarcastic, out-of-character, mockery. Daniel told me something that I had never considered, and still would like to consider in light of Scripture. He said that Satan still has authority over the unrighteous in hell, just as he did on earth, and that hell is actually Satan's domain. There the devil tortures and torments his own, keeping them captive to the very sins they were enslaved to while they served him on earth. Having nothing to lose, Satan no longer deceives them about his true nature, and so he fully reveals it to them, hating his own spiritual children who have served him. *God* doesn't deal with the unrighteous until they are brought before the Great White Throne of judgment, after which they are cast into the lake of fire. That lake is a manifestation of *God's* judgment against them, and that is why both hell and Satan himself are ultimately cast there. One could wonder: If hell is God's domain of punishment, why would He not cast people into *hell* after their judgment at His Great White Throne, rather than into the lake of fire? Why wouldn't He cast Satan there as well, rather than into the lake of fire as we are told He will do? And why would God cast hell *itself* into the lake of fire if it is something of His design? Finally, why did Jesus promise that "the Gates of Hades" (or "hell" as the KJV says) would not

overpower His church (see Matt. 16:18) if "the Gates of Hades" speak of or represent a place of God's domain? Those are a few questions to think about.



Daniel also indicated that Paradise and the place of the great mansion, the "Father's house" that Jesus has prepared for His people, are different places. Presently, believers who die go to Paradise, not to the great mansion. He said it is only at the return of Christ when Jesus will take believers from Paradise and the earth and bring them into the mansion, His "Father's house" (as He perhaps implied in John 14:2-3). Daniel said that the great mansion he saw is the New Jerusalem, or at least part of it, that will one day come down from heaven to earth (see Rev. 21:2, 10).

In any case, I completed my investigation even more convinced that Daniel Ekechukwu did die on the night of November 30, 2001, and came back to life on the afternoon of December 2, 2001, in response the persistent faith of his wife, Nneka. The evidence is very compelling. I am also more persuaded that Daniel's out-of-the body experience was genuine, and that he did have a divinely-granted opportunity to see parts of heaven and hell. And I have once again made certain that I am harboring no unforgiveness in my heart!