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Report Two of Four

Follow-up on the Daniel Ekuchukwu Report

by David Servant

So many people have asked questions regarding my report on the resurrection of Nigerian pastor Daniel Ekechukwu that I thought I should write a follow-up. Reactions have ranged from total unbelief to serious self-examination and repentance. And because folks have forwarded the e-mail version or copied the snail-mail version, I've received responses from far and wide. The report has, for example, been posted on a web site in New Zealand and inquired about in Finland. If you've forwarded my previous report to anyone, you may want to forward this follow-up as well.

First, do I really believe that pastor Daniel Ekechukwu was dead for at least 42 hours? Yes, and for two reasons. First, because the evidence strongly indicates that this miracle actually happened. It is documented by means of many credible witnesses. It didn't happen secretly; it happened publicly. I personally interviewed two of the witnesses, Daniel himself, and a friend of his, Ede Samuel, who was there when he died and when he was resurrected. Daniel's friend said he thought Daniel's wife was crazy thinking that her husband would come back to life.

Second, I believe the report because my theology makes room for the existence of God. It amazes me that people who see and experience millions of unexplainable miracles every day refuse to accept the fact that God performed one more little miracle in Nigeria. When you can explain to me how your fingernails grow or how the leaves change color in Fall, I'll explain to you how Daniel Ekechukwu was raised from the dead! It takes millions of unexplainable miracles for you just to read this sentence. To religious unbelievers, Paul asked, "Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8).

If one does not believe that Daniel Ekechukwu was raised from the dead, one must then believe that he was unconscious for at least 42 hours, and that medical personnel, a doctor, family members, pastors, church members, and an experienced mortician were fooled into thinking he was dead because of the fact that he was not breathing, had no heartbeat or pulse, had fixed pupils and rigor mortis! One might just as well claim that Lazarus wasn't dead, only unconscious, and that he just happened to regain consciousness by the startling sound of Jesus'

voice as he lay in his tomb. If I had been there to examine Daniel Ekechukwu, I would have thought he was dead, just like everyone else.

One “discernment ministry” attempts to discredit this miracle by quoting Hebrews 9:27: “It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.” Supposedly this verse proves that Daniel Ekechukwu could not have been resurrected since the Bible says that people only die once. This is a very weak argument indeed. A quick look at the context of Hebrews 9:27 reveals that the inspired author was not declaring an unalterable rule, but using a general truth as an analogy for Christ’s *one-time* sacrifice. The passage actually says, “*For inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation...*” If Hebrews 9:27 invalidates Daniel Ekechukwu’s resurrection, then it also invalidates the experiences of those whom Jesus, Peter and Paul raised from the dead and who later died again.

Another “discernment ministry,” splitting hairs, points out that the rich man’s request (recorded in Luke 16:27-28) was *denied*. This supposedly exposes the lie of pastor Daniel’s claim that the angel told him that the request of the rich man had been granted in Daniel’s resurrection. May I point out that the rich man of Luke 16 specifically requested that *Lazarus* be resurrected to warn his *five brothers*, but that request was denied because Abraham knew *they* wouldn’t believe, since *they*, as Jews, ignored the Law and Prophets all their lives. Abraham, however, never promised that no *other* people in the *future* would rise from the dead as a sign in an attempt to get other sinners (especially those who never heard any Scripture) to repent of their sins. If Abraham was promising that God would *never* resurrect anyone with the hope of leading people to repentance, then we must deny the many later resurrections of which we read in the Gospels and Acts, including even Jesus’ resurrection. The angel’s statement to pastor Daniel Ekechukwu could be paraphrased, “Even though the rich man’s request that Lazarus be sent to his five brothers was denied several thousand years ago (and for good reason), now God is mercifully going to grant even more than the rich man requested, and also for good reason. You will be resurrected and testify before more than five people who will *not* repent---you will speak to millions, and many who hear you *will* repent.” So it is in that sense that God has granted the rich man’s request. And God certainly has the prerogative to do that if He desires, even though some “discernment minister” might object.

It has been asked, “How was it that Daniel’s body had no visible marks from his accident when he came back to life?” I suppose that if God is able to raise someone from the dead, He is also able to heal someone’s bruises, cracked ribs, and damaged internal organs. In fact, if God did not heal the people He resurrects, they would immediately die again of what originally killed them.

Would not have Daniel’s body have bloated in the hot Nigerian climate during those two days? another person asks. I don’t know what would have been normal, but as I pointed out in my report, some Nigerians don’t bury their dead for many weeks or even months after death as they gather money from relatives for funerals. They must *load* those bodies with embalming fluid. (When David Aboderin, my Nigerian friend whom I mentioned in my previous report, lost his mother about a year ago, she was not buried for three months after her death.) Not only was Daniel’s body partially injected with embalming chemicals, but it seems obvious from the mortician’s testimony that supernatural things were occurring to Daniel’s body even as it lay in the morgue.

Some of the “discernment ministries” have attempted to discredit the entire miracle because of its association with Reinhard Bonnke, whom they deem to be a false teacher. Bonnke, however, is a man who has come close to death for his faith in Christ, and risks his life every time he ministers in Africa, where Muslims hate him. He was not permitted to minister in Nigeria for a number of years because of Muslim rioting in the city of Kano, where many Christians lost their lives and he almost lost his life just prior to a crusade there. He proclaims a gospel that calls millions of people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, and he prays for sick people, and numbers of them are healed through their faith, a very biblical thing. The truth is, as I said in my report, Reinhard Bonnke was nowhere near the church when Daniel Ekechukwu was resurrected.

Many of the “discernment ministers,” although saying they believe that God can heal someone or raise someone from the dead, could not tell you of a single instance where they believe God has actually healed someone or raised someone from the dead. Moreover, they do their best to discredit every report of a healing or resurrection if it is associated with someone whose doctrine differs from theirs. And while these “discernment ministers” spread their judgments to their little constituencies of fellow unbelieving believers, people like Reinhard Bonnke just keep preaching the gospel to the lost multitudes, risking what no “discernment minister” would dare risk, as they safely tap away on their keyboards in their kitchens and bedrooms.

What about the theological implications of Daniel’s experience in hell? For example, isn’t the scene of people endlessly eating their own flesh far-fetched? No, not really. God has repeatedly promised in His Word that He will render to every person according to his deeds. Paul wrote:

But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will *render to each person according to his deeds*: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom. 2:5-10; emphasis added).

The people whom Daniel saw endlessly eating their own flesh were apparently being judged for eating human flesh as an occult practice during their lives. In the Old Testament, God promised He would judge wicked people by leaving them no alternative but to eat the flesh of their own dead children (see Deut. 28:54-57). As foretold in the New Testament book of Revelation, when God will wrathfully turn the waters of the earth into blood, an angel will declare, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; *for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it*” (Rev. 16:5-6). God is not the big teddy bear that so many think He is.

Unless people repent, God is going to give them exactly what they deserve. They will reap what they have sown, and thus Hell will be customized for every sinner. Jesus warned of this: “And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few (Luke 12:47-48).

Certainly the one aspect of Daniel's experience in hell that is the most sobering was the angel's declaration that Daniel would have ended up there because of his unforgiveness (if God had not had mercy on him). Can unforgiveness actually cause a Christian to end up in hell? Again, Scripture answers *Yes*. Do you remember the parable of the unforgiving servant found in Matthew 18:21-35? When the master learned that his servant whom he had graciously forgiven had refused to forgive a fellow servant, he was "moved with anger," and "handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him" (Matt. 18:34). That is, the servant's formerly-forgiven and unpayable debt was reinstated, so that he found himself once again owing what he could never repay, under the wrath of his master and handed over to be tortured. Jesus then warned, "So shall My heavenly Father do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart" (Matt. 18:35).

Clearly, this was a warning to *Christians* as proven by the external context (see Matt. 18:1-2, 21; the parable was spoken to *believers*, admonishing them to forgive their *brothers*), and by the internal context, as the unforgiving servant obviously represents a person who was previously forgiven by God, a Christian. But that forgiven person's forgiven status was annulled. He reaped what he had sown. Pastor Daniel Ekechukwu was no different than the unforgiving servant in Jesus' parable. *So why should we be surprised that an angel told Daniel Ekechukwu what Jesus has told all of His followers?*

All of this is to say that Christians can forfeit their salvation by unforgiveness. If you are among those who believe that if you are once saved you are guaranteed that you will always be saved, you need to re-think your position. That view is not only disproved by the parable of the unforgiving servant, but also by many other scriptures. (See Matt. 24:4-5, 11-13, 23-26, 42-51; 25:1-30; Luke 8:11-15; 11:24-28; 12:42-46; John 6:66-71; 8:31-32, 51; 15:1-6; Acts 11:21-23; 14:21-22; Rom. 6:11-23; 8:12-14, 17; 11:20-22; 1 Cor. 9:23-27; 10:1-21; 11:29-32; 15:1-2; 2 Cor. 1:24; 11:2-4; 12:21-13:5; Gal. 5:1-4; 6:7-9; Phil. 2:12-16; 3:17-4:1; Col. 1:21-23; 2:4-8, 18-19; 1 Thes. 3:1-8; 1 Tim. 1:3-7, 18-20; 4:1-16; 5:5-6, 11-15, 6:9-12, 17-19, 20-21; 2 Tim. 2:11-18; 3:13-15; Heb. 2:1-3; 3:6-19; 4:1-16; 5:8-9; 6:4-9, 10-20; 10:19-39; 12:1-17, 25-29; Jas. 1:12-16; 4:4-10; 5:19-20; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; 2:1-22; 3:16-17; 1 John 2:15-2:28; 5:16; 2 John 6-9; Jude 20-21; Rev. 2:7, 10-11, 17-26; 3:4-5, 8-12, 14-22; 21:7-8; 22:18-19.)

Jesus solemnly warned that if we don't forgive others, God will *not* forgive us. This is so vital that we should examine ourselves in this regard at least as much as *every time we pray* according to Jesus:

Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions (Mark 11:25-26; emphasis added).

This is so fundamental that the concept is included in the Lord's Prayer:

'And forgive us our debts, *as we also* have forgiven our debtors'"For *if* you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But *if* you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions (Matt. 6:12-15; emphasis added).

Keep in mind that God does not expect us to do what He himself does not do, that is, forgive people who don't humble themselves and request our forgiveness. If a brother sins against us, Jesus didn't say we should *forgive* him; He said we should *confront* him. And if he refuses to listen to us, Jesus didn't say we should *forgive* him. Rather, we should bring two or three with us and *confront* him again. And if he refuses to listen to those two or three, he should not be *forgiven* but be *confronted* before the church. And if he refuses to listen to the church, he should not be *forgiven* but be *excommunicated* and treated like an unbeliever. Thus we can confidently say that there are some people whom God does not want us to forgive. Significantly, these steps of reconciliation and discipline I have just mentioned are found in Matthew 18:15-17, just prior to the parable of the unforgiving servant. These two passages certainly should not be interpreted so as to contradict one another.

Forgiveness in its purest form can only be given when it is requested. Jesus said, "If your brother sins, *rebuke* him; and *if he repents*, forgive him. "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, *saying, 'I repent, 'forgive him*" (Luke 17:3-4; emphasis added). In the parable of the unforgiving servant mentioned earlier, note that both first and second servants *requested* mercy.

In pastor Daniel's case, his wife had sought for reconciliation, Daniel had refused her, and then he experienced his ill-timed death. Thank God that He had mercy on Daniel, and in so doing, God has shown His mercy to all of us who are not ready to stand before Him because of unforgiveness in our hearts.

Clearly, it is a very great evil in God's eyes to refuse to forgive a brother or sister in Christ who requests our forgiveness. It is also an evil to not confront a brother or sister who sins against us and harbor ill-will against him or her. This is, however, commonly practiced by those of us who name Jesus as Lord. When offended, we don't confront the offender. Rather, we harbor a grudge and tell everyone of the offense, gossiping, adding sin to our sin, and placing ourselves in the danger of being judged by God (see Matt. 7:1-5). Jesus warned us that if our relationship with our brother is not right, our relationship with God is not right either:

Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering (Matt. 5:23-24).

If we realize that we have offended a brother, we should stop what we are doing, even if we are performing some spiritual obligation, and go to that brother to work towards reconciliation, just as Jesus taught.

Thus, both the offender (if he realizes what he has done) and the offended have responsibility before God to make no delay in working for reconciliation. And if they can't reach reconciliation, they should seek the help of others until reconciliation is reached or until one party is excommunicated from the church, according to Christ's instructions in Matthew 18:15-17. Obviously, this is serious stuff to God.

With unbelievers and false believers, of course, it is not the same. We can attempt to confront those who offend us, but we have very little recourse if they refuse to be reconciled.

As our general rule, we should imitate God, who longs for sinners to turn from their sins and be reconciled to Him, and so He always is working towards reconciliation, patiently waiting for sinners to repent. We, too, should maintain an “open-heart” policy, always doing what we can to be at peace with others. In this regard, Paul wrote, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Rom. 12:18). Both Jesus and Stephen prayed for God to forgive the very people who were killing them. We, too, have the same capacity to love by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Daniel Ekechukwu is now calling Christians to do what Christ has been commanding all His followers to do for two thousand years: forgive one another. And he is doing it with the passion of a man who really believes that Jesus meant what He said. What if the whole thing is a hoax? Then the worst thing that will come out of it is that hundreds of thousands, and perhaps millions, of Christians will examine their lives and obey Jesus’ commandments regarding forgiveness. Thus they will be more ready to meet Him when He comes. *That isn’t so bad, is it?* And even if we ignore everything that Daniel Ekechukwu says, we would be wise to not ignore anything Jesus said. He had a lot to say about the absolute necessity of forgiveness and the dire consequences of unforgiveness.

If you address as Father the One who *impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;* knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:17-19, emphasis added).