

Week 25 (December 30, 2007)

Text: 1st John 5:18-21

Title: “Do Not Fear”

INTRODUCTION

I don't watch a whole lot of TV, so when someone told me about an illusionist named Criss Angel last week, I thought I'd go online and see who he is.

For those of you who do not know who he is; I thought I'd show you one of his tricks this morning.

Show video clip of Criss Angel levitating a woman on a Las Vegas street.

Pretty impressive isn't it?

When I did my internet search, I found Christians debating whether or not the tricks Criss Angel performs are demonic in nature or not.

I must be honest; when I watched one of his tricks where he walks on water across a swimming pool, I wondered the same thing myself—is this illusion or is this some sort of magic?

Let's just for a moment though, consider the woman floating in space.

Our mind tells us not to believe what we're seeing, but our eyes tell us that we should.

Often times in life, our eyes or our ears tell us to believe one thing, but when we sit down and honestly examine the evidence, our mind and our heart show us a different story.

Criss Angel make you wonder, until you begin to examine the evidence and think about what you've seen.

Suppose the people randomly selected from the crowd have not been “*randomly*” selected at all, but are actually employees of the illusionist.

Have you ever considered that this could be the case when you watch a magician, an illusionist or your favorite television evangelist? That maybe just like the Pharisees planted

some in the crowd to cry out “Crucify Him!” that the entertainer on stage may have planted some in the crowd to cry out “*believe!*”

Why do I say that there is no random selection taking place in this video?

Well, for one thing, if I were to show the video again and we were to look closely at the woman’s loose fitting top as she is supposedly floating in air, we’d see that her blouse hangs down to the left and to the right, but smack dab under the small of her back where her center of gravity would be if she were being supported by something, we see that just as we’d suspect, that the fabric of her blouse is pressed up tight against her body...

In other words, all this randomly selected gymnast is doing, is balancing herself on an object that is not easily seen in the low light of the setting.

Things are not always as they seem, and that is why we’re talking about illusion this morning.

It’s because sometimes “illusion” and “sight of hand” can be very convincing—in fact—so convincing that **we don’t know** what to make of what we see and hear...of what our physical senses are telling us.

It is because we are susceptible to being tricked, that John writes 1st John in the first place and our susceptibility to deception is especially why John ends 1st John as he does.

Let’s turn to our text—to the end of 1st John:

“18 We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. 19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.”