

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Jesus is Lord: The Lord's coming – authority and power exhibited

Connecting with the previous talk on the privilege of commemorating the Lord's death, let's think of the reference to the Lord's second coming. *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."* (1 Corinthians 11:26). It is the **Lord's** death we have remembered; it is the **Lord** who is coming. It is an absent **Lord** whose death we show; how solemn! When on earth He was unwanted and rejected and cast out by men. His death was the death of the cross. One aspect of his coming again will be with authority and power to rule and govern. Under His rule this world will be different from the way it is today. There will be righteousness and peace on earth. Of the nations we read, *"neither shall they learn war any more"* (Micah 4:3). In the physical creation, *"The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose"* (Isaiah 35:1). The animal creation will be affected, *"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb"* (Isaiah 11:6). All that sin has brought into this world will be removed.

Let's continue with the subject of the Lord's coming with reference to His power and authority. There are many scriptures in both Old Testament and also in the New [Testament] giving light on this theme. In the Old Testament there are many passages that refer to the Lord Jesus. Christians have no doubt as to whom they refer. At Christmas time we often think of Isaiah 9:6-7. Just listen to it. *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end."*

This is one great outcome of the 'coming of the Lord with power and authority.' As we look around the world today what a need there is for stable government. Righteousness is missing in the politics of the world therefore men fail to achieve peace. With high hopes the national leaders formulate their 'road map for peace' but it seems to miss the way and takes a wrong turn ending in failure. We Christians know that the answer to these problems await the coming of the Lord.

Let's look at one more Old Testament scripture before moving on to the New Testament. In the book of Ezekiel reference is made to the final King of Judah as a wicked Prince; (21:25) his name was Zedekiah. Like other of the kings of Judah he led Israel into the worship of idols. Had he been faithful to the covenant he entered into with the king of Babylon his life may have been spared. As it happened, the king of Babylon put out his eyes and he was carried to Babylon and put in prison till the day of his death. Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the tribe of Judah was taken into captivity in Babylon for seventy years. In the New Testament this event is referred to as the beginning of the *"times of the Gentiles."* (Luke 21:22) From then onwards Israel as a nation has never really escaped from Gentile domination.

Listen to Ezekiel 21:25-27. *"And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him."*

This was a very degrading time for God's people Israel. Already, the ten tribes had been taken into captivity and removed out of their own land into Assyria. Now Judah was to have a similar fate and be taken into captivity to Babylon. These conditions prevail up to the present time until the Lord Jesus appears whose right it is to wear the diadem. The overturning process referred to in the verses quoted from Ezekiel is still very evident in the year 2004. Israel does not have a sovereign ruler. There is an Israeli nation, but on a very shaky foundation. God's chosen people are surrounded by enemy nations baying for their destruction. As we pick up our newspapers to survey the news, the story told by the prophet is right, it is overturn, overturn, overturn. It must be noticed that it is God who does the overturning. More than 2,000 years ago the rightful King came to Israel and presented Himself at Bethlehem. You may remember the visit of the wise men from the east to Jerusalem a little later. They had a question to ask, *"Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"* In no time they were seeking His life, even in His infancy. His whole life was one of rejection. At the time of the crucifixion, Pilate, the Roman Governor, said unto the people, *"Shall I crucify your King?"* The answer was given by the chief priests, *"We have no King but Caesar"*.

As believers in the Lord Jesus we should never be ashamed of confessing Jesus as Lord; indeed it the basis of our salvation. Let's just remind ourselves of the well-worn and often used gospel text. *"That if thou shalt confess with thy*

mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Romans 10:9. Do not allow the challenge of this invitation to pass you by; so much depends upon your confession. Do not forget! **Jesus is Lord**, God says so. It was on the day of Pentecost, (the birthday of the church) that the Apostle Peter, when preaching to the very people who had been guilty of putting Jesus to death., said this, *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."* Acts 2:36 When the time of Ezekiel 22 arrives Jesus is given the diadem that is the royal crown. Jesus will be King!! When He comes in power and great glory, He will wear many diadems, Revelation 19:12.

The Power and Authority exhibited at the Lord's coming for Old Testament men of faith, Christians and all who form part of the Church.

One of the earliest intimations of the Lord's coming for believers is given in the Upper Room Discourse. We refer to John 13-17. We should try and picture the circumstances at that time. The Lord Jesus had already made it known that He was soon to leave His disciples. This had given them a good deal of sorrow. They had depended upon Him in every problem. He had always been available to turn to. Later on He repeated this and said, *"But I go my way to Him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart"* (John 16:5-6) So with these circumstances surrounding the disciples, Jesus brought to them the promise of His coming again to comfort them, *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me, In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."* John 14:1-3. This must have meant a great deal to the disciples; they had never thought of such a thing; they had never heard it before. It should be said that these verses in John 14 do not refer to the time when believers go to be with the Lord at death. They concern the Lord's coming for the whole church. This is an imminent hope. It may be at any time!

What authority in these words of Jesus! What mere man could speak like this? The disciples knew His love, but here was unchanging power. This promise is true today for every believer, let's not forget who Jesus is, He is God and when He says, *"I will"* it knows no change. Jesus has gone back to his Father and because this is true, the place is assured to us. In the letter to the Hebrews we are told that the Lord Jesus is our forerunner. He has gone into heaven, so will every believer when He comes again. This promise was to calm the troubled hearts of the disciples. Let these words sink into our own hearts, *"I will come again."* We should not forget, however, that at the very time Jesus was dispelling their sorrows, His own heart was troubled. The cross was before Him with all its deep sorrow for Himself.

Let's move on now into the letters of the Apostle Paul. We learn the great truths of our Christian faith from these letters. Let's consider then 1 Corinthians 15. You have no doubt heard this chapter read or quoted from when attending the funeral of some friend or relative. There is no other occasion in our lives that stands out so clearly as giving evidence of the power and presence of death. When the Lord Jesus comes again He will take the sting out of death, in power, for every believer. The Bible describes death as an enemy in this very chapter. However, it will be defeated! This very chapter tells of a time when, *"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."* This will be when time has ceased to be that *"God may be all in all"* (verse 28).

Resurrection

This chapter is a striking one. Paul is writing to an assembly of believers who had been converted as a result of his labours in Corinth. He found that there were many doctrinal and practical points to correct. The writer starts off by reminding them of the fundamental fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. If this is doubted the whole fabric of our faith must collapse. So he starts off with a clear statement of the Gospel they had received from the Apostle. Let's listen to this, *"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures."* (verses 3-4). This is what they had believed and was the basis of their Christian faith. Have you believed this, in particular, the truth of the resurrection of Christ?

Strange as it may seem, there were some of the Corinthians who didn't believe in resurrection at all. Listen to Paul's reasoning, *"Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen"* (verses 12-13). How foolish was their unbelief.

When the Lord Jesus comes again

Let's relate this wonderful fact of resurrection to the coming of the Lord. In this chapter the believer who dies is said to have, *"fallen asleep."* That is not difficult to understand. When we go to sleep actually at night we do so expecting to be wakened up in the morning. When the Lord comes again all believers who have died will be wakened. The Lord will wake them up! You may remember the incident recorded in John 11. A very dear friend of Jesus had died; his

name was Lazarus. Speaking to his disciples Jesus said, *“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I to may awake him out of sleep.”* (verse 11) This is what the Lord will do at His coming again. What of those believers who are alive then? They shall be changed! Let's read the whole passage in 1 Corinthians 15:51-54. *“Behold I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”*

There is a verse in the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Romans that tells us that death reigns in this presents creation,. he writes, *“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses.”* And it still reigns. Just think of the tremendous power to be put forth. In the very place where death has reigned for so long there will be an exhibition of Divine power over death at the coming of the Lord. It will happen! In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye! The sleeping raised and the living changed. In this chapter Jesus is referred to as the firstfruits, *“But now Christ is raised from among the dead, firstfruits of those fallen asleep”* (verse 20) JN Darby Translation The resurrection of believers will be after the same pattern, *“from among”*, because the unconverted remain in their graves until the judgement of the great white throne (Revelation 20:11). We should point out that there is no mention in 1 Corinthians 15 about believers being caught up. We must look into other of Paul's letters for this.

We might have thought that Paul was attempting to comfort the bereaved when he penned these words. They did, of course carry great comfort for the sorrowing. But it may come as a surprise to see that this wasn't his only object. Let's listen again, *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”* (1 Corinthians 15:58)

There is work to be done, as Christians, we need to be up and doing, serving the Lord with diligence. We are on the victory side!

Caught up at His coming

We come now to another aspect of this great subject of the coming of the Lord Jesus and the power exhibited. This was unknown in Old Testament times. It is New Testament teaching! The believers who have been wakened out of sleep and the living whose bodies are changed according to 1 Corinthians 15 will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. The scripture where this is told us is (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Let's listen to this scripture, *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord”*. This is the true Christian hope!

Now in this letter Paul had also told them of a time when Jesus would come in glory. But when He comes He will not be alone. This is how he puts it, *“the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints”* (1 Thessalonians 3:13). Just as a conqueror comes with all his armies every believer will be there. This raised real concerns in the minds of the Thessalonians. Some of their company had fallen asleep. They thought that they would miss that wonderful day. However, their fears were groundless; in the passage quoted above from 1 Thessalonians 4 it said, *“the dead in Christ shall rise first”*. Those who had fallen asleep would have the advantage. Believers alive at his coming would not go before. They will all meet the Lord in the air. This is the genuine Christian hope. It may be at any moment! This will be followed by a period in which judgement will fall upon the world which has rejected the gospel. Then the Lord Jesus will return again to put this sad world right and establish peace. He will be the accepted King. As believers in the Lord Jesus, look up! His coming is near, at the same time be concerned about people around us who will be left behind for judgement.

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