



Bible Study

Christ is Risen!
Indeed He is Risen!

April 19, 2017

Acts 2:22-36
John 1:35-51

Acts 2:22-36 (NKJV)

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David says concerning Him: ‘I foresaw the LORD always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of joy in Your presence.’

“Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”’ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

John 1:35-51 (NKJV) - Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that

day (now it was about the tenth hour). One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, a stone).

The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Commentary -

It is often put forward that the reason that the people of Judea in the time of our Lord Jesus Christ did not accept Him as the Christ was in large part because they were expecting a political Messiah who would overthrow Roman power and establish a kingdom on this Earth, and so Christ's death on the Cross was for them a stumbling block that they could not surmount, as the Messiah was not supposed to die, let alone a shameful death. This is only partially true. The Old Testament Prophets set forth a very clear timeline of the latter or last days. To a great extent, the disagreement between the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ in the first century and the rest of the population of Judea, and those who followed the Judean religion around the Roman world, was a disagreement regarding where they were living on that timeline.

What would take place in the last days was symbolized by what took place in 586 BC when the nation of Judah and her Temple were destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar II. God's judgment descended, but a remnant of His people was preserved, and later restored. The Prophets foretold to the people that this pattern would find its fulfillment in the latter days, when the Messiah would come, bringing judgment which would first fall upon the people of Judea, though a remnant would be brought through that judgment, purified, at which point all of the nations (the Gentiles) would come into Judea and also begin to worship Judea's God. The Christ would then rule over the Kingdom of God which would encompass the entire world. The dead would be raised up, and God would judge the entire earth, from which point His Kingdom would have no end, extending from a new Jerusalem, the Jerusalem of God.

The disagreement between the first Christians and the Judeans who refused to accept Jesus as the Christ is illustrated quite pointedly in St. Peter's speech as recorded in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, in today's epistle reading. Though the vast majority of the Judean people, including the Pharisees, would have agreed with the above general description of the latter days, they were operating under certain false understandings. First, they considered themselves to be the righteous of Israel, who would logically constitute the remnant that would be preserved. They believed that because they observed, to the letter, the written customs of the Torah, that they were righteous and pure in the eyes of God and therefore not in need of repentance. We see, however, beginning in the ministry of St. John the Forerunner, who began forming the remnant of Israel in the wilderness, which group of disciples he then turned over to Christ as we see in the Gospel, that it was rather those who repented of their sins

who were prepared to escape the coming judgment, not those who sought to justify themselves by the Torah.

For this reason, St. Peter begins by convicting his fellow Judeans of their one undeniable sin, the murder of Jesus. They may deny the blood of the Old Testament prophets, but all of them are accessories to the death of the Christ. This guilt is not intended to be a source of general condemnation, however. Rather, as St. John points out, Christ is the Lamb of God. He has offered Himself as the sacrifice of the new Passover. The fact that the Jews killed Jesus Christ, the fact that His blood is upon them, is not an 'anti-semitic' screed or a justification for violence against them. Rather it means that Christ was offered first as their sacrifice, as the ransom for their sins, to create a remnant of their people, a new assembly (Gr. Ekklesia), namely, the Church, into which all the nations of the world came to be grafted in. In order for death to pass by on the Passover, the lamb had to be killed and the blood had to be upon the family's doorpost.

By continuing to refuse to accept their own sinfulness and need of repentance, even as they refused the Baptism of the Forerunner, the Pharisees and many of the Judeans following them cut themselves off from the New Covenant in Christ's Blood, and so fell under the judgment that came upon Judea in the latter half of the first century. They would not accept that Jesus was the Christ because they would not accept that they were fallen or in need of deliverance from the power of sin and death, seeing themselves as the innocent and righteous who needed deliverance from the wicked who surrounded them.

St. Peter is therefore then easily able to move in his preaching from the guilt of the people to the proof that Christ is the Messiah, His Resurrection. Notice that St. Peter does not argue for Christ's Resurrection, he argues from it. Meaning, he takes it as a fact, just as he takes the murder of Jesus by the people as a fact that the people cannot deny. They know that they gave Him over to be executed at the former feast, and that He arose from the dead on the third day. Thus he quotes from Old Testament passages to show that the Christ was prophesied to rise from the dead and ascend into Heaven, to argue that because they know that Jesus did those things, this proves He is the Messiah.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this brings us to the point of St. Peter's preaching on that day. On this Bright Wednesday, we have beheld the greater wonders that Christ foretold to His Disciples. We have seen His betrayal, His sufferings, His death on the Cross, and His Glorious Resurrection. Because we have seen His Glory, we know that Jesus is the Christ. And if Jesus is the Christ, if the dead are being raised, if we as Gentiles have been brought into the new people of God in the Church, then these are themselves the last days. These are the days we live in anticipation of the Second and Glorious coming of Our Lord, and God, and Savior Jesus Christ. Now is the time to come out of the world, to separate ourselves as a holy people, and to proclaim to all the world the Gospel, the good news of the great victory that Christ has won over the powers of sin, and death and hell summarized in the words, "Christ is Risen!"

Questions to Ponder -

- 1) Christ compared the last days to the days of Noah, before the Flood came and wiped the Earth clean of sinfulness. If we truly believe that these are the last days, how ought we to live in that light? What things that you spend time or worry on today would you feel were an utter waste if our Lord returned tomorrow? What would you regret that you had left undone or unsaid?
- 2) When Christ began calling His inner circle of Disciples, we notice repeatedly that they went out and found their brothers and friends and others and told them that they had found Jesus, and that they believed Him to be the Christ. Are their people close to you, in your own family or circle of friends, who do not know Jesus, or who aren't living a life of faithfulness to Him? What are some ways in which you could open up your life

to them to help them see Christ in you? What changes would you need to make in how you live to make that possible?

- 3) That we are in the midst of the last days means that all the promises of the Holy Scriptures are not only for the future, but are available to us today. Christ says concerning the Resurrection of the dead, for example, that 'the time is coming and now is', meaning that like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the dead in Christ are in fact alive with Him even now. How does the good news of the Resurrection that we now celebrate turn our mourning into dancing? How will it change our lives if we truly believe that this is real?

Questions or Comments? FrStephen@stgeorgecharleston.org

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