



AP

**REFORMED
THOUGHT
FOR
CHRISTIAN
LIVING**

Today's Quick Word Matthew 28:6-7

By Bruce Christian

MATTHEW 28:6-7 - *"He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."*

God makes it very clear in his inspired Word that the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus and the historical empty tomb are essential elements of the Gospel of Salvation. Yes, our Lord's atoning, substitutionary Death in our place, bearing all the punishment we deserve because of our sinful, rebellious, God-ignoring, God-denying hearts, is also an essential element, because without this as the basis of God's forgiving grace/love/mercy, it is IMPOSSIBLE for us to come into a saving relationship with him (cf John 14:6; Acts 4:12); but the HISTORICAL EVIDENCE of the empty tomb is what leaves every unbeliever without excuse. As the Apostle Paul declared to a group of philosophical sceptics at the Areopagus: "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but NOW he commands all people everywhere to repent. FOR HE HAS SET A DAY when he will JUDGE THE WORLD with justice by the MAN he has appointed. HE HAS GIVEN PROOF OF THIS TO ALL MEN BY RAISING HIM FROM THE DEAD."

The statement of the heavenly messenger to the women at the empty tomb contains four imperative verbs (commands):

'COME ... SEE ... GO ... TELL', and we need to respond to these imperatives in that order! This is what the Gospel, the Good News, is all about. It is about COMING AND SEEKING Jesus as Saviour, SEEING the undeniable evidence of his Resurrection (confirming his spoken words, his perfect life, his miracles, his claims, the voluntary shedding of his life-blood for us, and the ultimate miracle of his breaking the bonds of death), and THEN letting nothing stand in the way of GOING wherever we can, TELLING whoever will listen about WHAT he has done and WHY.

Jesus would soon commission 'the Twelve' (ie 'eleven', following the demise of Judas) to go and make disciples of all nations. In the book of Acts we find the disciples DOING this, and we find that they are UNSTOPPABLE because they were 'WITNESSES' of 'these things', these 'facts' (see how important their being EYE-WITNESSES was to their testimony in Acts 2:32, 3:15, 5:32, 10:39, 10:41 and 13:31). Threats or persecutions could not ground them or silence them.

If WE have COME and SEEN, why are we so reluctant to GO and TELL? Why do fear of inconvenience or of ridicule or rejection make us so shy (ashamed?) about what we KNOW to be true?



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Today's Quick Word Esther 6:11-12

By Bruce Christian

ESTHER 6:11-12 - *So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honour!" Afterwards Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered, in grief, ...*

I'm sure Mordecai would have enjoyed singing Psalm 7 after his providential escape from the gallows set up by Haman for his execution: "He who digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit he has made. The trouble he causes recoils on himself; his violence comes down on his own head. I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High." (Psalm 7:15-17).

It is almost as if the Sovereign LORD had, not only David's circumstances, but the future Persian situation in mind when he inspired him to write Psalm 7. Because of the LORD's amazing intervention (by way of the whole course of events recorded throughout Esther - it's worth a quick read if you're not familiar with the story), the 20 metre high gallows that Haman had built

to hang Mordecai became his own scaffold. And, to add insult to injury, the 'procession of honour' that Haman had orchestrated for himself was hijacked by his arch enemy.

It is good for us to keep the Mordecai-Haman episode in mind whenever we suspect that our innate pride and feeling of self importance might be overshadowing the humility that should be a defining characteristic of every follower of Jesus. As the Apostle Paul says: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he HUMBLED HIMSELF and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:3-8).

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Today's Quick Word Romans 4:18-21

By Bruce Christian

ROMANS 4:18-21 - *Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead - since he was about a hundred years old - and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*

Abraham provides us with an excellent example of what it really means in practice to 'live by faith and not by sight' (cf 2 Corinthians 5:7) - ie, as the Author of Hebrews defines faith: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients [eg Abraham] were commended for." (Hebrews 11:1).

There are many times in our lives when our experiences and circumstances don't appear to us to align very well with the clear promises revealed in God's Word. We live in very confusing and uncertain times - not only with the great variety of global issues that the Media do their best to sensationalise and thereby capitalise on, but the unsettling issues that arise in our personal lives and the lives of friends and loved ones.

At age 75, Abraham was given the promise by God that he would become the father of innumerable descendants and

nations (Genesis 12:1-2; 15:4-5), yet by age 99, with his wife Sarah having celebrated her 90th birthday and being beyond child-bearing capacity, he still hadn't achieved the very first step necessary for this promise to be fulfilled! And in the face of this impossible, inexplicable outworking of God's providence in his life we are told that "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." (Genesis 15:6). We note that even then his name was still the original 'Abram' ('Exalted Father'), not becoming 'Abraham' ('Father of a Multitude') until Genesis 17:5!

So, true faith is BELIEVING God's promises and LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF THEM, trusting God fully IN SPITE OF everything that would cause the normal person to doubt and turn against God by being angry with him, or simply deleting him from the story (ignoring his existence). In the face of all the uncertainties that unsettle our short-term and long-term futures on planet Earth, will we be like Abraham and TRUST GOD with the future - whatever it might bring for us? Remember, for Abraham, the real TEST of faith did not come until Genesis 22 when he was called on by God to sacrifice Isaac, his ONLY SON, and the ONLY HOPE of God fulfilling the original promise of countless descendants (cf Hebrews 11:17-19)! Can we say with conviction: "I don't know what the future holds, but I KNOW WHO HOLDS the future.?"