

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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GOD'S PRESENTATION OF CHRIST

In all languages there are commonplace words that seem to be of no great importance, yet when they are used in certain contexts they take on a great significance and deliver an important message. The Greek word *ago* is one of these - a word so simple that it is often used when one is being taught to conjugate the verb forms. It means "to lead forth" or "to bring forth" and is used of such ordinary actions as a shepherd leading or bringing forth his sheep from the sheep-fold in order for them to drink or to graze. It is used of "Elymas the sorcerer" who, when smitten by blindness went about seeking for someone to lead (*ago*) him by the hand (Acts 13:11).

It can be readily seen how this word takes on a new and enlarged significance, when in Acts 9 the newly converted Saul (Paul) sought to attach himself to the disciples. They wanted nothing to do with him because of his notorious past conduct, and did not believe he was a disciple. They took him to be an infiltrator, seeking to identify the followers of Jesus Christ. However, Barnabas, who knew that Paul had truly become a disciple of the Lord Jesus, took him and brought (*ago*) him to the apostles and declared the facts of his conversion and subsequent bold proclamation of Christ (Acts 9:27). In other words, Barnabas took him and presented him to the apostles so that they would truly know the facts concerning him. Thus we see that *ago* when used in certain contexts means not simply to bring forth but to present. This presentation of Paul by Barnabas changed the whole picture, so that he found fellowship with the apostles and labored as a bold proclaimer of Jesus Christ.

In John 19 we find the word *ago* used in a different context that is highly informative. There is here a presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but He is

presented in the worst possible light. It was when Pilate went forth before those who were demanding the death of Jesus and said: "**Behold I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him.**" (John 19:4). In this passage "bring forth" is *ago*, and since Pilate did not physically lead Him forth or bring Him forth (He came forth Himself, 19:5), this was Pilate saying, "I now present Him to you so that you may see for yourself what an abject, helpless, and harmless person He is".

So Jesus came forth, wearing the dreadful crown of thorns, hair matted with blood, clothed in the ridiculous, cast-off, purple robe: "**And Pilate said unto them, 'Behold the man!'**"

This was Pilate's presentation of Jesus Christ to His enemies, a presentation that should cause every believer to long and pray for that day when God will present Jesus Christ to the world, and every man on this earth will know Who Christ is in the sight of God.

This presentation of Jesus Christ by God to every man on earth is a plain truth of Scripture that has been absent from all theologies. Men have emphasized His incarnation, His ascension, His coming, His unveiling, and His manifestation, and rightly so, but they should not have missed altogether the great truth of His presentation. Even now as I write, I wonder if many will understand it. Will they accuse me of teaching that the time will come when God will give Christ to every man on earth? Well, if they do, then: "They say what they say so let them say it.

We can best advance our knowledge of this great truth by carefully considering Paul's inspired words in 1 Thess. 4:14: "**For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring (*ago*) with Him.**"

Two great facts stand out in the last half of this passage. Jesus Christ is going to be presented, and those who are sleeping in Jesus are going to be presented with Him. This guarantees their resurrection from among the dead; otherwise there could be no presentation of His own to the world. Thus, this passage marks the time of their resurrection, which makes it to be one of great importance in the prophetic program.

Bible students have long struggled with this passage, not knowing just what to do with it. As a rule they have added to the confusion by failing to

see that this passage speaks of God's presentation of Christ to all mankind and of our presentation with Him. Once this has taken place it can never again be said: **"Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knows Him not"** (1 John 3: 1). This passage is not dealing with His second coming or with His **parousia** (personal presence) that follows His coming. We need to clearly understand that there is a time gap between 1 Thess. 4: 14 and 4:15, and this gap covers the entire period of the kingdom of God. The kingdom begins with His presentation and it ends with His parousia. We should not confuse these two events. There is a resurrection in 4:14 and another in verse 15 and these are centuries apart. A consideration of the outstanding facts will show this.

Paul did not want the Thessalonians "to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep" (1 Thess. 4:13). And to this we reply -- very good. We do not want to be ignorant concerning those who have died and now "sleep in Jesus." Yes, we would like some concrete word from God's spokesman (1 Thess. 2:13) concerning them. Give us something solid to believe and to tell to others. Otherwise, we too will be sorrowing as those who have no hope.

So, in answer, Paul continues: **"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again. . ."** Very good, but permit us to interrupt and declare that we do believe, we most certainly do. This is fundamental with us and we cannot walk in fellowship with anyone who denies it. Jesus died, Jesus was buried, and Jesus rose again on the third day in harmony with the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3,4). And this was because God raised Him up (Acts 2:32). He who was dead became alive again (Rev. 2:8). However, speak on, Paul, and tell us about those who have fallen asleep and are now in the state of death. His declaration is brief: **"Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God present (ago) with Him."**

What else can this mean but what it says? There is to be a bringing forth, that is a presentation of Jesus Christ, and all who sleep in Jesus are to be presented with Him. This presentation of Christ and His own is beyond all doubt to mankind as a whole, so that for the first time in the history of the human race the world will know Who Christ is in the sight of God and also what the children of God mean to Him.

God's presentation of Christ to mankind as set forth by Paul is not a new revelation. The Old Testament declared that this was to be, and reveals it to be the initial act of God when He assumes sovereignty and brings His

government upon the earth. In Isaiah 40:5 we are told, "**The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.**" It should be noted here that it is the glory of the LORD (Jehovah) that is to be revealed, and this comes about as a result of the mouth of the LORD declaring that it shall so be. The word *glory* has to do with *esteem*, so much so that it would make a better translation in most occurrences. Thus this passage tells us that suddenly, universally, and miraculously the whole of mankind (all flesh) is going to be informed by God of the esteem in which He holds Jesus Christ. Every living man will then know Who Christ is and What Christ is in God's sight, and all will know it in the same amount and at the same time.

How else can "**the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea**" (Hab. 2:14), unless God makes a universal and official presentation and declaration concerning Jesus Christ?

In 1 Corinthians 1:7 we find that the Corinthian believers were waiting for this grand presentation of the Lord Jesus. The translators of the KJV not knowing what to do with this simple declaration, they having no place in their theology for a future unveiling of Jesus Christ to mankind, used the word "coming" as a translation of *apokalupsin*, something that it could not possibly mean, as its elements clearly show. The prefix *apo* means "from," and *kalupsin* (from *kalupto*) means a covering or veil. And yet this egregious error of translation is often cited as proof positive that the first century believers expected Christ to return during their lifetime. This idea is totally false. What they were waiting for was the unveiling of Jesus Christ. This is identical with His presentation, but a different word is used in order to emphasize another aspect of this many-faceted event.

In Titus 2:12, 13 we are exhorted to live: "**Awaiting that blessed expectation, even the blazing forth (*epiphaneia*) of the glory of the great God, even our Savior, Christ Jesus**" (TRV). This event is identical with that set forth in Isa. 40:5 and 1 Thess. 4: 14.

This same glorious truth is set forth in other words in Colossians 3:4: "**When the Christ, Who is our life, shall be manifested (*phaneroo*) then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory.**" This corresponds to 1 Thess 4:14. Thus, whether it is called presentation, unveiling, or manifestation, it is the same event. If we are among the dead when this takes place, we will need to be raised to participate in it. If we are living we will need to be changed. But this presents no problem to the one familiar with the secret revealed in 1 Cor. 15:51,52.

There has been a struggle by some students to make the words "in glory" in Co!. 3:4 refer to a place, a very special and exclusive place, far above all heavens, for those who are now believers. But all one needs to do is to check out all occurrences of the Greek phrase *en doxe*, and he will find that trying to hold this idea is about the same as trying to carry water in a sieve. It simply will not work.

Thank God that when we are presented with Christ, when we are manifested with Him, it will not be in shame, disgrace, or humiliation, but in the esteem in which God holds the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, it needs to be noted that all such events as the divine presentation, the unveiling, the manifestation, the blazing forth of His glory are all aspects of a still greater all-encompassing event, the divine assumption of sovereignty. So we pray, "Thy kingdom come".

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