

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST (1)

Isaiah wrote the following words 700 years before Jesus was born, but yet these words are so appropriate for our world today: “Ah, the thunder of many peoples; they thunder like the thundering of the sea! Ah, the roar of nations; they roar like the roaring of mighty waters! ...but [God] will rebuke them, and they will flee far away, chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and [a] whirling dust before the storm.” Friends, the nations swirl but Jesus is a rock.

The ONE thing that can bring peace and calm to the nations is God’s only Son, Jesus Christ. But the preaching of Christ has not brought peace; the preaching of Christ brings people into conflict. There are many enemies of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When many people hear the phrase “Church of Christ” they think of a religious group among many, or “church” among many, a denomination among many. However, Jesus Christ did not build a denomination, or a multitude of denominations. Jesus Christ built one church. Jesus told his apostles, “Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18 ASV.) The word church means “an assembled group.” The original Greek word translated as “church” in the Greek Bible literally means “called out.” Matthew chose this word to record in Greek what Jesus had said in Aramaic. “Called out” people make up the church of Christ. They have been called out of the world of sin by hearing the gospel; and when they believed the calling, they answered that call by repenting of their sins and being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God and Jesus saved them and the Lord then added them to his church. (Acts 2:47.)

Furthermore, Jesus said that the “gates of hades” would not be able to prevail against his “called out” people. “Hades” is death. Hades is the location where the dead are kept until the great resurrection day when all of the dead will be raised. What did Jesus mean when he said that Hades could not prevail against the church? He meant that death could not kill the church. That’s right! Death cannot destroy the church of Christ. Those Christians who have died in the Lord are still in the church of Christ. The church of Christ can never diminish in number; it can only grow in number, because everyone who dies as a faithful Christian will live forever in the kingdom of the Lord, which is the church of Christ. The nations can “thunder”; the nations can “roar” but Jesus Christ and his people will prevail. Friends, if you die as a faithful Christian then your death will have no

effect upon your membership in the church of Christ. The church of Christ will be victorious. Beginning in the Old Testament, the Bible proclaims this over and over again.

Listen to the message of King David's song recorded in Psalm 110. This Psalm has seven verses and they all are about Jesus Christ, David's descendant. In his spirit David overheard a conversation in heaven. God the Father was talking with his Son Jesus Christ. David called Jesus "my Lord", he did not know his given name, Jesus, but David did recognize him as "my Lord." God was talking with someone whom David should obey just as fully as God Himself. This is what David heard:

"The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." ² The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! ³ Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. ⁴ The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." ⁵ The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. ⁶ He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. ⁷ He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head." (Psalms 110:1-7 (ESV).)

That is the reading of the entire Psalm. Now let us look more closely at what is here predicted 1000 years before Jesus was born. David heard God say to Jesus, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." There is coming a day in which all the enemies of Christ will be made His footstool. On that same day, all of his people, the church, will be made to sit with Him in his throne. Jesus said in Matthew 5:34 that the "throne of God" is "heaven." So, to sit with Christ on His throne is to live with him in heaven. An angel came to a young Jewish woman by the name of Mary and predicted this: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:31-33 (ESV).) Jesus said this about repentant Christians: ²¹ **The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on**

my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.” (Rev 3:21 (ESV).) Yes, David overheard God make this promise to David’s Lord, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.”

Well, the Christian man Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God when Stephen was being persecuted by the enemies of Christ. Stephen’s vision is recorded in Acts 7:⁵⁵ But he [Stephen], full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."⁵⁷ But they [Stephen’s enemies] cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him.⁵⁸ Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him.” (Acts 7:55-58 (ESV).) Stephen died, but he never left the church of Christ. He died with a prayer on his lips, “And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."⁶⁰ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” (Acts 7:59-60 (ESV).) Stephen left this world only to join the next world. Faithful Christians who die in the Lord today will meet Stephen. The apostle John heard a voice from heaven telling him to write this down: “Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth [now on]: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.” (Rev 14:13 (KJV).)

David overheard God say to Jesus, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” Stephen saw Jesus standing at God’s right hand. But who are these “enemies” of Christ who will be his footstool? The apostle Paul wrote that “many [people] walk...as the enemies of the cross of Christ.” (Phil 3:18.) The enemies of Christ do not believe that he is the Son of God, or that He died on the cross for their sins. They do not believe that Jesus has any authority over their lives. But yet, the scripture says that “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil 2:9-11 (ESV).) But of course, millions of people in this world do not believe this

scripture. They are the enemies of Christ. But you might say, “you can believe in Christ if you want to; I choose not believe in Him, but that does not make me His enemy.” Well, friend, it does make you His enemy. You see, in this cosmic world of heaven and earth there are only two to whom we can owe allegiance, God or Satan. God said through the apostle John, “Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1 John 5:10-12 (ESV).) Have you made God a liar, by not believing His testimony about His Son? If so, then you are an enemy of God by not believing that Jesus is God’s Son.

Jesus himself said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers not with me scatters abroad.” (Matt 12:30 (KJV).) If we do not “gather” the harvest together with Christ, then we are scattering the harvest. The unbeliever stands in the way because of his influence upon someone else. Nations of people are standing against the Christ. That’s right. Most of the Governments of the world are no friend of Jesus. Psalm 110 predicts that God will cause these nations to be the footstool of Christ. The psalm also says that Jesus will “Rule in the midst of [his] enemies! The psalm also assures Jesus that “[His] people will offer themselves freely on the day of [His] power, in holy garments.” Jesus’ power will be revealed to the world on the day He returns to the earth. All eyes will see His glory...the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Psalm 110 predicts that Jesus will “shatter kings on the day of his wrath. ⁶ He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth.” Friends, Jesus will conquer the earth. He is coming again...not as a tender baby, not as the meek and mild-mannered man of Galilee, but he is coming as the King of Kings and the Lord of lords. He is coming as the master of the universe. Satan Himself trembles at the thought. But Satan is gathering the nations to oppose Jesus. But Jesus is reigning in the midst of His enemies by reigning in the hearts of those who believe in Him. Is Jesus your Lord, your master?

David overheard the conversation. “Sit here at my right hand until I make your enemies the footstool for your feet.” When Jesus comes again, will you sit with Him on his throne, or will you be the footstool?