

The Comforter

Isaiah 40:1-----“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.....”

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Jesus is the Truth

Elder James Conley

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

The truth is defined as exact, 100% fact, and honest. In this day and age, people have the idea that they can have their own truth, but in reality there is only one truth. Truth stands alone; we simply must acknowledge it (Titus 1:1). In studying the Bible, the reader will soon realize that no truth exists apart from Jesus because He is the truth, just like no resurrection happens apart from Jesus because He is the resurrection (John 11:25). Jesus embodies everything about the truth. Pontius Pilate asked Him, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). Truth was standing right in front of him, and he did not even know it. Any well-meaning person strives to be a true and honest person, but Jesus is the only true and honest Person who ever lived. In this sense also, Jesus is the truth, but He is so much more than that.

In the Bible we read expressions that state that the word of God is truth (John 17:17, 2 Timothy 2:15). This is the case because the word of God is given by the inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:19-21). We also learn that the Word of God is alive and is the second Part of the Godhead (1 Peter 1:23, Hebrews 4:12, 1 John 5:7). These descriptions of the living Word of God become more clear when we realize that they are telling us about Jesus (John 1:1, 14). Since the word of God is truth and Jesus is the living Word of God, Jesus is the Truth personified as John 14:6 states.

By His own testimony, Jesus states that He was born to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37). The Pharisees sought to entangle Him in His talk (Matthew 22:15), but someone speaking the truth cannot be entangled. The truth doesn't entangle like a web of

lies does. This concept helps us in our

journey because if we continue in His word, then are we His disciples indeed, and we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free (John 8:31-32). If we want to experience liberty and freedom and not bondage, we must continue in God's word as true disciples should, and the truth shall make us free. If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed (John 8:36). Once again we find that the truth makes us free, which is what Jesus also does, demonstrating again that Jesus is the truth personified.

The Bible teaches other lessons that demonstrate that Jesus is the truth personified:

1. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). This means the church should stand for and uphold the truth. The Bible also teaches us that as His bride the church should do all things for Christ's sake and glory in His work (Matthew 10:39, 19:29, Galatians 6:14).

2. We are commanded to have our loins girded about with truth (Ephesians 6:14). We are also commanded to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14). Just as we hang tools on that which is girded around our loins, everything we have that is profitable for our life hangs on Him as the truth personified.

3. We are told to buy the truth and sell it not (Proverbs 23:23). Paul counted everything as dung that he may win Christ (Philippians 3:8). We should spend our days, substance, energy, and time to get the truth. While trying to win Christ, we should be willing to spend the same in order to please Him and seek His favor above all else.

4. The words of the Lord are pure words...He shall keep them...and preserve them from this generation for ever (Psalm 12:6-7). Heaven and earth shall pass away but His words will not (Mark 13:31). God's word is so pure that there can be no doubt that it is the truth. We also see the endurance of these words from this generation for ever (Psalm 12:7). Jesus spoke of His own words the same way, showing that there is no difference between what He says and God's words.

From all these examples, we can see how the Bible teaches that Christ is the truth personified. If we want to have the truth in our lives, then we must walk closer to Jesus. May the Lord bless us to do so!

He Shall Come—In His Time

Elder Joe Holder

*Cast not away therefore
your confidence, which hath*

great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. (Hebrews 10:35-37 KJV 1900)

The Christian faith has made its spot in human history for almost two thousand years. It existed in its ancestral roots, Judaism, long before. A foundational teaching of ancient Judaism and of Christianity is that God shall return in a powerful and visible way to raise the dead and to judge the wicked. Even Job rejoiced at this belief. (Job, chapters 14 and 19) David wrote that his soul could rest in hope because of it. Thousands of years before Jesus, plus two thousand years since He came; but we have not yet seen Him return in this way. Yet Christians today still keep that hope alive. Is it then any wonder that the unbelieving skeptics of the faith will ridicule our faith and ask the doubter's question, "*Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*" (2 Peter 3:4) And we today remind ourselves and other believers of Scripture's teaching. God, who shall bring this event to pass, is not a creature of time. One day—a thousand years—it matters not at all to Him. The comforting truth of Bible faith remains, "He is coming! It matters not when." However, Scripture does not limit His "Coming" to this event.

We fail the "Rightly dividing" test if we try to make every passage in the Bible that speaks of the Lord's appearing a reference to the Second Coming. As the Head of His family, He "Comes" often into our lives,

both in judgment and in blessing. Earlier verses in Hebrews 10 remind us that our neglecting the assembly with His people brings His "Coming" in severe and fearful judgment. Paul reminds the Corinthians that, some time between new birth and death, "*...we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*" (2 Corinthians 5:10) I suggest that the judgment seat of Christ may be more than a once-in-a-lifetime event. Once or many times, His position as the ultimate and righteous Judge of His people (Hebrews 10:30) involves His appearing to judge and to make His judgment known to the children whom He so judges.

The first readers of Hebrews had converted from Judaism to Christianity, but intense persecution had worn them down to the extent that they were seriously thinking of giving up their faith and going back to Judaism. The whole Hebrew letter is effectively summed up in these verses. Don't give up. Keep your faith. He promised to return. That promise was true when you believed it at your conversion to the faith; it is no less true today.

Occasionally sincere and, no doubt, well meaning believers will reach the wrong idea, I believe, that suggests that Paul and other first century teachers believed that the Second Coming was coming at any time, likely with a few years at most. Many of the passages they try to claim for support of this idea, when read in context, give stronger support to the opposite idea than to the immediate return idea. Contextually, this passage likely refers to His "Judgment seat" coming in judgment of His children, not to the final

coming when He shall judge the wicked.

Whether the Lord's final return occurs in our lifetime or centuries from now has no bearing whatever on how we should conduct our Christian lives today. If we believe Him and His faithful promise that He shall return, whether He comes tomorrow or a thousand years from now, His sure return requires us to take His words in Scripture seriously, and to manifest that conviction in our conduct.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (1 John 3:3)

After affirming this truth in 2 Peter 3, Peter similarly urges his readers—and us—to live our faith as people who are waiting for their King to return, people who long to honor that King every day from now till he returns.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. (2 Peter 3:11)

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (2 Peter 3:14)

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. Does this sentence teach salvation by works? No, Paul is reasoning with the Hebrews on their choices from the present time till their death, not with where they shall spend eternity. I suggest, based on His inspired description of these people that they

were born again children of God. Heaven was assuredly their future inheritance, not their reward. Consider this description of these people in Chapter 6.

They "...were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." (Hebrews 6:4-5)

Further, he described them just a few verses prior to this passage.

*The Lord shall judge **his** people.* (Hebrews 10:30b, emphasis added)

Contemporary Christianity seems almost obsessed to find a way to imagine as many people in hell as possible. In doing so, they often pass their superficial judgment on various people who appear in Scripture, people whom Scripture describes as saved, not lost. There can be no sound question regarding the spiritual, eternal state of the Hebrews to whom this letter was first sent. There are simply too many verses that describe them with clarity as children of God. The confusion of the day

between "Perseverance" and "Preservation" serves to illustrate this point. When someone teaches that God preserves you from eternal loss by your perseverance, either voluntarily maintained by you, or robotically decreed by Him, they reveal this unbiblical bent.

The Hebrews, undeniably described in this letter as children of God and heaven bound, were presently considering abandoning their faith and returning to their synagogue worship. The language of Hebrews acknowledges quite clearly that they could actually do

so. We read nothing whatever in Hebrews about “If you are really born again, you won’t turn back.” The warnings and concerns of the writer, I believe Paul, are quite grave and real. Would an inspired writer of New Testament Scripture voice such concern if he knew that such a retreat could not occur? In the sixth chapter, the Hebrews are reminded that a conscious and knowing retreat would leave it “impossible” to renew them to their faith, not to their eternal salvation, so long as they remained in that unbelieving state of mind. In our present context, the urging plea to stay the course and not turn back is loud and clear. In the twelfth chapter, the warning of God’s severe chastening will sound a clear warning.

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. These words do not indicate what the Hebrews stood to gain or lose in heaven, but rather what they were in grave danger of losing by conscious abandonment in the here and now. The promise is the promise of blessing that has been underscored throughout Hebrews. Refresh your study of “*Harden not your hearts*” in the third chapter. Consider the closing point of Hebrews 11.

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:39-40)

The “promise” that Old Testament saints failed to receive in their lifetime, despite their “Hall of Faith’s Fame” godliness, was the actual

fulfillment of their faith in Jesus’ coming. They were shown in faith that He would surely come, but He didn’t come in their lifetime. God reserved that special blessing for a future time and for future believers who would witness His coming and live subsequent to it. The promise was not about going to heaven when they died, but about realizing a “Heaven on earth” far richer than their ancestors experienced in Canaan. Notice how Moses described Canaan to Israel, if they would enter that land and live in it with faith in their God.

*That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, **as the days of heaven upon the earth.*** (Deuteronomy 11:21; emphasis added)

We also see the “Promise” of God’s blessings on His faithful (Actively living in faith) children in Hebrews 6 with its reference to Abraham.

And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. (Hebrews 6:15)

Again we see the “promise” of Hebrews in passages before and after our study lesson related to present blessings reserved for the “Faithful” of God’s children. This promise was in the present, not in heaven. It was for “Faithful” children of God, not for all children of God. Despite his and Sarah’s age, Abraham realized God’s faithful and fulfilled promise with the birth of Isaac, not later when he died.

For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. His “Coming” in this context could

be His Second Coming, or it could be His coming to judge His people. This verse accurately describes His coming in either way. Given the context, I lean toward His coming in judgment. How would the Hebrews react if He appeared in judgment, present, chastening judgment, if He found them in the synagogue? This context gives us full details of such an event. It would be a fearful thing for these struggling Hebrews.

Consider some of your recent struggles in your personal faith. Health, loss of a loved one, relationships gone off the rails, career uncertainty, life uncertainty; whatever in your life challenges your faith and entices you to throw in the towel and abandon your faith. Suppose you follow through. You abandon your faith because of your difficulty, but then shortly after you abandon your faith, He comes and does not tarry, or delay. Do you think you can rationalize your abandonment to Him? Do you really think He will accept your rationalization to turn from His commandments and teachings in Scripture? Whenever we willfully choose our own ways over His revealed teachings and commandments in Scripture, we invite, and shall surely face His fearful judgment. Remember the three-fold chastening that we studied earlier from Hosea 5; the moth, the lion, and frightening silence. When we sin willfully and against knowledge, our sinful pride is liable to so blind us that we are willing to settle for that frightening silence. We settle for it at the moment, but then that unexpected life disaster hits, and we pray. And we are disappointed and surprised at His silence. Why the surprise? He warned us

in that passage. He warns us in this Hebrews 10 context. (Psalm 66:18)

What can—should—we take away from this lesson for our lives? Clearly, we need to remember and not forget that we are dealing with God, not a gullible human. His righteous judgment is not negotiable. He cannot be mocked or deceived. He knows everything we think or do, and He faithfully promises us in Scripture that He shall judge His family righteously. (Hebrews 10:30) We have only one alternative to facing that frightening judgment. Scripture calls it repentance and faithfully living His faith in our lives. Our future in this world is limited to two options in terms of our relationship with our God. 1) We may choose our own way and face the reality of the moth, the lion, and divine silence, fearfully described in the context of our study passage. 2) Or we may choose faithfulness, even repentance when we stumble, as we shall on occasion, and realize His amazing forgiving grace and love. Scripture abounds in its teaching of the Lord's gracious forgiveness and healing when His people repent and return to Him. The impossibility mentioned in Hebrews 6 is only overcome by our repentance and return to God and to His way. So long as we walk in our own way and try to rationalize it, we live in that impossible-to-renew-state. Choose faithfulness and repentance.

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