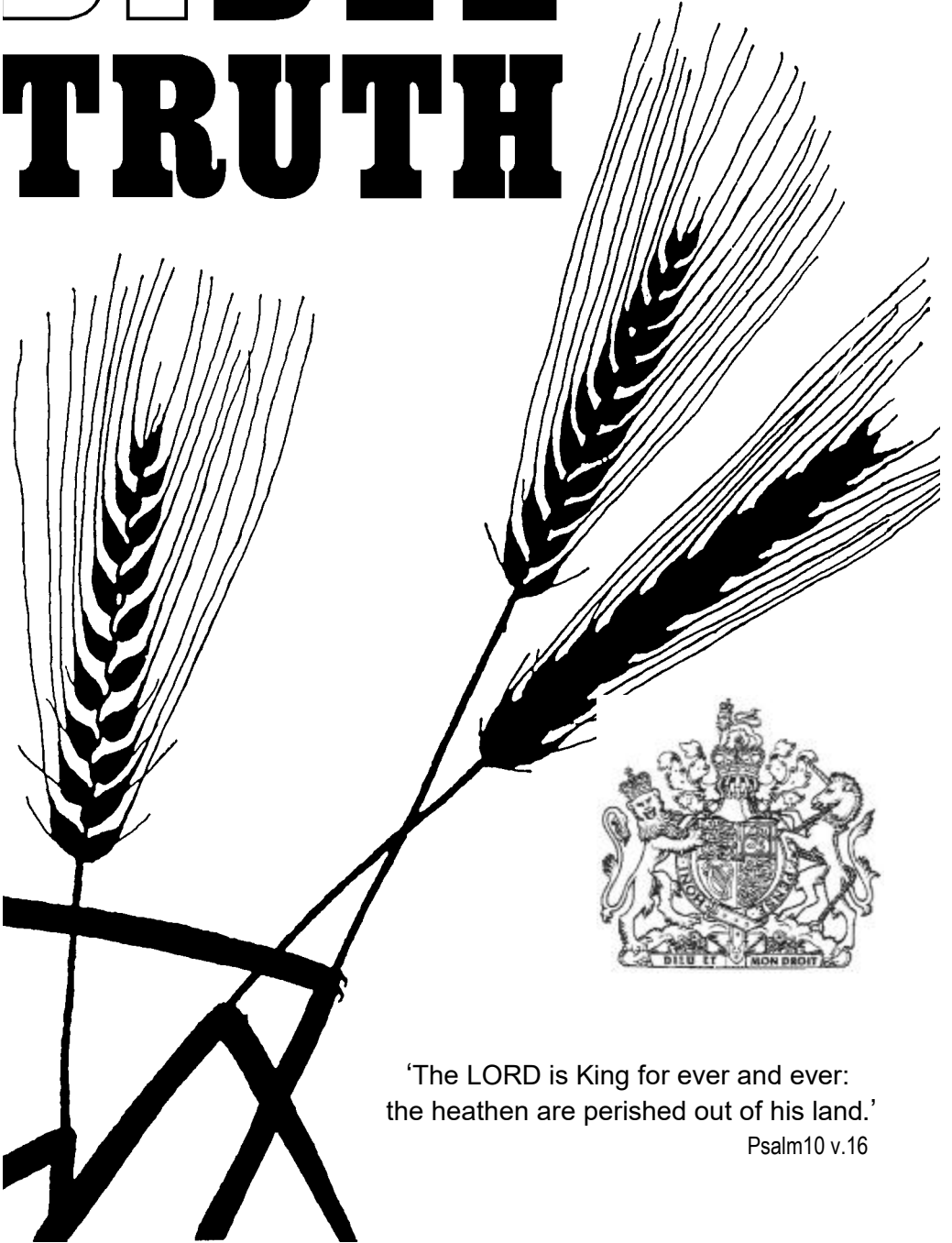


BIBLE TRUTH

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'The LORD is King for ever and ever:
the heathen are perished out of his land.'

Psalm10 v.16

Our Future Hope

by Brian Davies

He writes this article in memory of his wife
Margaret.



The study of last things should make us very aware of the imminence of the Second Coming of Christ. In this, every Christian must be watchful, earnestly expecting and be in a state of readiness for it. We should not allow our preoccupations to take us away from the centrality of Christ in our lives. This was illustrated by Jesus in the parable of the sower where we are not to allow any of the following causes to take our attention from Him and fail through persecution or pressure because of the lack of faith. Sadly the cares of this world and pride of life can cause us to be unfruitful as Christians, whereas to do the will of the Father should be our objective.

‘Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he cometh unfruitful.’

Matthew ch.13 vv 21-22

‘Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.’

1 John ch.2 vv 15-17

We should not speculate over dates and events that lead up to the Second Coming, but focus rather on Christ and our fellowship with Him and let that draw us closer to Him, thus perfecting us over our whole life span.

‘The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.’

Psalms 138 v.8

Tensions can exist in our earthly lives, so keeping the right balance in our spirit, soul and body make-up is important. By allowing the dictates of the flesh to rule our lives is to the detriment of our spiritual life of walking with God. It is the spirit of man that communicates with God and which ideally influences our lives for good to be a 'whole person'.

'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

1 Thessalonians ch.5 v.23 (See also Romans ch.7)

Prayer is a resource and an antidote to becoming fearful or depressed because it fuels the Christian life when a burden is almost too heavy to bear. It is also a looking to the Holy Spirit to guide us. Against this backdrop there is that life of secure joy and hope for the future. Through fellowship with Jesus we are free to bring every need in prayer to him and be confident that He hears us.

'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:'

1 John ch.5 v.14

There was once expectation of the disciples with fear that turned to joy through the coming of the Holy Spirit (see John ch.16 vv 7-14). Also, we should have the right kind of hope that is mixed with faith as an anchor for the soul, without which there is no real hope.

'For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.'

Hebrews ch.4 v.2

'Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;'

Hebrews ch.6 v.19,

We are told to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the things of God.

'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

1 Corinthians ch.15 v.58

When we are joined with Him it is much blessing for the future and this hope brings optimism amidst adverse circumstances.

‘Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;’

Titus ch.2 v.13

This was Paul’s experience and provides a model for us.

‘For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;’

2 Corinthians ch.1 vv 8-10 (See also ch.11 vv 23-30)

This testimony holds forth the word of life, the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ, to those around us,

‘Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain’.

Philippians ch.2 v.16

We can rejoice in the power of God.

‘But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.’

2 Corinthians ch.4 v.7

The return of Christ is the world’s only hope because there will be,

‘... upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity ... Men’s hearts failing them for fear ... ’.

Luke ch. 21 vv 25-26

There is threat of nuclear warfare, disease, famine, and pollution of the environment in which we live, as well as population explosion.

The fact that large areas of the world are unfit to live in and unable to support life are other factors, as well as the acute social and political problems in an ever growing urban society. Some people enjoy the highest standards of living while elsewhere crime and lawlessness are unprecedented. Affluence has brought about such a contempt and indifference to spiritual values and an utter disregard for moral virtues that vice and immorality are rife.

In this environment the Christian stands out and his hope is not in the human solutions but in God and His purposes. Jesus said,

‘And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s (i.e. believers - Christians) sake those days shall be shortened’.

Matthew ch.24 v.22

Matthew writes that Christ must return, and soon, if mankind is to be saved. It is a blessed hope (see Titus ch.2 v.13), the hope that is within us.

The hope of Christ's return assures comfort and encouragement which can be brought to bear on those around us, whether they be Christian or not. For Christians it can build up faith and make us stronger, not to look at oneself and our prevailing cares, but to hope for the eternal future. Like Christians in the Apostle Paul's day, who believed in the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are told not to be anxious about the death of loved ones.

'But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.'

1 Thessalonians ch.4 v.13

So we are not to grieve as others without any hope, like unbelievers, but we will be joined with Christ at His coming and remain with Him (see 1 Thessalonians ch.4 v.17 & ch.5 v.10). Let us rather be a source of comfort and encouragement to the weak in faith, and build them up in the knowledge because we would want to receive the same ourselves.

'Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.'

2 Corinthians ch.1 v.4

Our task is to bring unbelievers into knowledge of the truth, that none should perish eternally.

'Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.'

1 Timothy ch.2 v.4

'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 ch.3 v.14

Our earthly lives are short as Psalm 90 vv 9-12 tells us and we are not to look at them as though everything depended on our total success. Rather, it is best to please God by the way we live and do His will in our lives. It is in the knowledge of things to come that the Christian can find strength to cope with any failure and not let despair or disappointment overwhelm him in total frustration. After all, God says He will perfect that which concerns us if we will but let Him.

‘Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.’

Hebrews ch.13 v.21

God's purpose for mankind is not limited to this life, and it is not going to be frustrated in the end even by a person's moral frailty.

In order to please Him we are called to holy living. To be holy is to set ourselves apart from the ways of the world. That is, to be in the world but not of it (see Romans ch.12 v.2 & 1 John ch.2 v.15). This is a life dedicated to God, to His ways and His will, all through salvation in Christ, the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit (see John ch.17 vv 15-17 & 1 Thessalonians ch.5 v.23). Having knowledge of His impending return is a call to action (see Ephesians ch.5 vv 14-17). Thus the challenge is to bring changes to a lifestyle that would give offence to God and then conduct our lives accordingly - with all diligence and to be without fault (see 2 Peter ch.3 v.14). This in itself will prepare us for our eternal home with Him (see Ephesians ch.1 v.4 & ch.5 v.27).

An outworking of the above attributes shows the clear need to be a people of action. To be a light and salt to the world, the light of the Gospel, speaking the truth to those around us and be the flavour of Christ and His life and character in our lifestyles.

‘Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.’

Matthew ch.5 vv 13-16

As part of the Body of Christ we are His limbs to bring Christ to the world (see Revelation ch.2 vv 4-5). This means building good relationships, so enabling growth and maturity to take place in each member through encouragement and so building one another up, to live in peace, to help the weak and idle, and be patient with everyone (see 1 Thessalonians ch.5 vv 11-14). In Jesus' parables He illustrates the need to be in active service with the talents and gifts that He gives us to be applied to good use in order to bear fruit. By doing so we will be faithful witnesses to this end and responding to the Great

Commission He gives (see Acts ch.1 v.8 & Matthew ch.28 vv 19-20). In short, we are not to be lazy, introspective and unfaithful but to make the most of our commission in the time at our disposal.

‘So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.’
Psalms 90 v.12

This concept is illustrated in Jesus’ parables and the consequences of not following them (see Matthew ch.24 vv 45ff & ch.25 vv 14-30) .

Finally, before the end of the age, when Jesus comes back, the Gospel will have been preached to all the world.

‘And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.’
Matthew ch.24 v.14

‘And the gospel must first be published among all nations.’
Mark ch.13 v.10

These are the signs given. We have a responsibility to do this with zeal while time remains to fulfil our place and function in the body of Christ. The study of the Last Things should sharpen us up and make us aware of our shortcomings and bring about conviction to make the necessary changes in our lives in time.

FOOTNOTE and addition to the Obituary in the last magazine

Brian’s wife, Margaret Davies, was a great prayer warrior and spent much of her time in this pursuit. As a Fellowship so many of us are also grateful for the way that the Lord God used her to set up our prayer chain and oversee it for many years.

In later years Margaret passed this task on to one of our Trustees, Lynette Rogers, who is often seen on the streets of Brixham ministering to and for people.