

A CLARIFICATION

In class last week we discussed the “reign” of Christ Jesus, and I made the statement, “Christ has been reigning, in one way or another, since His bodily resurrection.” While driving home after class, my good wife raised the point that maybe we should move that beginning point back to an earlier moment, for Jesus Himself declared that He was a king. Please turn to [John 18](#). In v33 Pilate asks Jesus point blank: “Are You the the King of the Jews?” In His immediate reply Jesus toys with the procurator a bit, but then answers more fully.

Read John 18:36-37.

So it is true that before the resurrection Jesus stated that He was a king. Linda and I discussed this for a while, and concluded that there can be a difference between being a king, and *reigning* as a king. Jesus as much as told Pilate that if His kingdom slapped the governor in the face he wouldn't recognize it, for it was “not of this world.” And we likened it to the “now—not yet” kingship of David: He was anointed king by Samuel *well* before he actually reigned as king from upon a throne. Was he a king? Yes, God had anointed him. Was he *ruling* as a king? Not yet. And that is the difference: Jesus was *born* a king ([John 18:37](#), [Matthew 2:2](#)), but He did not begin to reign—and even then not in its fullness—until after His resurrection.

v28: “SO THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL”

Before we proceed into the next paragraph of our text, just a few remaining thoughts about the last phrase in the previous: “so that God may be all in all.”

This side of the Pearly Gates—and perhaps even after—we will not fully grasp the intricacies of the Godhead: each Member's relationship to the other two, the manner in which they relate to each other, the mystery of their unity in spite of their pecking order and various responsibilities. Gordon Fee tells us that this phrase is “a Pauline idiosyncrasy,” which I take to mean it is something peculiar to him. Contributing to our confusion, the apostle says much the same thing in *Colossians*—but there referring to *Christ*, albeit in a different context.

Read Colossians 3:11.

One thing that impresses me, as I have been preparing for our next class, is the dramatic contrast between the Christ of the gospels and the Christ of the Eschaton. Even though Jesus, in the gospels, did not hesitate for a minute to put the religious hypocrites in their place, for the most part He was there to be a compassionate Shepherd, to be the Suffering Servant, the one who gives His life for His friends.

During the Eschaton, however—principally from the end of the Tribulation through the Great White Throne—Christ will be the foretold Messiah described in Psalm 2.

Read Psalm 2:5-12.

The point Paul is making to the Corinthians is that no matter how much power and rule, how much judgment of the nations is given into the hands of Christ by the Father, He still answers to Father God. J. Calvin (1960, cited in Garland) put it this way:

Of course we acknowledge that God is the Ruler, but His rule is actualized in the man Christ. But Christ will then hand back the Kingdom which He has received, so that we may cleave completely to God.

Note: “God” in v28 clearly points to *Father* God. The Greek *Theos* is the word most commonly used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew *Yahweh*.

We need only look at how Paul ends this chapter to know how to interpret this instance of “all in all.”

Read 1 Corinthians 15:56-57.

That is, during those days, from an earthly perspective it will seem that Christ Jesus is the absolute ruler; He will be reigning on earth with supposed absolute authority. But we give our thanks to God the father, for *He* is the one giving the victory, but doing it through “our Lord Jesus Christ.” Ultimately it is Father God (*Theos*) who will be “all in all.”

Read 1 Corinthians 15:28-34.

v29

Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?

It may be that at the reading of v29 you were left scratching your head. If so, you are not alone. There are at least forty different solutions that have been offered to explain what Paul is speaking of in this verse (Fee). His *purpose* is obvious, that some actions or behavior are pointless if there is no resurrection of the dead. He offers two “for instances”—the first of which borders on the bizarre. As I have before, I will spare you from an itemization of all these possibilities; I will even spare you from the details of the interpretations of the three commentators I have been using on a regular basis in this study—all of which differ from the other two. The common denominator among all of these attempts is the interpreter’s conclusion that he could very well be wrong, but then, so is probably everyone else!

There is no way to fit the practice of being baptized for someone who has already died into the salvation doctrine of the NT—much less Paul’s teaching. So there is no point in trying to shoehorn this verse into that environment. As for our three commentators, I found MacArthur’s solution to be nonsensical; Garland’s solution to be intriguing, but ultimately a bit too clever by half; but Fee’s to be simple and sensible. So we will go with that.

We do not have any historical evidence that this was a common practice in Corinth, much less in the church there. It *is* common today in the Mormon church, but we’ll not waste our time detailing that farcical doctrine. MacArthur is helpful in setting the scene for us (it is only his conclusion with which I disagree). He points out that in the NT “baptism is closely associated with salvation, of which it is an outward testimony.” Baptism is not required for salvation, but in the NT it would be assumed that if one were saved, one had also been baptized, “and a person was not baptized unless the church was satisfied he was saved. To ask, then, if a person was baptized (in the first century), was equivalent to asking if he was saved.”

In such an environment (the first century) it is easy to imagine that if a loved one died saved, but not baptized, those left behind might feel the need to supply the baptism vicariously—to, as it were, complete the person’s salvation. Or, to confuse the two even worse, some may even have done this for a loved one who was “*on their way to becoming [a] believer*” but then died before that happened (Fee).

The apostle is not sanctioning either of these practices, of course, and one can easily surmise that if this were occurring in the church, it was being done by a small minority. Paul is simply pointing out the obvious: *What’s the point if there is no resurrection! What have you bought them by being baptized for them if they will not be raised from the dead?* Answer: Not a blessed thing.

v30

Why are we also in danger every hour?

The apostle then offers a second “for instance” in vv30-32. We might reasonably ask, To what is he referring when he says “we” (possibly the other apostles or his fellows in ministry, but probably an editorial “we”) “we are in danger every hour,” and in v31, “I die daily”? He gives an accounting in his defense to the Corinthians in his second letter to them.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-27.

Thiselton renders this verse, “From day to day I court fatality.” This is not the statement of a self-righteous zealot hoping for a glorious martyr’s death, but an apostle of Christ stating the cold fact that to be one meant the very real possibility of physical harm—even death (v31).

I favor the NIV for v30: “And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour?” *If there is no resurrection, if we will never make it out of the grave—that is, if we’ve all been played for fools—why place ourselves in danger every day? That would be really stupid.*

v31

I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

We don’t expect v31. As Fee rightly points out, Paul could have made his point (and more succinctly) by leaving out v31 and v32a, which would have given us “Why indeed do we ourselves face dangers every hour? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (Fee). But he had his reasons for bringing the Corinthians—and his regard for them—into the discussion.

The NASB “I affirm” is essentially an oath; we would say, “I swear by...” Paul swears that he dies daily, and he swears this by his “boasting” in the Corinthians. (I find it bordering on the bizarre that the ESV runs back to the KJV with “I protest”—something even the NKJV does not do. Using “protest” here sends the modern reader in entirely the wrong direction.

J. Moffatt offers a helpful paraphrase: “Not a day but I am at death’s door! I swear it by my pride in you, brothers, through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Gordon Fee: What a telling oath this is. To make sure that they understand the truth of his constant facing of death, he swears by that which is dearest to him, their own existence in Christ, which also came about by labors that had exposed him to such dangers. That seems also to be the point of the qualifying addition, “which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The boast is his, but it is not self-serving, nor self-exalting. It rests completely on what Christ had done among them through his labors. Thus they are his boast; but for Paul that ultimately means boasting in Christ.

We will continue this paragraph in our next session, but before we leave it, let’s remind ourselves of the punchline to all this.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:16-19.

The resurrection of believers is *incredibly* important in the full scheme of God’s plan. The resurrection of Christ Jesus paved the way and made our own possible. If none of this is true, we have already perished, and “we are of all men most to be pitied.” We have been played for fools.

But, praise God, it *is* true.