

CHRIST'S ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR US

By

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The Christian is to walk by faith and not by sight, understanding that things are as God says they are in spite of how they may appear to the natural eye. Having such faith enables one to see the world from God's viewpoint and himself as one with citizenship in heaven, so that he can live in a hostile world without succumbing to its threats or surrendering to its fear.

During Christ's ministry there were few who could imagine that this obscure carpenter's son from Nazareth was actually the fulfillment of the prophets. Moses had described Him as a deliverer like himself. Isaiah and Jeremiah had pictured Him as a powerful ruler, establishing peace and bringing great joy to his people. Jews thought of peace as total absence of conflict, and joy as the thing experienced on a festive holiday. Jesus just didn't fit the description, according to their understanding.

Even John the Baptist began to wonder. From prison he sent his disciples to ask of Jesus, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" The Jews generally rejected him out of hand, preferring their own messianic plan (Zionism) to the plan God was revealing in Jesus. Today the world still rejects Messiah looking for extraordinary things to happen to quell their fears and give them peace and joy. **BUT IT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED.**

The gist of Peter's sermon on Pentecost was that by the giving of the holy spirit, God had shown that prophecies were fulfilled concerning the reign of Messiah. The 3,000 who believed this became the dynamic church which confronted Judaism and paganism for the first time. They were imprisoned and tortured, yet they went on preaching the "Good News" and challenging the Roman Empire with the fact that Jesus, not Caesar, was Lord.

Peter's second sermon (Acts 3:12-26) emphasized that "all the prophets" had spoken of the very things which Christ had accomplished. At the council in Jerusalem (Acts 15) the apostles were in agreement that the prophets were being fulfilled in that "God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name."

The burden of Old Testament prophecy was that God would send a redeemer into the world to save certain ones, including Israelites and Gentiles. The apostles understood Christ to be that redeemer, and that prophecies upon which they had hung their hopes were now fulfilled. The issue involved not only the identity of Jesus, that He was the Christ, but also the gathering of people from the 12 tribes and from the Gentiles (nations) to be God's special Priestly nation on earth under the reign of Christ in Heaven until the day of judgment.

The burning issue now, as then, is the purpose of God. That purpose is two-fold: first, to choose and redeem a people for His possession and, second, to glorify them with immortality in the day that He judges and destroys the wicked. Obviously the second stage is yet future, but the apostles affirmed that the first stage began with the death, resurrection and coronation of Jesus at God's right hand.

Generally speaking, all professing Christians readily claim the part of the purpose that has to do with “redemption,” the saving **from** sin and its guilt, but there they usually stop, failing to grasp that which they are saved **to**. Like the ancient Jews they cannot see in Jesus a reigning Sovereign and cannot see in themselves the special people described in the prophecies of the Old Testament. Their faith carries them only over the threshold of the church, not through the tribulations of the world. If the fulfillment of the prophets is not grasped (by faith) in what Christ has accomplished, then these prophecies are open to speculation, and every event of the world opens a new can of worms squirming with a variety of fearful possibilities.

God promised a Redeemer; Christ paid the redemption price by death. God Promised to save a remnant; that remnant from the 12 tribes and the nations is made up of the redeemed. God promised a king to reign on David’s throne; Christ is that king, and David’s throne is at God’s right hand. “All authority has been given unto me,” He said (Matt. 28:18). God promised a new and holy nation, a kingdom to last forever; the Christian community is that nation and kingdom.

Peter wrote that Christians are the “Elect race.” “The people of God.” “You are,” he wrote, “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God; who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (I Peter 2:9–10).

Now, this is not the way it always appears. Christians do not usually look different, or “holy”, and do not wear “priestly” clothing, although Christians strive to dress modestly which sets us apart from many in the world. Often we fail to act like God’s people and a lot of the time we do not “feel” that we are anything special, as we must face severe trials and sorrows and problems. In fact, the more we strive to be Christ-like the more severe the trials may be. So, from the natural standpoint, it does not appear that much has happened after all. Many believers go looking for special signs and feelings and are still looking for the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning peace, joy and victory under Christ the King.

This is where faith applies. On the basis of objective faith (knowledge based on God’s revelation in Scripture) we know that we are relieved of the guilt of sin and its penalty by the fact that judgment was borne by Christ in His death. This is what gives peace and joy to the saint, in spite of outward circumstances. By the same faith he knows that he is a child of God, the object of God’s care, that he is destined for immortality in fellowship with God in a new creation, and that he has a purpose in this world to “show forth the excellencies of him who called” him.

Christian faith, therefore, not only embraces the accomplishment of salvation (saving us from sin and final destruction at judgment) but also it embraces the accomplishment of all the prophecies regarding the standing of God’s people and the working of God’s eternal purpose in and through the saved. Paul declared that “we are more than conquerors”, that we are God’s chosen vessels, that we are God’s temple on earth and lights in the perverted world. John said that we are not of this world, because we are of God. As God’s people Christians are called, justified, sanctified, given His special presence through the holy Spirit and granted the special privilege of prayer.

What if the world does not recognize this? That doesn’t change it. The world did not recognize Jesus, even after His miraculous works.

The cross is a stumbling block, a disgrace and offence to most people even to this day. Yet Jesus said concerning it, "For this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27). Christ came not to convince men that He was doing the right thing and thus gain their approval, but rather to do God's will and please Him. "I am come to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7). To the world He was a miserable failure, but in reality He was a perfect success, and God was completely satisfied, so that He exalted Christ to the seat of power over all the universe (Phil. 2:9, Eph 1:20–22). Christ now stands in a completely different relationship to the world than before He entered it in the flesh. He is no longer sacrifice, but Priest. He no longer says, "Thy will be done," but "My will be done." This may not be the way it appears to the world, but that's the way it is in reality.

The Christian is one who is "in Christ" and thus placed in a different position in the world from that of the unbeliever. He is classified not with the world but with Christ and His kingdom which is "not of this world." He does not stand under condemnation for sin, because judgment was already rendered upon him in Christ's death (Rom 8:1–4). He is one of those whom God is "taking out" for Himself, so that in all the circumstances of his life, he is being fitted for God's pleasure (Phil. 2:13). This is not to be construed to mean that he is passive and has no responsibilities in the world. The commands of God call forth the response of obedience with respect to all mankind — family, church and social order. But the center of responsibility is not mankind, but God, and if our response is inadequate to bring about the perfect order of things, which of course it is, we are not to worry or fear, because the accomplishment of the purpose of God lies in Christ, and He has already succeeded. "I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou has given me to do" (John 17:4).

What is the Christian to do but to lay hold of that which is given in Christ; to claim the high estate to which Christ has already called us, and to live out the priestly life which God has given us? What a despicable shame that so few who claim the grace of God ever actually live as the redeemed, but continue to live in fear of world conditions as being still "of the world."

The humanistic concept of equality has so permeated our society that Christians have a tendency to lump themselves right into the whole, with the same frustrations and fears that characterize those "who have no hope." The religion of humanism has spawned a generation which has no conscience about morals and refuses to recognize that there are both good and evil people. But ever since Cain and Abel, God has insisted on a division inhumanity. Jesus said, "Suppose you that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, NO: but rather division" (Luke 12:51). As He went forth preaching "there was a division among them because of Him" (John 15:19). It is just this difference that Christians must recognize if we are to live as those who are God's people, redeemed by the work of Christ, and living so as to please God. Ultimately God will consummate history in the final divisive act called the judgment. But Christ has already saved us (Christians) from that by undergoing it Himself by his own death, and has raised us and made us to sit with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). It may not look that way, but that's the way it is by faith. Thus Christ has already accomplished all for us, except the final state of immortality which He will do when He comes again.

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