



CHRISTADELPHIAN ISOLATION LEAGUE

EXHORTATION

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SECTION LEADER:

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Readings: Numbers 31, Proverbs 22, John 4

He Will Return

In **Proverbs 22:1(AV)**, we are reminded that: *“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches and loving favour rather than silver and gold”*. Here we see Jesus.

The Proverb carries on: *“The rich and poor meet together; The Lord is the maker of them all”*. (**Proverbs 22:2**). Here we see God’s creative power and both servant and Master praise Him together.

At the beginning of **John 4** we find that Jesus’ disciples baptised people alongside John the Baptist (v 1-2). Though both baptisms were relevant for forgiveness, John had been preparing the way for Jesus, in whose name we become one. No matter what our position in life we look for not just forgiveness but the promise of eternal life.

In **Mark 6:8** we have recorded that when the disciples were sent out by our Lord to preach and heal, they were to take only a staff, no money, no bread, no written message, but that men should repent. They carried a great promise! The miracles of healing were a proof that they had received the power of the spirit and they were to use this to preach that the Kingdom of heaven was at hand.

Now that the Lord Jesus Christ is resurrected, it is our Lord’s sinless and perfect life guided by the Father, which we celebrate; the grave was not able to hold Him. The resurrection gave confidence to a group of followers who otherwise would have surely melted away knowing only that they had known a good man of wonderful works. They had not understood nor could they accept that Jesus had to die (**Matthew 20:17-19**), that He would be crucified and rise the third day.

In **Matthew 26:6-12**, we find Jesus being anointed at Bethany in the house of Simon and saying: *“For in that she has poured this ointment on my body she did it for my burial”*. For those listening, here was the realization that Jesus would actually die, but would we have understood any better?

When my Father died, although I expected it, I found the situation left me hardly able to speak. Yet my brother could say words of encouragement for we knew that we would meet again in the Kingdom, as I feel sure the disciples did with Lazarus.

In **John 11:24** Martha says to Jesus: *“I know that He (Lazarus), shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day”*. The disciples had faith in Jesus, but struggled to understand that their Lord must die a dreadful and public death. As Jesus lay in the grave they were left broken.

Here was the perfect son in whom no sin dwelt, who had total confidence in his Father. He had endured to the end and given all for His Father, as well as for us. Now we await his return.

Jesus understood what was required for a New Covenant between God and Man. It had to be a New Covenant in his blood. In order to give us the opportunity of life everlasting Jesus had to do God’s will.

We move to the early Sunday morning now, the beginning of a new week. Mary Magdalene and Mary the Mother of James come to the tomb with others to anoint Jesus just as the sun rises. Wondering who would roll the stone from the doorway they are shocked to find an angel sitting in the tomb, the stone having been moved well out of the way leaving them amazed. His message that

Jesus was to be found in Galilee was the very instruction that Jesus had previously given to the disciples.

The women hurry to tell Peter and the other disciples: *"They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre and we know not where they have laid him"*. (**John 20:2**).

Peter and his fishing partner John rush off to check the sepulchre. John gets there first but Peter pushes past to see: *"Then cometh Simon Peter following him and went into the sepulchre and seeth the linen clothes lie and the napkin that was about His head not lying with the linen clothes but wrapped together in a place by itself"*. (**John 20:6, 7**).

The picture we are given may cause us to consider, did Jesus simply sit up, the grave clothes having been released, and fold the napkin from his head and put it aside separately? This may have simply been enough to convince or remind them of Jesus' words, yet maybe there is more to say. It is said by some that the true significance of the napkin being folded neatly by itself takes us to a Jewish tradition of the time. If so, the whole verse given to the napkin being folded and put separately from the other clothes gives Peter and John understanding. **John 26:8** says: *"...he (John) saw and believed"*. Their eyes seem to have been opened regarding his resurrection promise.

The tradition is that the folded napkin had to do with the Master and Servant and that every Hebrew boy would know it. When the servant set the dinner table for the master, he made sure that it was exactly as the master wanted it. The table was furnished perfectly and then the servant would wait, just out of sight until the master had finished eating. When the master had finished eating he would rise from the table, wipe his fingers and beard and toss the napkin onto the table. The servant would then know to clear the table. However, if the master got up from the table and folded his napkin, laying it beside his plate the servant would not touch the table because the folded napkin meant the master was coming back. We know that Jesus is coming back, was this the action that caused John to believe? As John and Peter return to their home, Mary Magdalene having arrived at the tomb, finds two angels there. Mary, highly upset and confused, asks where has Jesus been taken. At this moment, what appears to be a gardener arrives and through her tears Mary hears her name. It is the Lord.

From a locked room for fear of the Jews, the disciples, within days, would be found in the Temple praising and blessing God. Jesus had not only been raised by God but had given them the assurance that: *"...lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world"* (**Matthew 28:20**).

Two thousand years on, we continue to witness to the world. We see man's destruction of habitat, of plastic waste and greed in a largely Godless society. We need God to send Jesus back and He will, when the time is right. Meantime we continue in preparing for that time. In the days of Noah, man was eating, drinking, marrying and doing what was right in his own eyes. Mankind has no excuse, Jesus died to free us from sin's grip, that as His followers we may gain life everlasting.

As we consider these things, we come to the bread and wine, remembering how our Lord gave his body and his blood in order to make a new covenant between God and man. Jesus did this for all of us and we know, he will return.

Brother Philip Gentle: Mendip UK 12.04.20