

Choosing To Die

*"In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."
Matthew 26:64*

Jesus was on trial for His life. The trial was held at an illegal time. The witnesses could not agree on any charge concerning Him. They lied and perjured themselves but no one noticed. Justice was denied Him. He had not been allowed time to prepare a defence. He had not been properly arraigned. He had not been told the charges against Him. The ones who had vowed to follow Him to the death had fled and left Him alone when arrested. He was about to be physically tormented. He was certainly under threat of death and He was made to testify against Himself, an illegal manoeuvre by the prosecution.

What can anyone say when under the gun like this? The treatment that Jesus had already received, and would receive in the next few hours, was unprecedented. It seems unimaginable that the One who had done so much good could generate such hatred against Himself. Even those who hated Him the most confessed He was doing miracles to heal and resurrect people from the dead. They had tried to best Him in theological arguments and He shut them down. Wisely they gave up on that line of attack.

Finally, as the presiding judge saw the hopes of getting a conviction on a capital offense fading, he decided to challenge the prisoner to either condemn Himself or else deny what He had been teaching for some time. He asked Jesus if He was indeed the Christ, the Son of God. Now it was a capital offense in Jewish law to say you were the Messiah if you were not. They had already decided that Jesus was not the Messiah so if He now claimed under oath to be such they would have Him condemn

Himself.

When Jesus uttered the words of our verse for today, He was indeed choosing to die. He told the truth and died as a consequence! But look at what Jesus said when He chose to die. The meaning of His words is to the effect that in the future He would come to judge the world on behalf of the Father. He is using the words of Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 110:1. Jesus is telling those who are sitting in judgment on Him that some day they will have Him sit in judgment on them! Talk about role reversals.

Sadly, fear does not strike their hearts. Rather they set themselves to destroy this blasphemer. Their minds were made up before the trial that the Man was guilty, and the evidence presented that did not conform to their views was ignored or discounted. His self testimony was all they needed to hear.

The lesson for us in this scenario is to do as Jesus did when bad things happen to us. Jesus clearly knew that telling the truth would only make matters worse for Him but He did what was right regardless of how much trouble it caused Him. Yet, He spoke of the glory that was coming beyond all the floggings, beatings, mocking, and the execution He would endure.

This is what we must do in our times of sorrow. We must firmly fix our minds on what the Lord has in store for His people after the trials. The closer you put your nose onto the canvas of life the less you will be able to see the whole picture. It is only when we step back and get the whole of life in view that we can

make sense of what is happening now.

When Jesus talked about giving His people eternal life He did not mean a quantity of life. He was not referring to the idea of living forever. Instead He was referring to a quality of life. By the term eternal life, Jesus meant that His people would enjoy the immediate presence of God in a meaningful relationship in a renewed world.

The Bible teaches clearly that everyone is going to live forever. The difference is that those who belong to Jesus will have God's presence forever. Those who have lived in such a way that they demonstrate they do not wish God in their lives will have that alternative forever.

That is the difference. So when the child of God gets some understanding of what is in store for them in the future, they are able to withstand the present. Jesus was in a great and terrible crisis. He looked beyond it and saw that the wrongs He was enduring would be made right. That perspective strengthened Him as He went through the horrors of the cross.

Do you have this hope? Are you looking forward to Jesus returning to judge the world? Are you ready to have Jesus address you when He comes as King? What will be His greeting to you when He comes? Jesus once said (Matthew 24:44 NIV),

"So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."