

Eternity Daily Bible Study

Romans 9-16 The Implications of Salvation

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE AIBI

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Verses: Romans 14:9

Topic: The Universal Rule Of Christ

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Romans 14:9 HCSB *Christ died and came to life for this: that He might rule over both the dead and the living.*

In the midst of Paul's explanation on Christian tolerance he "throws in" this sentence about the universal rule of Christ over all believers for all time. The idea is that Christ rules over all Christians for all time, whether we live, or whether we die. Therefore the Kingdom is very large, and by nature must include a wide range of people from different places and times and customs and ways of worship, therefore we need to accept this massive diversity of the Kingdom of God.

Yet there are other implications as well. For if Christ rules over the dead, then the dead are "conscious" in some way and continue to exist in such a state that it is meaningful to assert that Christ is their Lord.

Indeed Paul says that : *Christ died and came to life for this* -in other words the cross and the resurrection were "in order that" He would achieve dominion over both the living and the dead and that His love and justice would have full sway in the entire Universe both physical and spiritual.

Now if Christ is to have Lordship over the living, then all human institutions and governments and families and nations, all that we call "living" must finally submit to Him. It is not as if Christ rules over the dead in Heaven while the Devil rules over politics down here! No such bargain has been struck! Indeed Christ has come to "undo the works of the Devil".

1 John 3:8 MKJV *He who practices sin is of the Devil, for the Devil sins from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was revealed, that He might undo the works of the Devil.*

The incarnation, cross and resurrection were not just to save us, but also to form us into a Christ-governed people. The rebellion and iniquity in our hearts were to be uprooted and the work of the Devil in our soul was to be undone – along with his wicked works in the wider world. In the Christ-governed world evil will be rolled back.

Christ creates culture. He creates a new realm of mercy, grace, compassion and justice, a place of healing and sharing that we see during the high points in the gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles. This gracious rule of Christ over both the dead and the living is what we call the Kingdom of God.

Now Christ does not rule over tombstones and corpses and mouldy coffins. Rather He

rules over the spirits and souls of the departed saints that continue in some form of conscious and blessed existence in Heaven. While the wicked dead existence in a place of torment, a holding / remand cell, prior to the final judgment:

Luke 16:22-26 MKJV *And it happened that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich one also died and was buried. (23) And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (24) And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. (25) But Abraham said, Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. But now he is comforted and you are tormented. (26) And besides all this, there is a great chasm fixed between you and us; so that they desiring to pass from here to you cannot, nor can they pass over to us from there.*

2 Peter 2:4 MKJV *For if God did not spare sinning angels, but thrust them down into Tartarus, and delivered them into chains of darkness, being reserved to judgment.*

Revelation 6:9-11 MKJV *And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held. (10) And they cried with a loud voice, saying, Until when, Master, holy and true, do You not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth? (11) And white robes were given to each one of them. And it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little time, until both their fellow servants and their brothers (those about to be killed as they were) should have their number made complete.*

Philippians 1:20-24 HCSB *(20) My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all boldness, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death. (21) For me, living is Christ and dying is gain. (22) Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. (23) I am pressured by both. **I have the desire to depart and be with Christ--which is far better--** (24) but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.*

For Christians departing and being with Christ is "far better", while for the unrepentant rich man and the fallen angels it was far worse! Lazarus and the souls under the altar received comfort from God, and were able to perceive others, see what was happening in the world and engage in conversations with those in Heaven.

Since Christ rules over all dimensions of space, time, culture and human experience we cannot confine Him to this or that particular cultural form – to long hair or short hair, to this food or that drink, to hymns or choruses, to Republicans or Democrats, to this race or that nation or to church buildings of a certain size and shape or to worship on this day or that. But each of us lives in a particular time and place and we each serve God in our own way, and through our own cultural forms and understandings. Such forms are important expressions of faith for us, but they are not universals, they do not express the faith for all time. Gothic cathedrals expressed the faith of their builders then, and surely brought glory to God in that age, but they do not dictate how we must worship today.

Because the Lordship of Christ's is universal the Christian faith is never captive to any set of cultural particulars – though they may usefully express the faith of a certain group of people at a certain moment in time.

Blessings,

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