

## Christ the King. 1 Corinthians 15:20-26. Nov.22, 2020.

Someone shared with me this week the details of one king's story. His name was Qin Shi Huang (Chin-Shu-Wang). That's hopefully close for pronunciation. And that's at least the name he proclaimed for himself – "First Sovereign Emperor." I was told how during his lifetime he sought a potion / liquid of immortality, in an attempt to prevent his own death (extend his life). I then read how he claimed his dynasty would last 10,000 generations.

Well, what happened to his plans? Instead of enduring life, he died at a fairly young age, about 50. The dates listed for his reign as emperor are 221-210 BC. And his Qin dynasty lasted from 221-207 BC. Did you catch something in hearing those dates? His dynasty fell just a wee bit short of lasting 10,000 generations. Actually, a lot. It lasted less than 4 years beyond his death. That's how soon the Qin dynasty collapsed, his entire imperial clan wiped out along with it.

But one thing which he made, which was discovered not too long ago in the 1970s, did last. You know what it is? His tomb. It's actually described as a "funerary compound / complex." Long buried, recently unearthed, it is a marvel to set eyes on... covering 20-square-miles, it contained some 8,000 life-size terra-cotta (clay) soldiers and horses. The Encyclopedia Britannica site describes them as "an 'army' for the dead king."

What does the tomb of this king reveal?

Thousands of *lifeless* figures taken with Qin Shi Huang (Chin-Shu-Wang) to remain there *buried with him*.

Pivot. Change your view. Set your sights on *Christ the King*. Instead of taking the lifeless with Him into the grave to remain there, He takes *the living* - who are His people through faith in Him - out of their graves with Him to enjoy life eternal.

But that's the ending. We're kind of jumping ahead; let's take in the rest of the news here.

This portion of 1 Corinthians ch.15 begs us today to ask (and answer) the question: What does the tomb of Christ the King reveal? To make the question even a little more focused: What does Christ's tomb, along with His Word to us, reveal about: ***what He has done for His people, what He is doing & what He will do for us?***

- Look at Vs.20 - ***"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."*** There is no "if" about Christ alive after death. So there is no iffy-ness or uncertainty about your life after death as one who belongs to Him, His child through faith in Him.
- Jump back in at Vs.21-23 – ***"<sup>21</sup> For since death came by a man, the resurrection of the dead also is going to come by a man. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam they all die, so also in Christ they all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ as the firstfruits and then Christ's people, at his coming."*** Christ is the first to step out of the sleep of death to life eternal. And since He became human to fill your shoes – to take your place... if you are united with Him through faith (Romans 6), you too will step bodily out of the sleep of death to life eternal. And so will I as one who trusts in His life & death & resurrection for us.
- Christ is the first at the head of what will be a long train of His people following Him, who at His coming will bodily rise from our graves to life eternal.
- Go on to Vs.24 – ***"Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has done away with every other ruler and every other authority and power."*** That will be the end of this present age, at the time Christ brings an end to all other rulers. He is King of kings and nothing will keep Him from having all His people with Him in the end. (Rev. 17:14 "with Him will be His called, chosen and faithful followers.")
- Vs.25 - ***"For he must reign "until he has put all his enemies under his feet."*** What does that tell you? He reigns now also.

I know, I know, how days sometimes feel dark and gloomy in this world, presently, filled with the kind of sickness, and the kind of strained relations, and the kind of turmoil in society that we experience. We can feel exhausted. We grieve. Sometimes we don't know what to do; others we don't even know what to pray for. Be assured... Our Lord Jesus, the

Christ, is not absent, not weak, not uninterested. He has not lost sight of you, or neglected you, or lost control of your surroundings. Christ reigns. He must. He does. His resurrection proves His power to do it.

The Ezekiel Bible Lesson (ch.34), which we heard earlier in the service, especially helps unfold: And what does His reign – presently – involve for you? Remember the details? Christ, our Shepherd King, "...is with his sheep... among them." That's among us. And most importantly to note are these acts. He is:

- Feeding us – *"I will shepherd them." He says, "I will pasture them"* Vs.13-14. He has fed us and nourished us with food for our souls.
- *"I will bind up the injured," He says. "I will strengthen the weak"* Vs.16. He is restoring spiritual strength and health to us.
- He is protecting & Comforting us – *"I will rescue them. I myself will shepherd my flock," He says. "I myself will let them lie down."* Vs.12,15

These all come through His Word, the Word which is also present to bring these same gifts in Baptism and in The Lord's Supper. This is how he tends us – he cares for us.

Care, which includes...

- correcting us. *"I will bring back the strays"* Vs.16. If we begin to veer away from where we are safe, and head toward danger, He redirects us. It's His Word that He uses for this.

Take home the importance. Does someone intentionally stray toward spiritual death? No! The danger comes with little changes in course, if left uncorrected. A little compromise with the world, to fit in better. A little lust overlooked. A little materialism allowed to fester. A little pride left puffed up. It certainly has its momentary appeal. But you hear what's happening? A little less listening to what God has to say from His Word (the Bible). A little less devotion to Him, our King.

This is where spiritual honesty and confession are so important. The Lord comes with His redirecting, correcting calls. He calls us to: admit our sins as He comes and identifies them to us through His Word, and turn to Him for His forgiveness.

Through His Word He corrects, and works repentance in us for our sins, and heals, and comforts, and strengthens, and guides us onward in His truth.

And all this He does - and He never tires of it - because the one thing He wants more than anything else is: you with Him in eternity.

Eternity! He wants you with Him to enjoy eternal life, with the final and total end to all enemies. That's the very thing described here. Look at vs.26. ***"Death is the last enemy to be done away with."***

Other kings like Qin Shi Huang have sought to gain unending life for themselves. Christ the King took a crown of thorns, on His way to death, all in order to bring unending life for you and me.

And He will take the living, who are His people through faith in Him, out of our graves to enjoy life eternal with Him.

"Praise the Lord... who forgives all your sins... who redeems your life from the pit, and crowns you with love and compassion." – Psalm 103:1-4

"The Lord crowns the humble with salvation." – Psalm 149:4

"In that day they – [we] – will say, 'Surely this is our God; we trusted in Him, and He saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in Him; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.'" – Isaiah 25:9

Amen.