

THE PROPHETIC WORD IN CRISIS DAYS

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by

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE PROPHETIC WORD AND THE CHURCH

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“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (I Thessalonians 4:13-18)

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him” (I Thessalonians 5:9-10).

In Matthew’s Gospel, Chapter 16, we find a statement by our Lord, concerning the Church. It reads, **“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:16-18).**

You will see at the outset, that Matthew's Gospel, chapter 16, gives the first mention of the Church. The Lord Jesus Christ distinctly states that this Church to which He refers is His own Church, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The theme designated to consider is, “The Prophetic Word and the Church.” When we deal with the prophetic Word, there are two aspects that we must be acquainted with. The first aspect, of course, is that which declares the divine revelation of truth from beginning to end, and in that sense it is prophetic. Divine revelation is God making known to men what would otherwise be unknown. In other words, if God had not revealed these things under divine revelation, men could and would never have known these truths, (I Corinthians 2:9-12).

The second aspect of prophecy and the prophetic Word, is the fact that there is predictive prophecy; and being predictive prophecy, it predicts that which shall be, in the future, not only from the time given, but also from the time of unfulfilled prophecy, — that which may lie before us today.

In Matthew's Gospel, chapter 16, you have the historic account of the beginning of the Church declared, and the revelation of its purpose. Incidentally, in this first use of the Church in Scripture, Christ says: "It is my church."

We need to be acquainted with the word church, because, in its general sense, it simply means any people or assembly called out for a specific purpose. There is an Hebrew application of this use, as we find in Acts 7:38, where the first martyr, Stephen, was witnessing concerning the risen, exalted Lord and Saviour and his past dealings with the nation Israel; and there you recall that Stephen called Israel, the nation, the assembly or church in the wilderness. That is, Israel, as a nation in the wilderness, was a true called-out assembly or church and, as thus separated unto God, constituted a theocracy, a God-governed people.

When we go further in the book of Acts we find an added use of the word. In every Greek city there was an ecclesia or assembly or church. We find in Acts 19:39 this statement, "**But if ye enquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.**" That term lawful assembly in the text is a church. Now this was not the church of Jesus Christ, but it was a gathered-out company of people for a specific purpose, — for example, a city council gathered out to represent the people in factors determining the well-being of that city. And in the Greek idea, you have in this body the center of governing authority, a God-governed theocracy transferring office and responsibility to a new institution.

That is how our Lord used the word church, so, coming to the New Testament meaning of the church, in the light of the use of the word, you have the fact that the church of Jesus Christ is a called-out, God-owned, God-governed body for present completion and for future government, with responsibility to God alone.

When we come to the book of Ephesians, we read that God has exalted His Son: "**Far above all principality, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come; And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things, to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all**" (Ephesians 1:21-23).

Thus the Church of Jesus Christ is declared to be "**the Body of Christ.**" Now in my use of terms I want to recognize the distinction between the coming of the Lord FOR the Church, and the second coming of Christ to the earth for the Scripture reveals the fact that they are not the same event.

Others will write of the second coming of Christ to the earth. I will not be dealing with that, only in passing, as it may relate to the Church, but I am speaking more particularly concerning the coming of the Lord in the air for the Church.

The Church, as the **“Body of Christ,”** is **“the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”** In other words the Church is a living organism, of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head, and we are members of His body, and members one of another. The Church is not yet complete in relation to its being the body of Christ. It is still in the state of formation. That formation began on the Day of Pentecost, as we will see in a moment, and will be completed when the Lord comes for His own. Thus the Lord will come when the last one is to be inducted into the Body of Christ, and the Church will then be complete and taken unto Himself.

Will you please notice when our Lord made the statement in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 16, that the realization of the Church was still future, **“I will build my church.”** When the Lord Jesus was on earth he did not “start” anything. He was a **“minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the Fathers and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy”** (Romans 15:8).

He did not start the Church while he was yet upon the earth. He could not start the Church, because the death of Christ is the very ground and foundation of the Church. That is spoken of in Ephesians 5:25, 26, **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”**

Further the Church could not start until the resurrection of Christ, as we read, **“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God”** (Colossians 3:1). He could not start the Church, as we have already read in Ephesians 1:19, 20, until His exaltation at God's right hand. He could not start the church until the Day of Pentecost as we read in Acts 2:32, 33, **“This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.”**

O, but someone says: “Did you not know that the Day of Pentecost was a feast related to the nation Israel?” Of course I do, but did you also notice that the Feast of Pentecost was fulfilled fifty days after the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and since the Feast was fulfilled, God had the perfect ability to start whatsoever he had declared he would start, in Matthew, chapter 16, and accomplish that purpose.

The church is the local assembly of born-again, blood-bought, Spirit-baptized believers, and the term generally used to deal with them concerns the churches, in any given locality, wherever former, established, and set in divine order according to the scripture.

Christ said in Matthew 16, **“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”** (Matthew 16:18).

Christ told Peter that he, Peter, was a fragment of rock, but upon the Rock Christ, Rock being a title of Deity in the Old Testament, a solid immovable rock, He would build His Church. **“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”** (I Corinthians 3:11); cf. I Peter 2:6-8.

The gates of the unseen realm would not prevail against this Church. Gates refer to the place of authority, the councils of the unseen, the conniving of the enemy of our souls. These cannot prevail against the church.

Now it is well, by reason of the terminology that is used concerning the baptism in, with or by the Holy Spirit, to understand what that term means. For example, you find this term in contrast to John's baptism used only once in Matthew's Gospel, — chapter 3, verse 11; only once in Mark's Gospel, — chapter one, verse 8; only once in Luke's Gospel, — chapter 3, verse 16; only once in John's Gospel, — chapter 1, verse 33; and only once in the book of Acts, — before the Day of Pentecost, in Acts, chapter 1, verse 5. Generally speaking, what is the contrast?

The contrast is simply this, — John baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. You will find **“the baptism of the Holy Spirit”** is not explained in any one of these passages that have been referred to, and you will notice further that, when Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, he did not in any way, shape or form ever refer to the baptism by the Holy Spirit. However, when he was called on the carpet, as recorded in Acts 11, before the apostles and the brethren at Jerusalem, they raised the question why Peter had ministered at the house of Cornelius preaching to the Gentiles.

“Well,” he said, “Cornelius had a vision, the outset of which was that he should call me to minister. I, too, had a vision showing that I should not make certain distinctions, that I had made in the past as a Jew, and therefore I obeyed God and went down.”

And we read in Acts 11, **“He shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost”** (Acts 11:13-16).

Here we have a concrete statement asserting the fact that when the Lord Jesus Christ was exalted at God's right hand, and received from the Father the gift of the Holy Spirit, as Peter said on the Day of Pentecost, **“He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear,”** and those of the nation Israel, who listened to the gospel message on that occasion, and received it into their hearts and were saved, were instantly incorporated by the baptism of the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ, the Church.

This truth is later referred to in Acts, chapter 15, when again we find Paul before the apostles, and the elders at Jerusalem, and they are listening to what had been accomplished through the preaching of the gospel, **“and God who knoweth the hearts, bear them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as to us at the beginning, And put no difference between us and them purifying their hearts by faith, Now therefore why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.**

“Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God hath wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and Brethren, hearken unto me! Simeon hath declared how God for the first time visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return and will build again the house of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things” (Acts 15:8-17).

The question still remains, “What is God doing in this age of grace?”

Well, the thing that God is doing is that He is taking out from among the Jews, and from among the Gentiles, a people unto His name, and this new group of individuals, thus called out by the Spirit of God are the ones, that He is forming into the Church.

But, you say, “What authority do you have that the Holy Spirit is doing this ministry by the baptism of the Spirit?”

The answer to this is given to us in I Corinthians 12:12, 13, where we read, **“For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body: so also is the Christ. For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and have been all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.”**

And so we find here God's own definition of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and this ministry began on the Day of Pentecost, incorporating believers into the Body of Christ, an organism that never previously existed, an organism that is now existing in this present age of grace, and this organism will be removed from this scene when the Lord comes for His own.

It might be well, at this juncture, to mention the distinction between the visible church in general, which we call Christendom, and the Body of Christ, the living organism, and the local church of believers. By the visible church we mean that church which is upon the earth at the present time, which men see and observe. I am not going to discuss the apostasy of the present church, since that is treated in another chapter of the book. Suffice to say, that Christendom is that which embraces everything related to the church here upon the earth. It includes the professing church and apostate Protestantism, apostate Romanism, and apostate Greek Orthodoxy. Shintoism is not in Christendom. Confucianism is not in Christendom. Hinduism is not in Christendom.

The only thing that is in Christendom is that which is visible under the name of Christianity in any form. What does this visible church embrace? It embraces all the ecclesiastical organizations and all the religious heads, and all the rituals, and all the ceremonies, and all the ordinances, and all the societies, and all the church councils, divided, and subdivided and split into a hundred fragments — that is the church men see. No wonder that, when men are told that one should unite with the church, they may ask, What should I unite with,— how would I know which is the true church?

In contrast to this you have the local church, which embraces the true Church yet on earth, which is a called-out company of people, and, as we read in Acts 15:14, “**God for the first time called out a people for His name,**” so that every born-again, blood-bought, Spirit-baptized individual in any local assembly that names the name of Christ is a part of the true Church. That does not mean that every local church has a fully saved membership, born-again, redeemed by the blood, baptized by the Holy Spirit, but in that company, there should be those who meet these qualifications.

Then there is, of course, the invisible organism. This is that which was purposed, created and nourished, undivided and indivisible, and is composed of those who are in Paradise at the present time, from the Day of Pentecost to the coming of the Lord.

Another thing to realize is that God has given a constitution to the Church. This constitution is given to us in the book of Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 11 to 22. It states exactly what God is doing in this age of grace. God did not convert Jews into Gentiles. He did not convert Gentiles into Jews. He did not raise the earthly position of the Nation Israel either. He did not restore either one. He has been doing a new thing, and this new thing is the Church, the Body of Christ. The Church is super-racial, it is super-national, and we who are members of this Body of Christ have a heavenly citizenship. (Philippians 3:20-21). We find that in this Church, “**there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all**” (Colossians 3:11).

Now of necessity a foundation has been laid, because the Church was predicted at the time of our Lord, and there must be a true understanding of what one's relationship to the true Church of Jesus Christ is; and the next question to be considered is, What is the hope of the Church?

If one were to teach the book of First Thessalonians, chapter one might be designated the foundation of the Church. This foundation is a crucified, buried, risen, exalted Lord and Saviour, and we find that the Thessalonian believers were, “**waiting for His Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivered them from the wrath to come.**” The word for waiting here means to *abide quietly*, for His coming.

In I Thessalonians 2:1 — 4:12, we have the ministry of the Church, as it was in the apostolic era, before the Church Fathers ever came upon the scene. In chapter 4:13-18, we have the hope of the Church, even the coming of the Lord. In verses 13-16, we have this hope in relation to the sleeping saints. When you come to the word for sleep in Scripture, it is always associated with the body, never with the soul or spirit. For example, our English word cemetery comes from a root word which means, a place of repose, a place of sleep, for the body of believers, and others who have departed this life.

The believer who has departed this life is “**with Christ,**” which is far better.

The unbeliever is in Hades, the place of departed souls between death and resurrection, awaiting the resurrection unto condemnation, at the time of the White Throne Judgment.

Paul in writing to these dear saints at Thessalonica states, **“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope”** (I Thessalonians 4:13).

Men and women outside of Christ are lost. They are **“without God and without hope in the world”** (Ephesians 2:12), and if men die in that estate, before ever receiving Christ as their personal Saviour there is absolutely no hope of any kind for them after physical death. But what about the believer in Christ? Paul says, **“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him”** (I Thessalonians 4:14).

The believer in Christ who has departed this life is with Christ in Paradise. Just as Christ said to the believing thief on the cross (Luke 23:43), **“Verily I say unto thee, Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.”** Paradise is not the final state of bliss for the redeemed. Paradise is only a temporary state for the redeemed between death and resurrection, the resurrection unto life, and in that condition they are waiting the time when the Lord shall come, and when He comes, He is coming by the way of Paradise to empty the third heaven, of all the redeemed in that place, and particularly to receive the Church unto Himself.

What is the state and the condition of the believer in Paradise? There are three words that can be used to describe it. In our English it is only one word. It is the word “unspeakable.”

In II Corinthians 9:15, it says, **“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!”** What does this word unspeakable mean? It means that it baffles description, it is indescribable, it is fathomless. In II Corinthians 12:4, Paul tells of a man, **“who was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”** That isn't the same word in the text, but it means that these words were not to be divulged, mysteries not lawful for the uninitiated.

Going over to I Peter 1:8 it says, **“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”** The word for unspeakable there is, — *“unutterable because of the fulness of the heart, overwhelming, so absorbing that speech is too frail a vehicle to convey it.”* Now the joys of the redeemed in Paradise, in their temporary estate, in His presence, are inconceivable, unspeakable, and indescribable.

You understand that while there is a veil between us and our Lord because we are still in the body, there is no veil between them and the Lord because they are not now either in their physical body or in their redeemed bodies. Our veil is the body, just as His body was a veil, (Hebrews 10:20), and since they have had their bodies set aside temporarily, they are open to the full gaze of the mediatorial throne of our Lord Jesus Christ, where he is Adjudicator, Intercessor and Advocate, and where Satan accuses the brethren night and day. This mediatorial throne is distinct from Paradise. And while you and I in the body do not see Christ, nor have we seen him.

Paul says, **“We rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls”** (I Peter 1:8-9).

The word paradise is only used six times in the text, three times in the Old Testament and three times in the New. They are Nehemiah 2:8; Ecclesiastes 2:5; Song of Solomon 4:13; Luke 23:43; II Corinthians 12:4 and Revelation 2:7. There is a progressive use in the meaning of the word. It begins with, **“the king's paradise,”** then, **“gardens and paradises, with all kinds of fruit,”** then **“a paradise of pomegranates,”** all these being associated with a king's summer palace. When we come to the New Testament, it speaks of a safely-enclosed park of perfect security from all of man's enemies; a royal park associated with the king's palace; and finally a place of rest and repose. But all this is in conjunction with a summer palace, which is temporary compared to the Permanent Palace of the King where His eternal throne is in the Heaven of the heavens. (See Revelation, J. C. Bellett, M.A. on, *“The Dead in Christ”*).

The eternal Throne of God is above and beyond both Paradise and the mediatorial throne, which cannot contain any created intelligence of any kind, where God's eternal Throne is, in the Heaven of the heavens, in His eternal uncreated Being and Estate.

Thus when Christ comes back for His own, at the coming of the Lord, He will empty Paradise, unite the departed saints with their redeemed bodies, and translate the living saints to take them to the permanent home which He has prepared for those who love Him.

We read on in I Thessalonians 4:15, **“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not go before them that are asleep.”**

The Thessalonians had the idea that the saints who had departed this life might not share in the coming of the Lord for His saints at the time of the translation, so we read on in verse 16, **“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore encourage one another with these words”** (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

When the Lord comes for His saints, it is a personal coming. If he does not come in person, then those who have died in the faith are not coming in person. The angels at His birth announced a personal birth, His resurrection was a personal resurrection, and at His coming for the Church it is personal. Of course it is an imminent coming. It is that which may transpire at any time, in the sense that the moment that the last member that is to be incorporated into the body of Christ is saved and thus united to Christ, then the Lord will come, and I don't know when that will be. The Church is not dependent on signs.

Furthermore, the coming of the Lord is a well marked event, because there are three things that take place.

The first is the shout, and this shout is the loud summons, or the command on the part of the Lord to muster, or to arouse the sleeping saints. In other words, they shall hear His voice, and come forth out of the graves.

Then there is the voice of the Archangel. There is apparently but one archangel in Scripture and that is Michael, the Archangel. Michael in Scripture is associated with the saints of other ages, and he is also associated with the nation Israel, as we see in the prophet Daniel, and he is associated with the resurrection. Thus while Israel is in no way a part of the Church, nevertheless they as individuals may share in resurrection at the time of the coming of the Lord, since as saved individuals they are, **“In Christ,”** and not **“In Adam”** (Romans 5:12-21 and I Corinthians 15:21, 22).

Finally there is the trump of God, and this trump is the heralding note of the translation itself. It is the clear voice that changes the living saints (I Corinthians 15:51, 52).

This last trump, either of I Thessalonians 4:16 or of I Corinthians 15:52, has nothing to do with the opening of the seals in the book of the Revelation or of the trumpet judgments there. For the seals have to do with the judgments of God, **“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”** (Revelation 6:15-17).

Likewise we read of the seventh trumpet under the seventh seal in Revelation 11:18, **“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come.”** The Word also states, **“But God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him”** (I Thessalonians 5:9, 10). And as we read in I Thessalonians 1:10, We are **“to wait [abide quietly] for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the wrath to come.”**

Now if you go back to the book of Numbers, chapter 10:1-10, you have presented there the silver trumpets. Silver incidentally is the metal of redemption. While this trumpet related itself to Israel in their wilderness journeyings, it is a splendid illustration of the method by which the trump of God will sound for the believer who has died in the faith, and for the believer who is alive and remains unto the coming of the Lord. The first trumpet gathered the people together, then there was the alertness, and finally the march.

Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, wrote, **“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”** (I Corinthians 15:51-52).

Here is a mystery introduced.

What is a mystery? It is a secret. What is the secret? Back in the book of Genesis, chapter 5, we have Enoch's translation. In II Kings, chapter 2, you have Elijah's translation. But you have nothing in all the Old Testament to suggest or intimate, to declare or predict, that there would be anything to be realized by any future saints, as far as the Old Testament is concerned.

Now the Apostle Paul who is given the declaration of the mystery of the **“One Body,”** the **“Church,”** and of the *“mystery of the translation,”* is announcing in I Corinthians 15 that the fact that the Church, which is His body, is alone going to share in this translation and resurrection combined. It will be in a **“twinkling”** of an eye. It does not mean as fast as your eye-lid goes over your eye-ball. Maybe you think it is rapid, but it has to do with the travel of the speed of light, as it strikes the optic nerve and the retina of the eye-ball. Science tells us that the speed of light is 186,000 miles per second. That is rather rapid, — suffice to say that, when the Lord comes, we are going to be changed in a moment, — faster than light travels.

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Where will we meet Him? In the air!

This word air has to do with a sphere that is even beyond the height of the Himalaya Mountains north of Nepal, north of India in Asia, and we are to meet the Lord in a sphere above our own atmosphere, we will be ushered into His presence; and will appear **“at the judgment seat of Christ”** (II Corinthians 5:10).

Now the judgment seat of Christ is one of three major events that is associated with the Day of Christ, and the Day of Christ in Scripture is never on earth, it is only in Heaven. The Day of the Lord, on the other hand, is never in Heaven, it is only on earth; — for example, if I go to Isaiah 2:10-22, I read about that day. It is a day of judgment upon Israel, the nations, and the apostate church. Likewise, read Isaiah 10, Joel 2, Zephaniah 1, and Malachi 1. It is a day of darkness and gloominess. It relates both to Daniel's seventieth week, and the seventy weeks of Daniel are in no wise related to the Church of Jesus Christ. The Day of the Lord goes on into the theocratic kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, **“when he will rule with a rod of iron.”**

But the Day of Christ is in Heaven, associated with His coming and His presence. The Book of Philippians speaks of this wonderful day. Philippians 1:6 says, **“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.”** Philippians 1:10, **“That ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere, and without offence until the day of Christ.”** Philippians 2:16, **“Holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.”** I Corinthians 4:5, **“Therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God.”** II Corinthians 1:8, **“Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Now the Day of the Lord is on earth, its inception begins after the Church is removed from this scene, and then the time of Daniel's seventieth week begins. But the Day of Christ is in Heaven, and at this Bema, this judgment seat, — where only born-again, blood-bought believers will be, — you and I will have to give an account concerning ourselves as to how we have conducted ourselves since we have been saved. It will have nothing to do with the sin question in any way, for the guilt and penalty of sin was settled, once and for all, at the Cross.

You and I will give an account as to our conduct, as to our works. Some of the questions that may be asked will be: With what have you been occupied in My service? Have you faithfully used the pound of the gospel? Have you constantly used opportunities as they came? Have you used talents and increased them? Have you followed Christ, without concern about others? Have you put love before prophesying and the gifts? Have you lived in daily expectancy for the coming of the Lord? Our Lord says, Every one shall give an account of himself.

From the Judgment Seat of Christ, we go to the home of the Bridegroom and the Bride for the Marriage of the Lamb. This is not Paradise, but something supremely more wonderful than the wonders of Paradise. It is the place spoken of by our Lord in John's Gospel, chapter 14, where we read, **“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him”** (John 14:1-7).

This is the place that is declared in detail in the book of The Revelation, chapter 21, when seven new things that will be manifest on that occasion is described, and one of them is the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, and that place is to be the home of the Bride. Who is the Bride? The Bride-to-be is the Church. The Church is not now the Bride of Christ, she is the Body of Christ. That is not to be minimized, but being the Body of Christ, she represents the character and the manifestation of her Lord in the Glory. Some believe that Israel could be the Bride of Christ.

Under the old economy of the Old Testament, the High Priest was not allowed, under any circumstances, to marry a divorced woman or was he allowed to marry a widow, and when the Lord Jesus Christ gathers His Bride unto Himself, she is not going to be a divorced woman, or a widow. Israel corporately is going to be re-united to Jehovah because Israel is both a divorced woman and a widow. Israel, corporately as a nation, is never seen in Heaven. Individual Israelites are seen in Heaven, but Israel as a nation is only seen on earth during the theocratic kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

When the New Jerusalem comes down from God out of Heaven, she is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:2). She has been somewhere in the meantime, for after the Church is taken to be with the Lord in the air, they will have been at the judgment seat of Christ, and at the marriage of the Lamb; For this marriage, **“His wife hath made herself ready”** (Revelation 19:7-8).

The only thing that makes believers fit for the presence of God is the finished work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and nothing else, and we thus receive God's righteousness through Christ, and Christ is our righteousness, that makes us fit for His presence.

But God is very gracious in His economy, and so He allows even the bride to have added splendor for that occasion, and so we read in Revelation 19:8 that she will be adorned with the righteousness of saints.

The Bride of Christ is just one virgin, singular. She is not the five wise virgins of Matthew 25:1-11. Those virgins relate to Israel. (If you wish to read more about that read the 45th Psalm, which makes a distinction between the queen and the virgins, her companions that follow her).

Following the Marriage of the Lamb is that great event, the second coming of Christ to the earth, and there you have the fact that the Church will come with her Lord on that occasion. But the aerial heavens being emptied, and the Prince of the power of the air being cast out, the Church will rule and reign with Christ a thousand years to begin with, and the marriage feasts of Matthew 25 will be shared in, and then into the countless ages of eternity in relation to the New Heavens and the New Earth, following the White Throne judgment.

Sometimes friends inquire, “What are we going to do in Eternity” when we get home to our final estate.

I don't know! But I know what He is going to do. I read in Ephesians 2:7, **“That in the ages to come, He might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”**

In the ages to come He is going to shew all His heart's desires to us. I am not worrying what I will do, for I'll be occupied with what He is going to do. My, what a prospect what a hope! That is not something ethereal, or just visionary that is steadfast and sure!

Martin Luther wrote — ”Thou Lord art my righteousness, I am thy sin. Thou hast taken what was mine and hast given me what was thine. Thou did'st become what thou wast not, That I might become, what I was not.” Hallelujah what a Saviour! So Paul wrote to the Corinthians and to us, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”** (I Corinthians 15:58).

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ, who is also waiting” (II Thessalonians 3:5).

“He that testified! these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The Grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen” (Revelation 22:21).

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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