

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE AGES

by Louis T. Talbot

Talbot's comprehensive dispensational theology tracing God's plan from creation through the eternal state, outlining biblical ages and explaining how divine purposes unfold through Christ's comings, the church age, and consummation.

17 Chapters

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00.4 Author's Preface

PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

During the years that have intervened since the first and second editions of this book were printed, the world has seen chaos, confusion, and conflict such as never, since the days of Adam, had swept over the earth. Political upheaval, social disorder, economic stress, global war, spiritual darkness - these tokens of the confusion wrought through sin have caused men's hearts to fail them for fear.

Yet, as we send out this third edition of "God's Plan of the Ages," we are forcefully impressed with the fact that the message of God's inspired Word, which these chapters seek to proclaim, meet man's need today, even as it did many years ago or six millenniums ago, when Adam's sin brought sorrow and suffering and death upon all mankind.

Therefore, this third edition is sent out with the reiterated prayer that it may lead many souls to Him, to Whom are known "all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18).

- Louis T. Talbot

00.5 Book Jacket

Book Jacket

GOD'S PLAN OF THE AGES

by Louis T. TALBOT

The able and scholarly Dr. Talbot, Chancellor of Biola College and Talbot Theological Seminary, here presents another edition of his book, the outline of God's plan from the beginning of Genesis to the close of Revelation.

Clear-cut as a textbook; inspiring as an exhortation; and impelling in its conclusions!

The prophecies of Daniel are expounded in detail, as are those of Revelation. The definite purpose of God for each age or dispensation is made apparent as the plan is unfolded. The chart is given at the front of the book.

Premillennial in its chiliastic conception, the complete scriptural backing is given for each statement so that the student may study for himself and find out whether these things be so.

Much confusion exists in the minds of many as to the difference between the Judgment Seat of Christ and that of the Great White Throne. Dr. Talbot makes this clear, as well as many other troublesome questions.

The Church, he says, is to be translated at the beginning of the Tribulation Period, in order to escape the purifying judgments and to let sin come to a head.

This comprehensive view of God's dealings with man has value not only to the student of the Word and Prophecy, but to the Christian who should be thoroughly furnished in all knowledge concerning the Word of Truth.

01 Earth's Earliest Ages

CHAPTER ONE

EARTH'S EARLIEST AGES

We begin today a study of God's great plan of the ages, setting forth a comprehensive view of His dealings with man from the beginning to the end of all things.

There is more order and classifications in the Bible than many people seem to suppose; in fact, the Bible is the unfolding of a great plan that was ever in the heart of the eternal God. And the only way to understand the details of His Word is to have a clear understanding of it as a whole.

When I first came to this country to live in Chicago, a friend led me out to make me familiar with the city. He first took me to the top of the highest building and showed me the city as a whole. He pointed out to me the north side, the south, the west, and Lake Michigan on the east. Having thus fixed in my mind the plan of the city as a whole, I did not find it difficult to learn the details as to streets, buildings, and places of special interest. And so it is with the Word of God.

It is not my plan in this series of addresses to give a detailed study of the Bible, but rather to put before you the outline of the ages, beginning with the past eternity, and following God's methods with man through time, even unto the future eternity.

We begin this morning with the past eternity, and revert to the time before there was a universe, before a planet was ever brought into existence, before even the angels were created. We go into the past eternity to find out those things that have neither beginning nor end, and we behold four facts of utmost importance rising before our vision:

- (1) The eternal God;
- (2) the eternal Son;
- (3) the eternal Spirit; and
- (4) the eternal purpose. The Eternal God

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deu 33:27).

This familiar and much-loved quotation from the book of Deuteronomy contains far more than a precious promise to the child of God. It is a beautiful promise of strength to the weary, of assurance to the faltering; but it is more; it is also a plain statement of the fact that God is eternal!

The eye of faith looks up and beholds Him.

There He stands, a living personage - not an influence, but possessing all the attributes of personality - living, moving, and having His being. He wills; He loves; He looks into the very heart of man, into His secret thoughts.

He is all-powerful, all-wise, all-loving; and yet He is a holy God who cannot bear the presence of sin, and demands that man be clothed in the righteousness that He alone can give before he can stand in His presence. The Eternal Son

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:1-2; John 1:14).

Just as words express thoughts, even so the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, expresses to sinful man the very thought of God toward him, and that thought is one of forgiving love. And the Word of God who was made flesh and dwelt among us is eternal. “In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God.”

Seven hundred years before He “was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” the prophet Micah wrote concerning Him, saying He was to be “ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” (See Mic 5:2). This is the One who, according to Micah as he wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was to be born in Bethlehem, as this passage clearly states. The Son of God is eternal. “In the beginning was the Word.” His “goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

Once more the eye of faith looks up and beholds Him, the second Person of the Trinity, co-equal with the Father, co-eternal with Him, with a glory and a majesty uncreated and essentially His own.

When He was on earth, having come to the close of His earthly ministry, and having Calvary’s cross, He prayed to His Father, saying:

“Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5). The Eternal Spirit

God the Father “so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

God the Son “so loved the world” that He came to die on the cross as a Substitute for sinful man who could not save himself. And it was “through the eternal Spirit” that the eternal Son presented a sacrifice acceptable to the eternal Father when He “offered himself without spot to God” as an atonement for the souls of all men who will believe in His finished work on Calvary. (See Heb 9:14).

“The eternal Spirit” is the Holy Spirit of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and with the Son. He is a living Person, not an influence. He bears all the marks of personality; and repeatedly in His farewell discourse to His disciples, as recorded in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John, the Lord Jesus referred to Him as a living Person - a Comforter, a Teacher, a Guide, a convicting and a quickening Power because He is the Holy Spirit of God.

The Eternal Triune God - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are the only three Persons who are eternal - and these three are one God.

Concerning Him Moses wrote to his people, saying, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” (Deu 6:4). And yet this same Moses referred to the Trinity when he wrote previously, recording the

story of creation, and putting into the mouth of the Creator these significant words: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26).

It was the Holy Trinity that Isaiah saw when he beheld "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up" (Isa 6:1); and it was concerning the Holy Trinity that he heard the seraphim speak as "one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa 6:3).

These are only a few of the many quotations from Scripture that might be given to prove the doctrine of the Trinity - the eternal, triune God.

This doctrine is not contrary to reason; it is above reason.

One day we shall understand the great doctrine of the Godhead, as we cannot now understand it, possessed as we are with these finite minds; one day we shall understand how God can be three Persons, yet one God.

Some years ago a weak-minded boy, who was never known to utter a rational sentence, while on his death bed, looked up and spoke these amazing words:

"I see - I see - what do I see? Three in one, and One in three; And the One in the middle - He died for me."

This is all we can say as we think of the Trinity, no matter how profound our intellect may be. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God; and the second Person in the Trinity died for our sins, nailing them to His cross. The Eternal Purpose

We are called, says Paul, "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph 3:11).

"The eternal purpose" is, of course, according to the eternal plan which was ever in the heart of God. In other words, God foresaw what sin would do; and He had a plan that would elevate lost, but redeemed, sinners into union with His Son.

Listen to the reassuring words of the Son, spoken in prayer to the Father shortly before He went to the cross:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:20-23).

The eternal God, the eternal Son, the eternal Spirit, the eternal purpose - these only are eternal!

Angels are not eternal. There was a time when the archangel before the throne of God did not exist. Angels are God's creatures, having had a beginning.

Matter is not eternal. Scientists may speak of "that eternal matter," but there is no such thing. Only God - the triune God - and His eternal purpose have had no beginning and shall have no end. The Original Creation

Let us look now at the chart we are using in this study, noting that part which we have called “The Original Creation.”

In Gen 1:1 we read: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Verses one and two of Genesis gives us the only account of the creation found in the Word of God. “In the beginning . . .”

When was the beginning? How far back into the past does that statement take us? Please note that there is no reference here in this opening verse of Genesis to the six days’ work. That comes later, as we shall see.

Many people imagine the Bible teaches that the earth was created in six solar days, but nowhere does the Bible say so.

Some time ago I was called to see a college girl regarding spiritual things. She told me she could not believe the Bible for various reasons, one of which was that she could not believe the world was created in six days. “When I told her that the Bible made no such statement, she had difficulty in believing me.

The Bible does say that in six days the Lord “made” heaven and earth, but there is a difference between the words “made” and “created.” “To create” is to bring into existence out of nothing. “To make” is to take pre-existing matter and change its form.

The latter is what the Lord did in six days.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

Chaos

How beautiful this earth must have been “in the beginning”!

Before sin entered to mar and destroy, how beautiful it must have been! But proceeding further, we read: “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Gen 1:2). The word “was” is translated in other parts of Scripture “became,” and may read: “The earth became without form, and void.” This is the thought implied, as we learn from Isa 45:18 : “For thus said the Lord that created the heavens: God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain (or void), he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is none else.”

God created the earth not in vain, or void. If He created it not in vain, or waste, or void, then the original creation must have become so by some catastrophe. What was that catastrophe? The Scripture is not silent regarding it.

In Eze 28:12-19 we have a description of Lucifer, who, through his fall, became Satan. Among other things said about him is this:

“Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so:

thou wast upon the holy mountain of God: thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee . . . Thou hast sinned . . . Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee” (See Eze 28:12-19).

The description here is entirely different from that of the Eden in which Adam and Eve were placed. This is evidently a description of the original creation - and Lucifer was in that Eden before his fall.

Isa 14:12-17 tells of Lucifer’s fall. It tells us how he said in his heart:

“I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; J will be like the most high” (Isa 14:13-14).

Most likely Lucifer was at the head of the original creation when he made this utterance. Because of this sin he fell; and to his fall the Lord Jesus referred when He said in Luk 10:18 : “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” God cast him out. He became Satan. And just as this earth was affected later when Adam fell, so also the earth became waste and void at the fall of Lucifer. As already inferred, we have reason to believe from Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, that God had made Lucifer the head of the original creation; and that his fall and degradation brought about the catastrophe that caused the original creation to become waste and void.

Renovation

How long the earth remained in this chaotic state, we do not know - many years perhaps - possibly millions of years. But the chaotic earth was not forsaken by God; for we read that “the Spirit of God moved (or brooded) upon the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2).

From verse 4 to the close of chapter one we have the account of the renovation, in which God made the earth - reformed it, refashioned it, and placed man upon it. The order of this reformation is plainly stated:

- (1) light;
- (2) firmament;
- (3) earth and seas;
- (4) sun, moon, and stars;
- (5) fish and fowl;
- (6) cattle, creeping things, beasts, and man.

This is the only scriptural interpretation of these opening chapters of the Word of God; and it is not contrary to the laws of science. God is the God of science and law and order. And His Word will bear the lens of science and research!

Very clearly the Scriptures teach that God renovated a chaotic earth; and having brought order out of chaos, He created a new being - man - and gave him dominion over the renovated earth.

It was this authority given unto man that evidently stirred Satan's jealousy; for it was man who supplanted him in the dominion he had held over the earth before his fall.

God's Plan of Redemption in Shadow and Type

Now let us consider the typical significance of all that has been said in regard to the original creation, chaos, and renovation, because these things do have a typical significance, and foreshadow what was later to be God's dealing with man. We have here the history of man before the fall and God's plan of redemption set forth in shadow and in type. The original creation, as it came from the hands of God, was perfect; but through sin it became chaotic, waste, and void - and this because of man's desire to be something God had never intended him to be. All sin springs from the "I will" as set over against God's will.

But as the earth was not forsaken by God, neither was man; for as "the Spirit of God moved (or brooded) upon the face of the waters," so He brooded over the human race, with the eternal plan and purpose of bringing beauty and Godlikeness out of chaos and ruin. As God said, "Let there be light," at the time of the renovation, so He says at the conversion of every man, "Let there be light."

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Light of God! And as He divided the light from the darkness, so He does today. There is an impassable chasm between the darkness of sin and the light of life in Christ Jesus - impassable except by faith in His atoning work on Calvary's cross.

My brother, has God ever spoken the words, "Let there be light," to your soul?

If you want that light, look into the face of Jesus, the eternal son of God. In Him you will see the Light of the world, revealing to you what sin is, who God is, and what is the only way to God. When you allow the Light to dawn in your soul, you are separated from the darkness, separated from everything the darkness suggests. You become a child of light and begin your journey toward the city of light, of which the Apostle John wrote in Rev 21:23; Rev 22:5, saying:

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof . . . And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light."

What is recorded concerning the events of the fourth day is very significant:

"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also . . ." (Gen 1:14-19).

Will you please note that the sun, moon, and stars were set in the heavens "for signs, and for seasons"?

We understand the meaning of the word "seasons," but what is the significance of the "signs"?

Is it not to foreshadow the relation of God's people, the children of light, to the Lord Jesus, the Light of the world and "the Sun of righteousness"?

Figuratively speaking, the sun might be thought of as representing Christ; the moon, the church; the stars, individual believers. Even as the sun rules the day and the moon rules the night, so also Christ, "the Sun of righteousness, will one day rise with healing in his wings"; and in the meantime, the church shines in a darkened world during the night of sin.

Moreover, as the moon reflects the rays of the sun when the sun is beyond human vision, so also the church reflects a glory not her own, the glory of Christ, her Light, during this age when He is beyond human vision, except to the eye of faith. The planets also are set in relation to the sun, to be controlled by it, and to have their orbits fixed by its power. Likewise, every child of God is saved, filled with light, and set in relation to the Son of God, in Him to live and move and have his being. How marvelously this picture suggests the relationship between Christ and the church, which is His body!

In Jude 1:13 we read of certain ones that they are "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." This is a graphic picture of unconverted people who have never been placed in the right relationship to "the Sun of righteousness." They are like stars torn away from their orbits, heading for eternal darkness. My friend, are you in this class?

When I was a lad, the people in the community where I lived were greatly stirred by the appearance of Halley's Comet. I was told that it appeared in our heavens only once every seventy years. I asked in my childish wonderment where it had been all this time, and was informed that after an appearance in our heavens it rushes off into space, away from the sun, travelling thousands of miles a minute, on and on, away from the sun.

I was told that after this comet went on and on, away from the sun for seventy years, then the pull of the sun would bring it back. Again, I raised the question, "Suppose it never came back, but just went on and on and on?" And the answer was that it would then go farther and farther into darkness, farther and farther away from the sun.

My brother, this is a picture of every unsaved man.

God at the beginning set him in a right relationship to Himself. Sin entered, and turned man's face toward darkness - and his face has been in that direction ever since. Unless a man is regenerated, he will spend the eternal ages in outer darkness. Let me ask you, in God's name, to turn right-about-face, accept God's Light - the Lord Jesus Christ - and be placed in a relationship to Him that can never be disturbed. Then you will spend eternity in His presence, in that city of light. "And there is no night there!"

~ end of chapter 1 ~

02 Original Man - The Fall - The First Promise...

CHAPTER TWO

ORIGINAL MAN - THE FALL - THE FIRST PROMISE OF A REDEEMER In our former study we considered the past eternity - the eternal, Triune God and His eternal purpose. We discussed the original creation as referred to in Gen 1:1; the chaos of Gen 1:2; and the renovation of the earth which followed, as recorded in Gen 1:3-31. We saw that the renovation of the earth occupied six days, and that the order was as follows:

- first day, light and the dividing of light from darkness;
- second day, firmament and the separating of the waters on the earth from the waters, or clouds, of the heavens;
- third day, earth and seas and the bringing forth of herbs;
- fourth day, lights in the heavens, sun, moon, and stars;
- fifth day, fish and fowl; sixth day, cattle, creeping things, beasts of the earth, and man.

We saw that to man, created in the image and likeness of God, the Lord gave dominion over all the earth.

We come now to the second chapter of Genesis, which gives us the detailed account of the creation of man. In this lesson we shall endeavor to find the salient points in regard to his original state as he first came from the hand of God, considering also his fall, and God's first promise of a Redeemer.

Man in His Original State The detailed account of the creation of man is given in Gen 2:7 :

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

There is more truth implied in these words than is openly declared. Some of these things are very clear and need to be emphasized in this day in which we live.

1. Man is a Creature.

He had a beginning, and therefore is not co-eternal with God. If you are at all familiar, my friend, with the teachings of the cults, such as Christian Science, Unity, Theosophy, New Thought, Russellism and many others of like nature you know that their primary teaching makes man co-equal and co-eternal with God.

The Scriptures set forth no such doctrine; for according to the Word of God, man had a beginning; he is a creature, not equal with his Creator; and being a creature, he is responsible to God who made him, and will one day have to give an account to Him.

In this day of lawlessness and unbelief the doctrine of accountability to God is not very popular; but whether popular or not, yet it remains an inescapable and a solemn fact. You are responsible to your Maker, my brother, and will one day be called to give an account to Him.

2. Man's Bodily Frame Is of the Earth - Earthy.

Man was formed of the dust of the ground. There is not the slightest hint here that this dust of the ground was in the form of organized matter, as the evolutionists would have us believe. There is not the slightest intimation that man was evolved from some lower form of animal life. Such a theory of the creation of man is nothing less than a fairy tale foisted upon credulous mankind - and a theory is a supposition, not a fact! The divine record is to be believed, and here it is in Gen 2:7 : "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground."

3. "Man Became a Living Soul" (Gen 2:7).

Having created man's bodily frame, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Thus God communicated to the human race something from Himself, by virtue of which man became distinct from all the animal kingdom.

Not only was he a living soul; he was possessed also of a spirit, by which he was capable of knowing God and having fellowship with Him. This is something that the beasts which perish do not possess. Thus man has a three-fold nature: body, soul, and spirit.

Paul recognized this fact when he wrote to the Thessalonian Christians, saying: "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Th 5:23).

There is a difference between each of these three.

With the possession of a spirit, man became God-conscious, which fact determines an impassable gulf between the most sinful, the most degraded man and the highest form of animal life.

Some time ago a noted professor adopted a chimpanzee into his home, that it might be a close companion for his own boy. As we might suppose, he did this in order to study the animal carefully.

Later he declared that the chimpanzee acted in many ways as intelligently as his boy; for among other things he learned certain customs of table etiquette. He could use a knife, a fork, a spoon, even a table napkin. The professor thus endeavored to show how closely related the animal kingdom is to man.

Now all that he said about the formation of certain habits may be true; but there is one thing the boy could do that the ape could never do, no matter what his training or development might be. The ape could never reverently look up into the face of God and say, "My Father." It requires God-likeness to do that. It requires the possession of a spirit.

And only to man did God give this likeness to Himself when He created him and "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."

Man was not left to be guarded by instinct as in the case of the brute creation. To him God gave the intelligence to understand His will and His requirements.

4. God Clothed Man with a Raiment of Light.

Yet another marvelous token of God's provision for man lies in the fact that He clothed him with a raiment that is, indeed, the garment with which He covers Himself. In Psa 104:1-2 we read: "O Lord my God, thou . . . coverest thyself with light as with a garment."

The record of the fall, which we shall consider later, reveals that when man sinned, thus losing his God-likeness, he found himself naked.

That is why he made for himself an apron of fig leaves. This record, together with other portions of the Word of God, gives us reason to believe that man before his fall had a luminous garment which formed a covering, a glory that shone from within. We shall see that he lost that glorious covering when he fell; and ever since sin came into the world, unregenerate man has been naked, void of a covering, unfit to stand in the presence of a holy God. Not only so; his very nakedness is a constant reminder of his sin. But made in the image and likeness of God, how beautiful and majestic man must have been when he first came from the hands of the Creator!

5. God Gave Man Dominion Over the Earth.

This included lordship over the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fish of the sea. All the fruit of the trees of the garden was at his disposal, with one restriction only - he was not to partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

What was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

Why did God place the restriction in regard to it?

The tree was so called because of the very restriction placed around it; and this prohibition was given in order to remind Adam and Eve of the fact that, while man was lord over creation, yet he was still a creature, responsible to his Creator. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was ever a reminder of the fundamental truth that the Lord God of heaven and earth was his Governor, his Lord, and that His will was supreme.

Let me emphasize again the truth that this lesson to be learned from the restriction God placed upon Adam and Eve concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the lesson man needs to learn most of all today - his responsibility to his Maker, his Creator.

We are living in a day when man is throwing off all responsibility, both human and divine. The day is coming, however, when man shall give an account of himself to God. And in that day whatsoever a man has sown, that shall he also reap.

Daniel Webster was once asked to name the greatest thought that had ever entered his mind; and this was his reply: "My accountability to Almighty God."

My brother, this ought to cause you serious thought too. In the Garden of Eden God taught the lesson of human accountability to Himself; and throughout the Bible we find the same teaching - from Genesis to Revelation; from the Garden of Eden to the great white throne, before which will

be gathered all the wicked dead, there to give an account of themselves to a holy God. The Fall of Man

Such questions as these are often asked:

- Why did God not make man a character incapable of sinning?
- Why did He permit Satan to spoil His creation?

We shall endeavor to answer these questions in connection with the general topic, the fall of man.

Why did God permit the temptation?

We need to bear in mind the fact that when God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He placed them in a state of perfect innocence. There is a difference between innocence and righteousness. The latter is what God wants, as the Bible clearly shows; and innocence could not become righteousness until it had been tested and man had been given the opportunity of exercising his will Godward. This is what God sought in the Garden of Eden.

The age of innocence was that period of time during which man did not exercise his will either in one way or in another. Adam and Eve were innocent, but they are the only human beings that ever lived who were in this state.

We speak of babies as being innocent, but in this sense the word "innocent" is a misnomer. Babies are undeveloped rather than innocent. They have not reached the age of responsibility to God and man. We believe the Bible teaches that if a baby dies, he goes to heaven. But even so, babies are heirs to the fallen nature of sinful man; and as such, they are not innocent. Long before they reach the age of accountability, sin begins to assert itself; and sooner or later every child must be born again by the Holy Spirit of God if he is to be saved.

For a period of time Adam and Eve were innocent. God had given them a will which they could exercise Godward or sin-ward. For some time this will was dormant, as it were; and in order that they might have opportunity to exercise it, God allowed the temptation.

He permitted Satan to approach them in order that, through obedience to His Word, man might become righteous; for it is from such a creature that God receives the greatest praise. God is glorified through the obedience of a creature that is capable of disobedience, whose obedience is not mechanical, but rather is of the heart and of the will.

When people ask why God did not make man incapable of sin, they forget that such a creature could not be a man - a free moral agent.

The very term, free moral agent, suggests capability of either righteousness or unrighteousness.

God gets no glory from a machine, from the service of one who could not do other than follow a certain course. God gets glory from voluntary obedience, wherein there is a choice to be made. Therefore, in order that man might have opportunity of exercising his will, Satan was allowed to approach him with his suggestion.

Had man stood the test and obeyed God's Word, he would have become righteous. No doubt he would have eaten of the tree of life and become forever incapable of sin. But man failed in the test;

he became a sinner - and what a loser he was!

We cannot tell what would have been the glories of man had he remained true to God and become righteous.

There would undoubtedly have been a glorious advancement in the knowledge of things pertaining to God. But having fallen and become unrighteous, the only advancement man can know, apart from Christ, is under the leadership of Satan; and this advancement is in the knowledge of sin, sorrow, tears, disappointment, and death - until finally it reaches the outer darkness and eternal separation from God.

The only way back to God now is through the work of Another, and that One is the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world to redeem fallen man when there was no eye to pity and no arm to save. He died on the cross as man's Substitute. Not only did He pay the penalty for man's sin, but He also provided a righteousness that fits sinful man for the presence of a holy God. In Rom 1:16-17, Paul says: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation . . . For therein is the righteousness of God revealed." This righteousness is "unto all," but only "upon all who believe" (Rom 3:22).

The suit of clothes that I have on was unto all who saw it as long as it was in the shop window; but it is upon the purchaser only, the one who took it.

At Calvary God purchased a righteousness for unrighteous man. That righteousness is unto all: "for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

But that righteousness which God gives with everlasting life is upon those who believe and upon those only. Man must make the choice; he must meet the condition - the personal acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Saviour. My brother, have you believed? Have you taken Christ as your own personal Saviour? The Effect of the Fall

What effect did the fall have upon man? What changes did it produce in his person and in his relationship to God? Turn to the third chapter of Genesis for the answer.

1. Adam and Eve Lost Their Raiment of Light.

"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Gen 3:7).

The luminous garment which formed their covering before the fall now ceased to shine.

Having lost the moral image of God, they lost also the outward expression of that moral image. Later on in this series of studies we shall see how all believers shall one day be like Christ, clad in His glory and likeness. It is sufficient at this point to say that through the fall man lost his God-likeness. And man has been naked ever since. This fact is not only a reminder of his sin; it proclaims also his need of "the garments of salvation" provided by Christ, the Lord.

By sewing fig leaves together to make for himself an apron, man endeavored through, his own efforts to regain what he had lost.

The efforts of the natural man have ever been along this line; but man can be clothed, made fit for the presence of God, only on the basis of a death, and not through any work of his own. It is very significant that the covering Adam and Eve made was of fig leaves; for when Christ was upon the earth, the only thing He cursed was the fig tree.

It would indicate that the curse of God is upon all those who despise grace by going about to establish their own righteousness.

My dear friend, are you sewing fig leaves together for a covering for your nakedness before God? Or are you covered with that righteousness which the Lord Jesus Christ provided for you when He died on Calvary's Cross?

2. Sin Separated Man from God.

"And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" (Gen 3:8).

Sin always separates man from the face of God. If sin enters a home, it separates husband and wife. If sin enters a business, it separates employer from employee. But far worse than either of these, when sin entered the human heart, it put an impassable chasm between sinful man and a holy God - impassable so far as man is concerned, impassable except by the way of the cross of Christ. Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord. Sin separates!

3. The Fall Distorted Man's Vision of God.

"And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid" (Gen 3:9-10).

What made Adam afraid of God? Had God not been his Friend and Benefactor? Had He not bestowed upon him all the riches of His creation? Why then was he afraid? He was afraid because sin had distorted his vision of God. Sin always distorts man's vision of God. How strange that man should spend all of life in one great endeavor to get away from God! And yet this is not strange in the light of man's unconfessed and unforgiven sin. Adam was afraid because he had sinned.

I remember when I was a lad, if I had been told of a desert place where God was not, all my plans and purposes would have been concentrated on the one effort of getting there, so distorted was my view of God. And millions of people today feel that same way. They know nothing of the height, depth, length, or breadth of the love, mercy, and grace to be found in the heart of God for a sinning world.

God's cry, "Adam, where art thou?" is the cry that has come down through the ages. He is seeking man, seeking him to save him from his lost condition. But man still hides from the presence of God.

My friend, God's love has provided a Saviour. If you accept Him and trust His redeeming love and grace, you have no need to be afraid of His voice. You have no need to hide from His presence.

But if you reject this Saviour, then you have every reason to fear; for "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" without the garment of righteousness that Christ alone can give! (See Heb 10:31).

Are you hiding from God today?

If so, let me tell you, my brother, that Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save the lost.
The First Promise of a Redeemer

Very soon after the fall of man, God promised a Redeemer.

Into the scene of man's failure and sin God came with the lamp of promise - the promise of a Saviour. This lamp burned brighter and brighter all through the Old Testament days, until the star of Bethlehem appeared and the angels announced the birth of the promised One. It was this lamp that lighted up the sin of man's failure, and dispelled the darkness.

Listen to the very first promise of this coming Redeemer; it was uttered when God spoke to the serpent, saying: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15).

Thus began the great line of Messianic promise which runs like a scarlet thread throughout the whole of the Old Testament.

In this marvelous statement several things need to be noted carefully:

1. The promised Redeemer was to be "the seed of woman" - not of man. This is the first intimation that the Saviour would have a human mother, but not a human father.
2. The seed of woman was to "bruise" the serpent's "head." Now the head speaks of government, and the bruising of the head is prophetic of the overthrow of Satan's kingdom and the liberation of his captives.
3. "The heel" of the seed of woman was to be bruised, prophetic of the Redeemer's death. The heel is a part of the physical body; and in His death the hands and feet of the Saviour were pierced, even as the prophecy foretold.

The provision of a robe of righteousness on the basis of the death of the Saviour, "the seed of woman," is next suggested; for in Gen 3:21 we read: "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them."

How suggestive this is!

The coats of skins could be had only on the basis of a death. To take the skin from an animal is first to destroy the life.

Here also is a prophetic picture - that on the basis of a death, the death of the Son of God, man would be clothed in a garment of righteousness that would fit him for the presence of a holy God.

We have seen that when man fell, he made for himself aprons of fig leaves. Now God took those aprons away, and gave him a covering of His own making.

- Into the fig leaf aprons God did not put one stitch; it was all the work of man.
- Into the coats of skins man did not put one stitch; it was all the work of God.

Moreover, before Adam and Eve could be clothed with skins, the fig leaf aprons, the work of their own hands, had to be taken away. They had to be willing to exchange their aprons for the garments of God's provision. They had to be willing for the substitution to be made.

My brother, there are only two religions in the world today - that which gives to man a false hope, as represented by the fig leaf aprons; and that which makes man fit to stand in the presence of God, as represented by the coats of skins.

The one is of works; the other is of grace.

One presents man's futile effort to save himself; the other rests upon what Christ provided when He died on Calvary.

Which of these two is yours today? Are you clothed with the fig leaves of your own works, or are you clad in the garments of salvation provided for you by Jesus Christ when He died on the cross? Remember! The former has the curse of God resting upon it, while the latter will fit you for the presence of God throughout all the eternal ages. God wants to say of you, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him" (Luk 15:22).

Will you let Him? Will you let Him today?

~ end of chapter 2 ~

03 The Age Of Conscience

CHAPTER THREE

THE AGE OF CONSCIENCE As we begin our third study in the series on “God’s Plan of the Ages,” let us look carefully at the chart, entitled “From Creation to Re-Creation,” which accompanies these Bible lessons. Here we see set forth the fact that in the past eternity there existed the eternal God, the eternal Son, the eternal Spirit, and the eternal purpose. These only have had no beginning and shall have no end.

On our chart we see also the diagrams representing:

- (1) The original creation which, according to the Scripture, seems to have been the dominion of Lucifer before his fall;
- (2) the chaos of this earth which possibly resulted from the fall of Lucifer, who became Satan when he defied God and attempted to be worshipped as God; and
- (3) the renovation of the chaotic earth, which took place during the six days referred to in the first chapter of Genesis and which left Adam and Eve in a state of innocence in the Garden of Eden.

In our last study we considered in some detail the condition of man in his original state, his fall, and God’s first promise of a Redeemer. We found that in the Garden of Eden man did not know good from evil; but that after sin entered, he was no longer innocent.

Today we shall see that, with the entrance of sin, fallen man knew good from wrong. In other words, we are to consider in this lesson that period of time which we call “The Age of Conscience,” extending from the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden to the flood that came upon the earth in the days of Noah.

Why the Dispensations?

From the creation of man, God has passed him through different ages or “dispensations,” or administrations.

The word “dispensation” is a Biblical term. (See Eph 3:2; Eph 1:10; cf. 1Co 9:17; Col 1:25).

It simply means a period of time during which God deals with man according to a certain plan. Thus God has given man trial after trial. Each time man has failed to measure up to God’s standard; and each time God in His patience and longsuffering has given him a new trial. For example, man innocent in the Garden of Eden failed; then God gave him another trial under conscience.

As we shall see, man failed here too, with the result that this age or dispensation ended with corruption in all the earth in the days of Noah.

And so on throughout the Word of God we see age after age ending with sin and failure on the part of fallen man. Each time we see also God's judgment of sin. At the close of the age of innocence man was expelled from the Garden of Eden and the whole creation was under the curse. At the close of the age of conscience God sent the flood, in order to judge sin and in order to give man a fresh start, as it were.

As we follow this series of studies, we shall see how every age continues along this same course: a new beginning, sin, failure, judgment; a new beginning, sin, failure, judgment.

But you ask: Why does God pass man through these different dispensations? Does He not know the outcome before He brings it to pass?

Yes, my friend, God knows the end from the beginning. But He passes man through these different testings in order to show man that, no matter what his environment, no matter what his circumstances, he cannot make himself fit for heaven and the presence of God.

You could not find a better environment than Eden! You could not find an ancestry more pure, according to the law of eugenics, than that of the descendants of Abraham, separated as they were from the things that defile - in so far as they obeyed the Law of Moses. God has tried out all the methods that man has ever proposed as a means for the betterment of the human race; and God has done this to show man his need of a Saviour.

God knew from the beginning the utter inability of man to recover himself; but man is slow to learn his own sin and weakness and need. Therefore, all these trials of man under different circumstances in Old Testament times were given in order to prepare him for the coming into the world of a Redeemer, Christ Jesus, the Lord.

Man, independent of God, has ever sought self-reformation; but everything he has conceived for the solution of the world's needs, its sin, its crime, its problems, its sorrows - everything has failed. Man needs a Saviour! And God has from the beginning tried to show him that only by faith in the shed blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, can he ever hope for heaven and eternity with Him. How patient is God! And it is His patience that has made Him give man trial after trial, even though failure after failure followed each new beginning.

It is important to remember that today man is no longer under trial. Man's trial is past, with what results? The verdict is: "All the world . . . guilty before God" (Rom 3:19). But thanks be unto Him! He has provided a way of escape from the awful penalty of guilt and sin; for He Himself has borne the iniquity of us all!

Let us look now at our chart once more. Here the different dispensations are indicated by circles or semi-circles. Ordinarily they are classified as follows, according to seven periods, seven being the perfect number:

- (1) Innocence;
- (2) Conscience;
- (3) Human Government;
- (4) Promise (from Abraham to Sinai);

(5) Law (from Sinai to Christ);

(6) Grace;

(7) Millennium, or the thousand years' reign of Christ on earth.

On our chart, however, we have chosen to consider the period of time from Abraham to Sinai as a preface to the Law of Moses, and therefore have classified this whole period as the Age of Law.

If you distinguish these dispensations as the Bible divides them, at the same time keeping within scriptural grounds, you will have no difficulty in understanding the Word of God as a whole, as well as in its detail.

In 2Ti 2:15 the Holy Spirit exhorts every Christian, saying: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

And before we can intelligently and rightly divide the Word of truth, we must get a grasp of God's great plan of the ages. Then only shall we be able to understand the Bible in detail.

Man's Ruin - God's Deliverance The Age of Conscience began with Adam outside the Garden of Eden and ended with the flood, covering a period of some 1,656 years. Through disobedience to God, through believing Satan rather than God, man had received the knowledge of good and evil. Innocence is ignorance of evil; now man was no longer innocent.

During this new trial under conscience man was left to his own choice between good and evil.

There was no law from God in this age, no government. God tested man by letting him go in his own way, leaving him to do that which was right in his own eyes. No man had authority over other men - and this age ended with unspeakable corruption, as described in Gen 6:5; Gen 6:11-12 :

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually . . . The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence . . . for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."

During the Age of Conscience God thus proved to man that always, if left to his own choice between right and wrong, nothing but failure can result. And yet many today would have us return to such a scheme of things. Many are advocating Communism, Socialism, free love, no restraint. But if all restraint were removed today, the same thing would happen that took place in the days before the flood; the unregenerate heart does not change.

God tested man under conscience to show to man his guilt. The age ended in sin, rebellion against God, and hatred of God. But even as God proved to man his sin, He also offered to him a Redeemer!

Again and again, by the different tests through which He let man go through, He showed him his utter ruin and inability to save himself; and side by side with this object lesson, He gave the promise of a Saviour.

These two fundamental facts are indicated on our chart:

(1) Man's inability to save himself is seen in the ever-increasing evidences of his corruption and degeneration as each age goes on, ending in the final rejection of Christ by a world that refused God's only plan of redemption at Calvary's Cross; and

(2) side by side with this line of degeneration, side by side with the development of sin in the earth, we see also the line of sacrifice.

This line of sacrifice began, as we saw in our last lesson, with God's first promise of a Redeemer in the Garden of Eden, after man sinned. And from Gen 3:15 on, throughout the whole of the Old Testament, God promised a Saviour, His own Son and our Redeemer.

Through plain prophecy, and through shadow and type, God set forth the only way of escape from the condemnation of sin - and that way is the way of the cross, by faith in the sacrifice of "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

In Old Testament times God was painting a portrait, as it were, the outline of which became more and more distinct with each stroke of the Master Artist's pen. Every animal sacrifice was but a shadow of the cross. God sent His prophets also to foretell the coming of a Saviour. "And last of all he sent . . . his Son" (cf. Mat 21:37).

My brother, have you taken Him as your own personal Saviour and Lord? God has proved to you that you cannot save yourself by reformation or by your own good works. "Without shedding of blood is no remission," no forgiveness of sin. (See Heb 9:22). The Days of Noah - A Shadow of the Last Days The conditions that existed before the flood have a special significance to the student of prophecy; for the Lord Jesus Himself cast His all-seeing eye down the centuries and uttered those striking words:

"As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Mat 24:37-39).

"As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Let me ask you, my friend, how can you reconcile the statement many are making today, saying that the world is getting better and better, with this plain declaration of the Lord Jesus Himself? He said, "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." In the days of Noah there existed corruption, violence, sin! And these same circumstances will characterize the earth just prior to the Lord's return.

Just before the last war philosophists heralded the golden age. They said that by the process of science and invention, by the process of evolution and development, the world was getting better and better - that eventually a veritable millennium would come in the earth. But, my brother, the darkest period of the world's history is yet future. Before the Lord Jesus went to the cross, His disciples asked Him, saying, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world [age]?" (See Mat 24:3). And among other things in the highly significant discourse that fell from the lips of the Lord in answer to this question, is the plain statement: "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

It is a solemn fact, one that we dare not overlook, that the same conditions that characterized the days of Noah are decidedly in evidence today.

At least a five-fold analogy can be drawn between the days just before the flood and our own time.

Surely the return of Christ must be very near, even at the doors! It is a solemn fact that the unsaved man must face: but it is a "blessed hope" to the redeemed child of God to know that, before He returns in judgment, His church will be translated, caught away, forever to be with Him. To which class do you belong, my friend?

1. The Breaking Down of Barriers.

If you will read carefully the first thirteen verses of the sixth chapter of Genesis, you will see this five-fold analogy between the days of Noah and the time just prior to the return of Christ, the first characteristic of which might be called "the breaking down of barriers."

Verses 1,2, and 4(Gen 6:1-2,Gen 6:4) of this chapter are very significant:

"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose . . . There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."

Some Bible teachers believe that there is a great mystery associated with this passage. They think that "the sons of God" were angels, and that the "giants" referred to were a race, part spirit-being and part human-being. I have not been able to satisfy myself with this interpretation. Rather, I am inclined to believe that "the sons of God" refer to the godly line of Seth; the "daughters of men," to the ungodly line of Cain.

Now God has always told His people to be separated from the Christ-rejecting world. He told His people Israel not to intermarry with the heathen nations around them. He tells His blood-bought church to be "not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," to "come out from among them, and be . . . separate" (2Co 6:14-17). And it was displeasing to Him when the children of Seth, the godly line, intermarried with the children of Cain, those who had turned their backs upon Him. Herein was a breaking down of a divinely ordained barrier, the barrier of separation.

Let me ask you, my friend, is there not a breaking down of barriers today? Do we see very much difference between the manner of life of multitudes of professing Christians and those who make no profession whatever?

It is Satan's business to break down every barrier between the church and this world; whereas God says very plainly:

"Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed" (Rom 12:2)

Early in the Christian era the disciples preached in the words of the Lord Jesus, saying: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

Today on every hand we hear “blind leaders of the blind” proclaiming a false hope, teaching the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man, omitting all reference to the plain teaching of the Word of God: “Ye must be born again!”

In the days of Noah all mankind had corrupted his way on the earth, and only of Noah could it be said that he “was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God” (Gen 6:9).

Noah and his family were the only separated ones; and they alone found safety from the waters of judgment in the ark.

Likewise, today God has His faithful band of true believers, separated from the world which is dominated by Satan; and these have found the only place of safety from coming judgment, for they are sheltered beneath the blood, safe in the ark, as it were, which speaks to us of the Lord Jesus Christ. My Christian friend, remember! Our God wants a separated church, not united in unholy wedlock with the Christ-rejecting world. But be not discouraged. “As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” The return of our Lord seems to be very near!

2. God’s Judgment of Sin Postponed.

In Noah’s day the Lord said: “My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years” (Gen 6:3).

God pronounced judgment on the corrupt generation of Noah’s time; then, as this verse clearly indicates, He postponed that judgment one-hundred and twenty years. Why? Because He is a God of grace, and He wanted to give those wicked men an opportunity to turn from their sin and be saved.

Peter tells us that Noah was a “preacher of righteousness” (2Pe 2:5). And in Heb 11:7 we read: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

These words from the New Testament seem to indicate clearly that Noah by his very act of building the ark was preaching righteousness to his generation. And certain it is that through him God gave warning of judgment to come. Certain it is also that the unbelieving men of Noah’s day were condemned because they would not heed the warning he sounded.

Nearly two thousand years ago the Lord Jesus pronounced judgment to come; for He said: “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (John 12:31).

He promised also to return, not only to judge sin, but also to set up His kingdom, “wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Nearly two thousand years have passed since then. Has He forgotten His Word? No, He is the God of grace! He “is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” And “with him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” (See 2Pe 3:8-9).

Because of His longsuffering and patience with sinful man, this church age is called the Age of Grace. But the judgment He pronounced will one day fall upon unbelieving man; and as in the days of Noah the flood came “and took them all away,” so also when Jesus returns to purify the earth and to set up His kingdom, the wicked shall be taken away into everlasting punishment because of their unbelief, because they would not take warning and enter the ark of safety, even the shelter beneath the blood of our crucified and risen Lord.

3. Corruption and Moral Degeneracy.

Read again the first thirteen verses of the sixth chapter of Genesis, noting the frequent use of such words as “corrupt,” “violence,” “wickedness,” “evil.”

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually . . . The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Gen 6:5; Gen 6:11-12).

Then compare these verses with the words of the Lord Jesus, as recorded in Mat 24:38-39 :

“As in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so also shall the coming of the Son of man be.”

And now note once more these words: “The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose” (Gen 6:2).

“They took them wives of all which they chose.” Does that not sound like polygamy? Moreover, the Greek for the words of the Lord, “They were . . . marrying and giving in marriage,” suggests rather this thought: “They were exchanging wives.”

All this is a dark picture of corruption and moral degeneracy that polluted the earth, making it necessary for God to purify it with the waters of judgment - to give man a fresh start, a new environment, another trial. And let me ask you, my friend, is this not a picture of conditions in the world today? Are men not taking them wives of all which they choose? Are they not exchanging wives?

Twenty-six per cent of all the marriages in this country end in divorce. I know that there is a scriptural ground for divorce; and many unsuspecting souls are the victims of the divorce evil, yet with no fault of their own. But what of the hundreds and thousands who lightly, flippantly enter upon this divine ordinance, and as lightly and flippantly break these ties, even in the face of the words of Christ: “What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder”? (See Mat 19:6). “As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

“The earth was filled with violence” in the days of Noah.

What of the crime and lawlessness of our own day? What of the letting down of moral standards? Even unconverted men are sounding a warning to our country today. We are producing a type of criminal that did not exist twenty-five or thirty years ago. Kidnappers of babies, murderers, and bandits are on the increase. Human life is cheap.

But God foretold that this should be as the age draws to a close. Surely we are living in the last days of the dispensation of grace! Surely the return of Christ is at hand!

4. "Wicked Men . . . Said unto God, Depart from Us" (Job 22:15-17).

These terrible words were spoken by the men in the days of Noah, before the flood; for the Holy Spirit wrote of them in the book of Job, saying: "Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood: which said unto God, Depart from us?"

They did not want to know God. They defied Him. Is it any wonder that He gave them up? Yet we see this condition in many parts of the world today. Even nations are saying unto God, "Depart from us." Never was it so since the days of Noah. "And as the days of Noah were, so also shall the coming of the Son of man be."

In our own generation, both Russia and Germany have sought to get rid of Christ and the Bible. Many startling facts have been given out from reliable sources, signifying audacity of these countries in their defiance of the Lord of heaven and earth. I wonder at the patience of God! But He is "longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish."

The day will come when the cup of iniquity will be full. Judgment will overtake any individual or any nation that leaves God out. What is your relationship to the living God, my brother? He is a God of mercy, but He is also a God of justice.

5. A High Form of Civilization.

In the days of Noah "there were giants in the earth . . . mighty men . . . men of renown" (Gen 6:4).

Archeology bears out the truth of this statement, giving evidence of a high form of civilization before the flood. There are men of renown in the world today, but the problems of the world are still unsolved. Think of all that science and invention have done! You are sitting at your radio, in many different localities of Southern California, listening to my voice, and that without the aid of a wire. What a marvelous day this is! And yet the civilizations of the days of Noah, of the Babylonians and of the Greeks, developed as they were, have been long covered by the ashes of the earth because they forgot God.

Doubtless the "giants" of the days before the flood were giants intellectually, as well as physically. Likewise, we have intellectual giants in the world today. And yet we stand helpless in the face of the onrush of crime and lawlessness and violence. Noah preached righteousness in his day, but did men believe him when he said that God was going to send a flood? Do men believe us today when we tell them the Word of God, that He is coming again to purify the earth and to establish His kingdom? Thank God, there are many who heed His warning, but there are millions more who laugh to scorn such a possibility. "As the days of Noah were, so also shall the coming of the Son of man be."

"That Blessed Hope" To you, my Christian friend, I would add a word of hope and assurance before we bring this study to a close.

Look at your Bible once more, and you will see that before the flood came upon the earth, "Enoch . . . was not; for God took him" (Gen 5:24).

In Heb 11:5 we read: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

Enoch is a type of the church, the bride of Christ, which will be translated before the purifying judgments sweep the earth at the end of this age. Noah and his family represent the Jewish remnant that will pass through the great tribulation and be preserved in it. But you, Christians, all who love the Lord Jesus and have put your faith in His atoning work on Calvary - you will be translated before that time of tribulation comes upon the earth, as we shall see in our later studies.

At this time suffice it to say that the "blessed hope" of the Lord's return is to the Christian a precious promise, sure and steadfast.

But there are millions in the world today who are not members of the body of Christ. What of them? Do we care for their souls? Do you care for your own soul, my unsaved brother? Jesus is coming again. He is coming in judgment upon the ungodly. Will you enter the ark of safety before it is too late? "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Behold His love for you; accept His pardon; and be saved.

His own voice speaks to you today, saying: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment]; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

~ end of chapter 3 ~

04 The Age Of Human Government

CHAPTER FOUR

THE AGE OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT As we continue these outline studies of “God’s Plan of the Ages,” let us remember that we must necessarily pass over much of the detail that is both vital and instructive. It is our purpose here not to make an analytical study of certain portions of Scripture, but rather to view the broad sweep of God’s dealings with man from the beginning.

To this end we have considered in our former studies the eternal Triune God and His eternal purpose, man innocent, and man under conscience, together with certain related facts of striking significance. We have seen that from the beginning God passed man through different trials, or administrations, or dispensations, to show man his utter ruin and helplessness apart from Divine grace.

Two of these dispensations we have considered briefly, discovering the general trend of all these times of testing:

- (1) God’s trial of man;
- (2) man’s utter failure;
- (3) God’s judgment of sin.

Thus God tested man during the Age of Innocence; man failed; and God in judgment drove him from the Garden of Eden, pronouncing the curse upon Satan and upon a fallen race. Then followed the Age of Conscience, a new trial; here man failed again; and the corruption and violence that overspread the earth in the days of Noah were swept away by the purifying waters of judgment.

Today we shall see how the third dispensation, the Age of Human Government, followed the same course: a new trial, failure, judgment.

Now as we come to the study of this dispensation, let us look once more at our chart.

At a glance we note several outstanding facts:

- (1) The Bible record of events during this period of time is found in Gen 8:20-11:9;
- (2) this age covers some 430 years;
- (3) it extends from Noah to Abraham;
- (4) it began with an altar built “unto the Lord,” and ended with rebellion against God at the Tower of Babel; it began with Noah in fellowship with God, on a purified earth, and it ended with degenerate man defying the living God.

All this speaks to us of how God gave man a fresh trial, under favorable conditions; of man's failure; and of God's righteous judgment of sin. It is just another proof to man that he cannot save himself, that he needs a Divine Saviour to make him righteous, fit to stand in the presence of a Holy God.

"Noah Buildded an Altar Unto the Lord" The scene with which this new trial of man opens is very beautiful. Noah and his family had been saved from the flood that covered the earth, and in gratitude to God:

"Noah buildded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour" (Gen 8:20-21).

The altar throughout the Old Testament speaks to us of sacrifice.

Always it points on to the cross of Christ. In Heb 11:7 we read that "by faith Noah . . . became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." And Noah is in heaven today because he believed God's promise of a coming Redeemer. He acknowledged the eternal truth that the only ground of blessing is on the basis of shed blood. "By faith" "Noah buildded an altar unto the Lord." And God accepted Noah's sacrifice and honored his faith.

We have seen in our former studies that in the Old Testament, side by side with the record of the development of sin in the earth, there is the scarlet thread of sacrifice - from Genesis to Malachi. Side by side with the story of man's sin and failure and helplessness there is the promise of the coming Redeemer, Christ Jesus, the Lord.

Thus it is that a holy, just God who cannot tolerate sin is revealed also as a merciful, loving God who offers a way of escape from impending judgment. And that way of escape is always, only, by the way of the cross of our crucified and risen Lord.

It is very significant also that every dispensation begins with God's bringing man back to the place of sacrifice, while every dispensation closes with man's getting away from it.

This is a message that needs to be stressed in our own day. All about us we see an ever-increasing apostasy.

Many who "call" themselves Christians are blinded by Satan; their souls are lost because they have "trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant... an unholy thing" (Heb 10:29).

"It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev 17:11).

Are you sheltered beneath the cleansing blood of Calvary's Lamb, my friend?

"There is a fountain filled with blood,

Drawn from Immanuel's veins;

And sinners plunged beneath that flood

Lose all their guilty stains."

God's Covenant With Noah When "Noah builded an altar unto the Lord . . . the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart" some very significant words.

Turn to Gen 8:20-22; Gen 9:1-27, and read the entire passage carefully to find what the Lord said. "God's covenant with Noah," we call these words; and rightly so, for note that at least seven times, as the Lord addresses Noah, He uses the word "covenant," referring to it as "my covenant with you," or "the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature." In this covenant which God made with Noah there are several important facts to remember, among which are the following:

1. God Promised Never Again to Destroy the Earth with a Flood.

As a token or sign of this promise God set the rainbow in the clouds. When we see the bow in the heavens, therefore, we may know that God is looking upon it and remembering His covenant with Noah, even as He said.

2. God Promised Never Again to Interrupt the Seasons "while the earth remaineth."

For thousands of years "seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night" have not ceased. (See Gen 8:22). What a constant reminder of the providence of God!

3. God Gave to Man Animal Food, saying: "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you" (Gen 9:3).

In this connection the Lord said also that the fear of man should be in the heart of the beast of the earth and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea. But at the same time one highly significant restriction was given:

"Flesh with life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat" (Gen 9:4).

The blood represents life; the blood of the animal sacrifices was symbolic of the shed blood of the Lamb of Calvary; and God said, "The blood . . . shall ye not eat."

4. God Put Into the World His Governmental Law.

He placed a sword in the hands of Noah, saying: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen 9:6).

Before the flood there was no human government; every man did that which was right in his own eyes. That is the reason why Cain was not killed when he murdered his brother; human government had not been established. But what was the result of God's trial of man before He instituted human government? Corruption - violence - failure - sin - ending in the flood!

When God gave Noah the responsibility of government, He instituted, as a fundamental law, capital punishment: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." That was God's governmental law, not the Mosaic Law. Keep this distinction in mind; and remember that this fundamental law was not abrogated later by the Mosaic Law.

We have in this world today many sentimental people who think they know more than God Himself. They would abolish capital punishment. But God put government into the world to restrain

sin. In His sight it is a terrible thing to take a life. To be sure, it is the civil government's business to administer the extreme penalty. Most certainly it is not to be executed by mob-rule and lynching. But God will hold judges and juries responsible for the administration of justice in the earth.

Every civil officer is "the minister of God to thee for good," Paul tells us; "for he beareth not the sword in vain" (Rom 13:4).

Of course, this does not mean that he is a minister of the Gospel, serving man's spiritual need: it means that he is a minister of governmental power put into his hand by God, before whom he shall be called on to give an account of his trust.

In this connection let us never confuse these passages of Scripture which refer to a Christian with those which refer to human government. As Christians, we must not avenge ourselves; we must return good for evil. The context of these Scripture passages always makes clear the application, whether they admonish Christians to exercise forgiving love, or whether they refer to civil government.

Let us remember also that God's Word does not deny the murderer pardon from sin and eternal life. It is right that we should pray for the salvation of the condemned man, and seek to lead him to Christ. David was a murderer, and he was forgiven. But a sentimental setting aside of God's governmental law has led to a great crime wave in our country today. Human life is cheap; the murderer too often escapes justice; whereas in his execution he makes known the enormity of murder and the value of a human life.

Some years ago Governor Pollock of Pennsylvania refused to pardon a young man who was sentenced to die for a deliberately planned murder. In this Mr. Pollock was acting as a governor. Shortly before the execution, this high official, acting as a Christian, sat in that young man's cell and talked to him about his soul. He said to the condemned youth that, while he could not escape man's law, yet One had come to take his place before God.

"You cannot escape the law of Pennsylvania," he explained, "for there is none to die for you. But so far as your relationship to God is concerned, you may escape; for Christ died in your stead."

Do you see, my friend; that Governor Pollock was talking as a governor and as a Christian? He was obeying God's fundamental law in administering justice, at the same time pointing the sinner to the Saviour who is both just and the justifier of him who believes in His shed blood as an atonement for sin.

Man's Failure to Govern Himself

God met Noah at the place of sacrifice and made a covenant with him, giving to man a fresh trial. As we read on in the Genesis record, we see also that man failed to govern himself, to say nothing of governing his fellow-creatures. Even Noah, who had experienced the delivering power of God, failed to control himself, and "was drunken," bringing shame upon his own household. So it has ever been. Man lets riches possess him; he is a slave to sin; and in shame and remorse he fails to govern himself or others.

Why are dictators arising in the world today? Because human government is breaking as man gets farther and farther away from God. The world needs a Governor, a Ruler! That Governor walked

this earth nearly two thousand years ago; but wicked men said, "We will not have this Man to rule over us." And they thrust Him out of the world at the point of a spear.

But the Christian can look up to Him, as He now sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and utter that prayer of hope: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." For Jesus is coming again to rule in righteousness and peace. And "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa 11:9).

Political Babylon - Nimrod - a Type of the Antichrist

Though God's fundamental law of government has not been set aside, yet the Age of Human Government, God's third great testing of man, given to show to him his need of a Saviour, ended only a few hundred years after it began.

It ended in a political confederacy under Nimrod, in open defiance of God at the Tower of Babel. We read the story in Gen 10:8-10; Gen 11:1-9. Of Nimrod we read that "the beginning of his kingdom was Babel" (Gen 10:10).

The name "Nimrod" means "rebel." As a rebel against God, he is a type of "the lawless one" who will be revealed after the translation of the church, and who will in that day build a great civilization in defiance of God.

The form which Nimrod's rebellion assumed was a great confederacy against God; his aim was a world empire.

Conceiving the idea that in unity there is strength, he defied God who had told the people to scatter abroad over the face of the earth. In the judgment that came upon the people at the Tower of Babel God showed that any unity which leaves Him out will be scattered and swept away.

In disobedience to God's command, this godless civilization in the day of Nimrod had said:

"Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen 11:4).

So also will the Antichrist gather around him a great confederacy of nations just prior to the return of Christ to the earth; his aim will be a world empire.

Nimrod, we read, was "a mighty hunter before the Lord" (Gen 10:9).

The Jewish rabbis tell us that these words "before the Lord" signify this wicked man's defiance of God; that is, he was "a hunter" of souls "before the Lord," seeking to turn them away from God.

What a picture this is of the Antichrist who will form a great, godless federation of people, during the seventieth week of Daniel! This federation will be the revived Roman Empire, which will be swept away when Christ returns in glory.

Three times in the Genesis record we read of the "mighty" Nimrod. Likewise, the Antichrist shall work "lying wonders."

Nimrod's genealogy is traced back to Cush, a descendant of Ham, upon whom rested the curse. Surely the curse of God rests upon Satan and his masterpiece, "the man of sin"!

Nimrod was king of Babel. The Antichrist will come as a counterfeit of the King of kings, seeking worship as God.

The end of Babel was marked by the descent of Jehovah; for God came down and confused the tongues and scattered the people abroad "upon all the face of the earth."

The end of the Antichrist's confederacy will be marked by the descent of the Lord God; for the Lord Himself shall come to earth to put an end to the reign of the Antichrist, to judge sin, and to establish His millennial kingdom.

Mystery Babylon - A Religious Counterfeit

There will be a religious Babylon, as well as a political Babylon, at the end of time; and it is also foreshadowed in this Genesis record. In Rev 17:5 this system is described: "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

The Antichrist will unify apostate Christendom under the Roman Catholic Church - after true believers have been translated, that is, caught away to be forever with the Lord.

The principles of this great religious counterfeit began at Babel; therefore, it is called:

"BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS
AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

As we read further in Rev 17:6, we see that this religious system, composed of a confederacy of apostate Christendom, is described as being "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." After the rapture of the church, this confederacy of apostate religions will be formed on the territory of the Roman Empire. And all this is foreshadowed at Babel.

For a more detailed study of the mystery religion, you are referred to our studies of the book of Revelation, chapter 17, published some months ago. For our purpose here, however, only a few paragraphs are quoted from this former radio message. (Acknowledgment is made to Dr. George "W. Davis, Dr. H. I. Ironside, and Professor Hyslop for much of the material that follows here).

"It was in the city of Babel, later called Babylon that all the mystery religions began - those religions that one thousand years later covered the earth . . . The founder of Babel was Nimrod, but the foundress of the mystery religion connected with Babylon was Semiramis, the wife of Nimrod. She is not mentioned in the Bible, though her son, Tammuz, is. Archeology has discovered her story from the monuments.

"The central mystery was this: The wife of Nimrod claimed that she gave birth to a child who had no human father; she declared that he was conceived by the Great Spirit above. His name was Tammuz.

"As we study further, we shall see how, in this central mystery, the devil has sought to bring to naught all the purposes of God that were going to come to pass through Christ, 'the seed of woman' (not the seed of man); and Satan has sought to accomplish this by presenting a counterfeit.

“The wife of Nimrod, therefore, presented Tammuz to the people as having a mother, but no human father. The figure used in connection with the mystery of Babylon was the wife of Nimrod with a crown on her head and with a little baby in her arms - Tammuz. Archeologists who have gone to India, to Egypt, to Greece, and to ancient Phoenicia have found that a thousand years after Babel was erected the mystery religion had spread all over that part of the world. Isis and Horus in Egypt, Aphrodite and Eros in Greece, Venus and Cupid in Italy are some of the designations of this religion adopted by different nations and systems. If you go to any museum, you will find that from all these countries archeologists have dug out of the earth statues of a woman with a crown on her head, having a baby in her arms.

“Connected with this mystery, there are hundreds of lesser mysteries; for instance, sanctification through purgatory, the use of holy water, the eating of the wafer that was presented to the Queen of the Heavens. If you will turn to Jer 44:16-22, you will find that this particular mystery, the presentation of the wafer to the Queen of Heaven, had gotten into the nation of Israel in the time of Jeremiah, and you will find that this prophet pronounced the curse of God upon those who took part in this rite.

“A remarkable story about Tammuz was this: His mother declared that he had been slain by a boar, and that he arose from the dead on a certain day, which was always thereafter celebrated as the feast of Istar. This feast, supposed to commemorate the resurrection of Tammuz from the dead, was preceded by forty days of weeping and sorrowing; but the feast day itself was one of great rejoicing. This mystery also had corrupted Israel. (See Eze 8:14).

“When Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon and built that great city, there was a temple unit a mile and one-half in circumference dedicated to these mystery religions. It was called the Temple of Bel. There were the priests who gave themselves to the services; there were the virgins who were dedicated to Tammuz.”

You will readily see, my friend; that the principles of Babel introduced into the church in the fourth century, formed the basis for worship in ritualistic branches of Christendom such as Romanism. The worship of the Queen of Heaven with the child in her arms, holy water, wafers, purgatory - all these came from Babylon.

After the translation of the church there will be a great confederacy of the apostate religions, which will be Mystical Babylon in full bloom - hence Rev 15:5 : “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” But the Lord will scatter this religious confederacy when He returns in glory at the close of the seventieth week of Daniel to purify the earth in righteous judgment. This false religious system has been a counterfeit from the beginning. Even the materials used at Babel were counterfeit: “They had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar” (Gen 11:3).

Having turned their backs upon God, they began to build without God; and the result was the scattering of all their ungodly efforts. But the day will come when Satan’s counterfeit will meet its doom. In that day the King of kings shall establish a kingdom that will forever put an end to all that is counterfeit, all that is false.

“The Government Shall Be Upon His Shoulder” My brother, Jesus is coming again, and “the government shall be upon his shoulder.”

Man has abundantly proven to all the world that he cannot govern himself or others. He has been pronounced guilty before God. He is no longer under trial. But he will one day face the Governor of all the earth. And before Him every man will have to bear "the wages of sin," which "is death," unless he has claimed by faith "the gift of God," which is "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Are you ready for His coming? Have you gone to the altar of sacrifice, His cross, where He shed His blood as an atonement for your soul? Have you given Him your life, to govern it, to direct it into channels of service for His name's sake - for time and for eternity?

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom 10:13).

"Prepare to meet thy God," and be ready to welcome His return with joy. For the Christian it will be indeed a day of victory!

"The government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" (Isa 9:6-7).

~ end of chapter 4 ~

05 The Two Covenants

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TWO COVENANTS In this series of studies we have come to that period of the world's history which we call the Age of Law. According to our chart it extends from Abraham to Christ.

This period is usually divided into two ages: The Age of Promise, from Abraham to Sinai; and the Age of Law, from Sinai to Christ. For our purpose here, however, we have chosen to call the period of time from Abraham to Sinai a preface to the Law of Moses.

Today, with this thought in mind, we want to compare the two covenants given by God to man during this period:

- (1) His covenant with Abraham; and
- (2) His covenant with Israel at Sinai.

Then in our next lesson we shall amplify the message of the two covenants, dealing particularly with the Law of Moses.

We have seen how God in Old Testament times passed man through different testings or trials or administrations, in order to prove to man his need of a Savior. We have seen that man innocent failed; man under conscience failed; man under human government failed; and each time God had to judge man's sin and give him a new beginning.

Today, as we contrast the two covenants, we shall see this same principle set forth:

- (1) God wants to deal with man in grace; and
- (2) man, left to his own efforts, rejecting the grace of God, is utterly helpless, unable to save himself from the ruin brought into the world by sin.

In other words, failure is written over every effort of fallen man to make himself fit for the presence of a holy God.

And as, side by side with the dark picture of sin, we have seen the promise of a Redeemer, so also in the two covenants we shall see man's failure and God's deliverance.

This, therefore, is the purpose of the two covenants:

- (1) To show what is in the heart of God, as seen in His covenant with Abraham, a covenant wholly of grace; and
- (2) To show what is in the heart of man, as seen in the covenant He made with Israel at Sinai when man asked for a covenant of works.

God's Covenant With Abraham - One of Sovereign Grace From Genesis 12 to Exodus 18 we read the story of God's dealings with Abraham and his descendants in sovereign grace. In these chapters we find the record of the Abrahamic Covenant; whereas, in Exodus 19 to Malachi, even unto Calvary's Cross, we see Israel in that covenant relationship with God which began at Sinai.

The first of these two covenants was an unconditional covenant; the second, a conditional covenant, a covenant of works, later proven to be a covenant with death.

God's sovereign grace is seen in His words spoken to Abraham when He called him out of idolatry (Jos 24:2) and made him the father of the Hebrew nation; for "the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen 12:1-3).

Notice here God's sovereign declaration: "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee."

It was not Abraham's merit that obtained for him the promises; it was God's sovereign grace.

On the contrary, the covenant under which Israel entered the land of Canaan under Joshua was a covenant of works; the condition of blessing was Israel's obedience to the law. And did they hold the land? No. Likewise, God made a conditional covenant with King Saul, on the ground of his obedience; and Saul failed to keep his part of the covenant. Always promises given by God to man on condition of man's obedience are never attained; or if attained for a time, they are never retained. Why? Because man cannot keep his part of the covenant.

But thank God! Our salvation depends on the unconditional covenant of the grace of God! Like the covenant He made with Abraham, its promise is sure, because it depends upon the absolute "I will" of a sovereign God. It can never fail, because it is dependent upon the faithfulness of the God of grace!

The covenant at Sinai should never have been made; but Israel presumptuously asked for it; and God granted it, in order to show the sin and iniquity and unrighteousness of the human heart. He granted it, that the law might serve as "a schoolmaster" to bring sinners "unto Christ."

But before He permitted this covenant to be made, He gave to Abraham, out of His sovereign grace, the unconditional covenant that ever pointed on to Christ and His atoning work on Calvary.

Why Did God Call Abraham?

Perhaps God's grace in His relationship with Abraham will be seen more clearly as we ask ourselves this question: Why did God call Abraham out of idolatry, reveal Himself unto him, and make him the father of the Hebrew nation?

The answer is four-fold:

1. To show the utter ruin and sin and guilt of the human race and therefore the need of a Savior.

God placed Abraham, the best of men, in a most favorable environment. He gave to him and his descendants a fruitful land, and put a hedge about them, as it were, separating them from the

heathen nations and the things that defile. But Israel failed. They worshipped idols; they practiced all manner of wickedness; they crucified their Messiah!

2. Why did God call Abraham? To place in the world a depository for His truth: His Word - "the oracles of God" (Rom 3:1-2).

Written by "holy men of God" - Israelites - as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit, these oracles of God have gone into all the world to bless all nations.

3. Why did God call Abraham? To make the Hebrew nation a channel for the coming of Christ, the Redeemer.

To Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob He said: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen 12:3; Gen 26:4; Gen 28:14).

And Paul, centuries later, wrote these significant words: "God . . . preached . . . the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Gal 3:8).

Let me ask you, my friend, what is the Gospel? It is the "good news" of a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. And Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are in heaven today because they believed God's covenant of grace, and put their faith in the coming Redeemer.

The Lord Himself said to the Pharisees when He was upon earth, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56).

4. Why did God call Abraham? To put into the world a people who should be a national witness to Himself.

Through leaders like Moses and Joshua and the prophets; through His own presence in the midst in the Shekinah Glory; through His providence and power He was giving an object lesson to the world.

A most favored nation, separated from deteriorating influences, with a perfect code of earthly laws to regulate living, with instruction even about the kind of food to eat, disease, social relationships - with all these blessings, Israel failed more grievously than did man under conscience and human government, even crucifying the Lord from heaven!

God's call of Abraham and His covenant with him sprang from the unconditional, sovereign grace that is ever in the heart of God. Abraham had done nothing to merit such mercy. It all came from God's heart of love!

Sacrifice - The Ground of Blessing

Moreover, the ground of all this blessing which God bestowed upon Abraham was sacrifice, a type of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Turn to the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, and read the record carefully. Abraham, acknowledging himself to be a needy soul, takes the place of an unrighteous sinner, and goes to God with his need.

"What wilt thou give me?" he asks.

He does not claim any merit of his own; he asks for a gift of pure grace. Then it is that God points him to the stars and confirms His unconditional covenant regarding Abraham's seed and Abraham's land. That land is Palestine; and that "seed" is Christ. (See Gal 3:16; compare also the entire message of Paul to the Galatians).

Again Abraham turns to God and asks: "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit" the land, with all the accompanying blessings promised? (Gen 15:8).

Then it is that God shows him that the altar of sacrifice is the ground of all blessing; the shed blood is the basis of His covenant of grace. And that altar foreshadowed the cross of the Lord Jesus - the only ground of blessing for a lost and ruined people.

Every detail of this scene is significant; and the picture is wonderfully complete.

- The "heifer" speaks to us of the vigor of the Son of God;
- The "goat," of the sin-offering;
- The "ram," of consecration;
- The "turtledove" and "young pigeon," of His heavenly nature.
- The thrice repeated "three years" remind us of the three years of public ministry of the Lord Jesus.
- The "fowls" represent the powers of hell, trying to put doubt and fear into Abraham's heart. (Compare Christ's own statement that the birds of the air snatched away the good seed, Mat 13:4). But by faith "Abraham drove them away."

"And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abraham; and, lo, an horror of a great darkness" (Gen 15:12).

- The "deep sleep" suggests that Abraham was not to inherit the promises of the covenant during his natural life;
- The "horror of great darkness" represents the grave;
- While the awakening out of the "deep sleep" points on to the resurrection hope, that day when Abraham with the children of promise shall enter into the millennial reign of Christ.
- Verses 13 and 14(Gen 15:13-14) are prophetic of the Egyptian bondage, now a fact of history.
- The time of affliction in Egypt was but a shadow of "the great tribulation," "the time of Jacob's trouble."

"And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces" on the altar (Gen 15:17).

The "smoking furnace" but faintly speaks of the great tribulation through which Israel is yet to pass; but the "burning lamp" accompanied the smoking furnace!

So also God will be with His people to deliver them out of their time of sorrow, to see that the nation is not annihilated. Christ, the Light of the world, is ever "in the midst" of His people.

“In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram” (Gen 15:18) - a covenant based upon death. And then God said, not, “Unto thy seed, will I give this land” as in Gen 12:7, but, “Unto thy seed have I given this land.”

All the promises of the covenant are based upon the finished work of Christ, foreshadowed by the sacrifice offered upon the altar.

My brother, even as God pointed Abraham to the stars, so also He points you to the heavens; He points you to the stars; He offers you pardon from sin and promise of eternal blessings - on the basis of the death of His only begotten Son.

Will you follow the example of Abraham, and take Him as your Saviour? “Abraham believed in the Lord” (Gen 15:6).

It is not written that Abraham believed God and worked for his salvation. “Abraham believed in the Lord; and he counted it (his faith) to him for righteousness.”

When you approach God as a helpless sinner, asking, “What wilt thou give me?” then God offers, without money and without price, the gift of eternal salvation through faith in His pardoning grace. “Whereby shall I know?” you ask again. And God’s answer is: “Jesus paid it all!” He paid the penalty for your sins when He bore them on Calvary’s Cross. There can be no blessing apart from the altar of His sacrifice.

When Abraham “believed in the Lord” and His covenant of grace, Satan tried to put doubts and fears into his mind; “the fowls came down” to consume the sacrifice. But by the grace of God “Abram drove them away”!

When you accept God’s provision of unconditional grace, Satan will try to put doubts and fears into your mind. He will try to lead you to believe that your salvation depends upon your own good works, at least in part. But by the grace of God you, like Abram, may drive away all doubt and fear.

Fix your eye upon Calvary; and you will hear God’s reassuring voice, speaking to you, even as He spoke to Abram, saying: “Fear not . . . I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Gen 15:1). The Two Covenants Contrasted This is the message of God’s covenant of grace made with Abraham. In our next lesson we shall see how striking the contrast is between it and the covenant made at Mount Sinai. Today we shall look only at the high points of difference between the two. It is very important that we distinguish that difference carefully; for much confusion exists in the minds of God’s people regarding the issues involved. Perhaps the following contrast in outline will help us to grasp more fully the meaning of God’s unconditional grace offered to Abraham and to a sinning world:

The Abrahamic Covenant 1. Made with Abraham 430 years before Sinai; and not disannulled at Sinai (Gal 3:17). 2. Concerns Israel and Israel’s land primarily, but points also to “the spiritual” descendants of Abraham; i. e., the church. 3. Unconditional blessing. 4. A covenant of grace. 5. A covenant unto life. 6. Guarantees Israel’s future and the reestablishment of Abraham’s seed in Abraham’s land.

The Sinaitic Covenant 1. Made with Israel at Mt. Sinai to reveal the “exceeding sinfulness of sin” (Rom 7:13). 2. Concerns Israel and Israel’s land only. 3. Conditional blessing - dependent upon

Israel's obedience to God. 4. A covenant of works. 5."The ministration of death" (2Co 3:7). 6. Accounts for the state of dispersed Israel today, because the covenant made at Sinai depended on Israel's obedience to the law which they disobeyed.

Volumes have been written on the foregoing fundamental truths; the epistles of Paul to the Romans and to the Galatians deal particularly with this subject; but space forbids our going into full detail here.

As already stated, our next lesson will amplify this theme and explain more fully about the Sinaitic Covenant, called "The Law of Moses."

Then we shall see the difference between such questions as the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Lord's Day. But before we go further into these matters, let us get clearly in mind another significant contrast that we must if we are to grasp the meaning of the two covenants. And that distinction concerns Abraham's earthly seed and his heavenly seed.

Abraham's Earthly and Heavenly Seed

We have already seen that, even as "the seed of woman" in Gen 3:15 pointed to the virgin birth of Christ, so also "the seed" of Abraham is Christ, in whom all the nations of the earth have been blessed. This truth is fundamental.

In another sense "Abraham's seed" refers to the nation of Israel; and in yet another sense the expression refers to the children of "the household of faith," the spiritual seed of Abraham.

This is the message of the books of Romans and Galatians. "In Christ Jesus . . . there is neither Jew nor Greek . . . And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:29).

Abraham's Earthly Seed 1. Israel. 2. An earthly people. 3. Symbolized by "the sands of the sea" for number. (See Gen 22:17). 4. An earthly inheritance, the land of Palestine. 5. Assured of the future and their re-establishment in Palestine. 6. Jerusalem, an earthly city. 7. All of grace!

Abraham's Spiritual Seed 1. The church composed of Jew and Gentile. 2. A heavenly people. 3. Symbolized by "the stars of the heaven." 4. A heavenly inheritance, "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:10). 5. Assured of heaven and eternity with Christ. 6. The New Jerusalem, a heavenly home. 7. All of grace!

Many Christians today would return to Sinai. They would put upon the church the yoke of bondage, the Law of Moses. But do you not see, my friend, that God can deal with sinful man only on the ground of grace?

Thus He dealt with Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation and the father of the faithful in this church age.

Four hundred and thirty years later Israel, in blindness and pride and self-righteousness, presumed to ask for the law; and God granted their request, to show them that they could not keep His law, to show them their sin in the light of His holy law, to show them that only by faith in the only One who could keep that law can the guilty sinner find grace.

But remember! When God permitted Israel to have the law, He did not set aside His covenant with Abraham! He did not disannul that unconditional covenant of grace!

If you are trying to get to heaven partly by grace and partly by the works of the law, then you will not get anything on that basis.

“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9).

My brother, even your faith is the gift of God! Will you accept His gift, and be counted among Abraham’s heavenly seed? The Abrahamic Covenant Assures Israel’s Future

Now God’s covenant with Abraham has been partly fulfilled, in that Christ has come to die for the sins of the world; and through Christ and the Bible all nations of the earth have been blessed. But this covenant will yet be fulfilled in its entirety when Israel has been re-established in the land of Palestine.

According to the covenant made at Sinai, Israel was promised blessing if she obeyed the law; cursing if she broke it. God led the nation into the land of promise under Joshua. But Israel failed; they broke the law for which they had asked; they crucified their Messiah who alone fulfilled the law; and the curse of that law fell upon them.

As a result they have long been scattered among the nations; the name “Jew” has become a byword; they have been persecuted, hated, distressed.

But Israel will yet possess the land on the ground of God’s covenant of grace made with Abraham 430 years before the law was given.

In spite of Israel’s pride and self-righteousness and unbelief, they will yet have a glorious future because of God’s sovereign “I will.”

“Coming events cast their shadows”; and in the Zionist Movement today we see the prophecies of the Scriptures being fulfilled. We see Israel turning her face toward Jerusalem. God is working out His great purpose for His chosen people, but not on the ground of the law; it is all of grace, and had its beginning in His unconditional covenant with Abraham.

On the pages of the Old Testament, hundreds of texts bearing upon this theme crowd into view. We shall select from these some which prove that God will yet fulfill His covenant with Abraham in every detail:

1. Israel will be regathered in the land of Palestine.

Turn to Eze 37:1-4. Here we see the picture of the national resurrection of Israel from the “graves”; that is, from the Gentile nations where they have long been buried, as it were.

Read Eze 37:21, where God says: “Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen [nations], whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land.” Read also the eleventh chapter of Isaiah; Isa 14:1, Jer 16:14-15.

In Jer 30:11 we read that Israel dispersed among the nations is now under the disciplining hand of God; but in Jer 32:41 we see further that God said: “I will plant them in this land assuredly with my

whole heart and with my whole soul.”

Israel will be regathered on the basis of God’s covenant with Abraham, in spite of the fact that centuries later they asked for and received a law which they could not keep.

2. Israel will be reconciled to God by the acceptance of Christ as their Messiah.

Read the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of Zechariah. Words such as these are unmistakable:

“I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born” (Zec 12:10).

Again, we read in Zec 14:4 that “his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives.”

Israel will behold their King and be reconciled to Him - because God will keep the covenant He made with Abraham!

3. Israel will become a “praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame” (Zep 3:19).

Look carefully at the entire passage from which these striking words are taken (Zep 3:14-20).

In that day the Lord will be in their midst (Zep 3:17); “he will save, he will rejoice” over His people “with joy.”

What a wonderful future is in store for Israel! This cannot be said of Israel today because they are out of the land of promise. Today their name is a byword. But when the Lord regathers His people, then He will make them “a name and a praise among all people of the earth” - because He will keep His covenant with Abraham!

4. Israel will occupy the religious leadership of the world, not because they are worthy, but because God will keep His covenant with Abraham.

What a beautiful picture we see in Zec 8:2-8, the Lord in the midst of His people.

In that day “it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you” (Zec 8:23).

Then God’s covenant with Abraham will be completely fulfilled, in that “all nations of the earth shall be blessed” - not only by Christ, the Redeemer of the world, but also by His people Israel who shall be witnesses unto Him in every truth.

5. Jerusalem will be a city of righteousness and the metropolis of the world.

Listen to the Word of the Lord: “I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city” (Isa 1:26).

And listen yet again to the Word of the Lord God: “There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for every age. And the streets of

the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof" (Zec 8:4-5).

Even the wild beasts of the field will be no longer ferocious, "and a little child shall lead them" (Isa 11:6).

In that day the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, will sit upon His throne, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

To Peter He said when He was upon earth: "Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mat 19:28).

Here Christ was talking of the twelve tribes of Israel, Abraham's earthly seed; for, as we shall see later in our studies, before Christ comes to sit upon the throne of His glory, Abraham's heavenly seed, the church which is His bride, will be with Him. Abraham's heavenly seed will rule and reign with Him as "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

In our lesson today, however, we are thinking of the time of Israel's future glory, when their King shall rule "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psa 72:8).

We are thinking of that time when Jerusalem will be a city of righteousness and the metropolis of the world - because God will not forget His covenant with Abraham!

"Abraham Believed In The Lord"

"Abraham believed in the Lord; and he counted it unto him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6).

Abraham looked down the centuries and saw the "day" of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary; he saw it and "was glad." And because he put his faith in the shed blood of the coming Redeemer, God reckoned his faith unto him for righteousness.

My unsaved brother, even as Abraham looked forward to the cross of Christ and was saved, so also you must look back to Calvary if you are to inherit eternal life. There is no other way to God except on the ground of sacrifice, the shed blood of the only Saviour from sin. There is no other way to God except on His own terms - unconditional grace.

Do not let anyone put upon you the yoke of bondage.

You cannot keep the Law of Moses.

No man has ever kept it but the holy Son of Man who kept it because He was and is God, who kept it for lost sinners who have ever been and always shall be unable to keep it for themselves. Look unto Him; trust Him for His grace; and accept the free gift He offers you - everlasting life.

Abraham believed God for what He was going to do. You are called to believe Him for what He has already done. "By faith Abraham . . . looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:8-10).

By faith you may set your face toward the New Jerusalem and, as Abraham's heavenly seed, inherit the riches of Christ for all the endless ages. Will you take God at His Word? His promise is sure - and it is all of grace, unconditional grace!

~ end of chapter 5 ~

06 The Age Of Law

CHAPTER SIX

THE AGE OF LAW In our last lesson we contrasted God's unconditional covenant of grace made with Abraham and the covenant He made with Israel at Sinai, emphasizing especially the grace of God in His covenant relationship with Abraham and his earthly and heavenly seed.

Today, as we amplify the theme - law and grace in contrast - we shall try to find out what really came to pass during the Age of Law. In other words, our last lesson, dealing primarily with the covenant of grace, showed us what is in the heart of God; today, as we look more closely at the covenant of works, we shall see something of what is in the heart of man.

As has already been pointed out, the period of time from Abraham to Christ is usually divided into two dispensations, each following the same general course as those which preceded and those which were to follow:

(1) The Age of Promise, referring to God's promise to Abraham; sin and failure on the part of Abraham's descendants; 400 years' bondage in Egypt - a new trial, failure, judgment; and

(2) the Age of Law; sin and failure on Israel's part, culminating in the crucifixion of their Messiah; and the dispersion of Israel among the nations - a new trial, failure, judgment.

For our purpose in these studies, however, as we have stated before, we have chosen to call God's dealings with Abraham a preface to the Law of Moses. (See chart). We are thinking in terms of the great contrast between that which is in the heart of God toward sinful man and that which is in the heart of sinful man, both concerning his attitude toward God and his estimate of himself.

Let us remember first of all that which we have already had pointed out: God did not abrogate His covenant of grace made with Abraham 430 years before the law was given. (See Gal 3:17).

From the beginning God's way with sinful man has been by the way of sacrifice - all of grace. Nor was God making an experiment when He tested man under the law. He knew from the beginning what was in man. But unregenerate man ever refuses to believe God, or to see himself a ruined sinner apart from the grace of God. Therefore, God allowed man to make the experiment under the law, to show him his need.

Cain represents the natural man. He brought the fruit of his own works as an offering unto the Lord, even though God had told him to offer the animal sacrifice.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb 11:4).

Since he knew that it was the shed blood of the innocent victim that pointed on to the Lamb of Calvary then Cain also had every opportunity to know what God required. But did he accept God's way? Did he acknowledge himself a sinner, needing a Saviour? No, like every other unregenerate man who has tried in vain to approach God on his own merit, Cain brought the works of his hands.

But Cain had no righteousness of his own. Man as touching righteousness is always a total failure! And God knew before He let man pass through the trial of law that man would fail.

“Wherefore Then Serveth The Law?” To find the answer to the question, “Wherefore then serveth the law?” we need to read Paul’s letters to the Romans and Galatians. In Gal 3:19 he asks this very question. Then he proceeds to answer it, as he is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. Turn to this brief, yet profound epistle and read every word carefully.

“Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed (Christ) should come . . . But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal 3:19-24).

“The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.”

Today school is made attractive for our children, but Paul wrote these words at a time when school was “all work and no play.”

Even when I was a lad, I went to school under the old English schoolmaster who wielded a big stick. He was stern; he was exacting. But let me tell you, my friend, there is no schoolmaster as stern as the law of God. If a man seeks to work for his own salvation by obedience to God’s holy law, then let him obey in every iota. Let him never waver once from God’s high and holy standard; for God says: “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (Jas 2:10). He has broken, transgressed, God’s law. And the law demands perfect obedience.

Only One has ever kept that law. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal 4:4-5).

The Lord Jesus Christ could and did keep the law because He was holy, because He was God. But you cannot keep the law, my brother; I cannot; we are sinners. The law is a “schoolmaster” to lead us unto Christ. It reveals to us the blackness of our sin and our need of Calvary, but it can do no more.

The law is like a mirror. You look in the mirror to see the dust and grime on your face, but you do not wash yourself with the mirror. You look into the mirror of God’s holy law, and there you see your defilement and sin that keep you from measuring up to God’s standard, but you wash your garments white in the blood of Calvary’s Lamb if you wash them at all!

The law can only show what is in the heart of man.

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:19-20).

“Wherefore then serveth the law?” It is a schoolmaster, a mirror, as it were, to reveal sin, to show a guilty, condemned world its need of a Saviour. The Law - Israel’s Choice When Israel reached

Sinai in their wilderness wanderings, God rehearsed His ways with them - ways of grace. He desired to continue to deal with His people in grace, but Israel had gone far from the path of their father, Abraham, far from the walk of faith. And Israel chose law. It was the greatest mistake they had made hitherto.

Turn to the nineteenth chapter of Exodus and read the record.

God speaks to Israel, rehearsing His ways of mercy and guidance, in spite of their murmurings:

“Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.”

Israel had been stiff-necked, utterly unworthy. But God, on the ground of His covenant with Abraham, had been dealing with them in grace.

- Had He not delivered them from Egyptian bondage?
- Had He not saved them from the destroying sword of the death angel?
- Had He not led them through the Red Sea on dry ground?
- Had He not given them manna to eat and water from the flinty rock?

Israel had not deserved such mercy; it was all of unmingled grace. But Israel had become a self-righteous people, ignorant of God’s holiness and their own sin. They thought God had been dealing with them on their own merits. And instead of listening to God’s voice, they undertook the most presumptuous vows ever known to man.

Look at Exo 19:5 where God said to Israel, after He had rehearsed His ways with them:

“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant (the Abrahamic covenant - all of grace), then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people.”

God thus assured them of what they might yet be if they would hearken unto His “voice.”

And note Israel’s presumption:

“All the people answered together” - it was unanimous - “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do” - not “we will try to do” or “we will hope to do,” but “we will do.”

In abandonment of the holy promise of a holy covenant, Israel chose “their covenant” for God’s covenant, a covenant of works for a covenant of grace, a covenant of death for a covenant of life.

In this choice Israel showed their ignorance of the holiness of God; they did not realize that He could not be satisfied with less than absolute perfection, perfect obedience, under law. Moreover, in this choice Israel showed their ignorance of themselves; they did not know the weakness and sin of their own hearts. Thus it always is with self-righteous man.

Had Israel known God and themselves, they would have remained under the Abrahamic covenant. But they chose the law. And from that moment God’s attitude toward them changed.

A new dispensation began, with what result? The story we know very well.

Law Separates - Grace Makes Nigh

Read on in the record to see the immediate result of Israel's choice:

"The Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come to thee in a thick cloud" (Exo 19:9). God now veiled Himself "in a thick cloud"; not so when He talked with Abraham.

When a man approaches God on any ground other than grace, the Lord veils Himself! He reveals Himself in grace! He revealed Himself nearly two thousand years ago in the person of His Son, our Saviour, who was the very embodiment of grace. (See John 1:14; John 1:17-18).

To Moses God said at Sinai:

"Thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about" the mount. "Whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death" (Exo 19:12-13).

Compare this scene with that of the Lord God as He bore His people "on eagles' wings" (Exo 19:4).

As the mother eagle bears the little ones on her wings, so the Lord alone had led them and dealt graciously with them. But now the law separated them from a holy God. Only grace makes nigh!

The threat of death for disobedience, a quaking of the mount, the sound of the trumpet struck terror to the hearts of a guilty people.

"So terrible was the sight, that Moses (even Moses, the man of God) said, I exceedingly fear and quake" (Heb 12:21). Compare with this the word of the Lord to Abraham: "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen 15:1). Is this the same God? Yes, but Israel had not the faith of Abraham. For Abraham there was grace; for him there was the quieting of fears; for Israel there was judgment; there was trembling; there was fear.

The law separates, my friend; grace makes nigh.

Before Israel under the law God veiled Himself in "a thick darkness." But in Christ there is light! Thank God! Our salvation reveals to us "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2Co 4:6).

Our salvation does not depend upon our own resolutions, our own works, our own self-righteousness! In the days of Moses, as a result of the giving of the law, "the people . . . stood afar off" (Exo 20:18). "In Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:13). The Law - Then Calvary The law prepared the way for Calvary's Cross. It revealed to a guilty people their sin. God knew their need; and He was determined to bless Israel in spite of their sin. But first He had to get their eyes on the altar, the ground of sacrifice.

Turn to Exo 20:24-26, and read the Word of the Lord.

The altar where Israel was to worship Him was not to be "of hewn stone." No altar made by human hands can ever be the basis of the relationship of man to God. "No tool," no works of man, had any part in the altar where sinful Israel could meet a holy God! Calvary was all God's work, my brother. "No man taketh my life from me," the Lord Jesus said. He came to die; and He finished the work of redemption!

“Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar,” spake the Lord God. Nor can you or I take one step up to find God. He had to come all the way from heaven down to where you and I are, in order to save us, to take our feet out of the miry clay, and set them upon a Rock. No, salvation is not wrought partly by God and partly by man. It is all of grace.

A rich young ruler went to the Lord Jesus one day, and asked, “Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luk 18:18).

Why did the Lord answer him, saying, “Thou knowest the commandments?”

Because he was meeting the young man on his own ground. He had asked, “What shall I do?” And Christ told him, not the way of life - by grace - in this instance; He told him what a man must do to be saved under the law - keep the commandments.

Then Jesus, to convict the young man of his sin and need of a Saviour, probed very deeply into his heart. “Sell all that thou hast, and distribute to the poor,” He said, “and come, follow me.”

The very spirit of the law is love for one’s neighbor; but the rich young ruler was self-deceived. He had not kept all the commandments. And if he had been open to conviction, he would not have gone away “sorrowful.”

If you are asking today, my friend, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” then keep the commandments; turn neither to the right hand nor to the left! But do not be self-deceived. You cannot keep the commandments. You are a sinner. Look away to Calvary, and there you will see the only One who ever kept God’s holy law. And because He kept it for you, He offers you salvation as a free gift. The work of redemption He has done. “It is finished!” The Law Hidden In The Ark When the rich young ruler deceived himself by thinking he had kept all the commandments of God, he doubtless referred to the Ten Commandments, which set forth the summary of the whole Law of Moses. They represent the law in brief, though many pages in the Word of God are given to the explanation and interpretation of the civil, the moral, and the ceremonial law.

Since the Ten Commandments are the substance of the law, it is important to note where God told Moses to put them.

In Exo 25:10-22 we read of “the pattern” of the golden covered Ark of the Covenant, over which was placed the mercy seat of pure gold. Twice in these verses we read that God told Moses to put “the testimony” in the ark.

Deu 10:1-5 tells the story in detail.

Throughout Old Testament times, first in the tabernacle and later in the temple, “the tables of the covenant” (Heb 9:4) were kept hidden from the view of Israel in the ark.

And again, the ark was placed in the Holy of Holies, where only the high priest could enter, once a year, not without blood.

The tables of stone hidden in the ark speak to us of two very significant facts:

(1) The necessity for removing the law; and

(2) the manner in which it was to be removed.

God at the beginning saw this necessity; and He foreshadowed the removal of the law by hiding this “ministration of death” (2Co 3:7) in the ark, a type of Christ. Moses saw the danger of bringing the law into the camp when Israel was worshipping the golden calf, because it was “a ministration of death.”

Since they were “the tables of the covenant,” neither God nor Israel could set them aside; the covenant could not be disannulled. God was bound to punish disobedience; Israel was bound to obedience if she was to escape the curse of a broken law. This covenant of the law was dispensed at the hands of angels (Acts 7:53; Heb 2:2); angels were the mediators between God and Israel; and, reverently speaking, even God could not set the law aside. But knowing that Israel could not keep the law, God foreknew that He would come down to earth, keep the law Himself for Israel and a sinning world, and remove its curse in His death on the cross.

This is the symbolism of the law hidden in the ark!

But let us look further at this wonderful truth.

- The ark made of shittim wood speaks to us of the humanity of Jesus;
- The gold which covered the wood within and without speaks to us of His deity.

Within His heart there was no sin; without, His walk was above reproach! Over the ark was the mercy seat of pure gold, with the cherubim all of gold looking down on the sprinkled blood. The cherubim in the Scriptures are associated with the justice and the holiness of God. But there was no sword in the hands of the cherubim above the mercy seat as at the Garden of Eden. Why? Because they were looking down upon the sprinkled blood. That is why this covering of the ark could be called a mercy seat.

Only because Christ died to pay the penalty of a broken law, can God be both “just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). In Him “mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each, other” (Psa 85:10).

God dwelt between the cherubim in the Shekinah Glory. But the law, “the ministration of death,” was hidden in the ark, under the blood.

Do you not see, my dear friend, that all this pointed to Christ?

God knew that there was no mercy in the law. He knew also that Israel could not keep it. Therefore, He had an ark made, to shut from view this covenant of death until it could be removed - until One could be found who could fulfill the law, bearing its curse, and meeting its vengeance.

The ark kept the tables of stone unbroken, even as Christ kept the law unbroken. He came not to destroy, but to fulfill His holy law. “Made of a woman, made under the law,” He “hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal 4:4; Gal 3:13).

God did not lower His holy standard. He did not disannul His law. Such an act would have been a violation of His covenant. But God foreknew, foreordained, and foreshadowed the manner in which

He Himself would one day fulfill, vindicate, and magnify His holy law. He alone could say that He loved the law with all His heart. He kept every commandment! Then He offered Himself as a sacrifice “once for all,” bearing in His body on the tree all the failures, all the sin, and all the guilt of the human race.

Are you vainly struggling to keep the commandments of God’s law, my brother? It will be of no avail. Why not seek the ark of safety, and accept the grace of God? “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4).

“Christ Is The End Of The Law”

Earlier in this study for today we read from Gal 3:19-24 these words: “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.” But let us read on; verse 25 speaks plainly: “After that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”

Just at this point hundreds in professing Christendom pervert the Word of God.

Either in ignorance or in stubborn legalism, they try to impose the bondage of the law upon Christians who have been freed from the law by the grace of God. I refer especially to the observance of the seventh day Sabbath, as well as to the confusion that exists among evangelical Christians regarding the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Lord’s Day.

“After that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”

Do you remember how you felt during your school days when the holiday season came, and you were no longer under the disciplining hand of that stern schoolmaster? To be out from under the correcting rod meant liberty. So it is for the believer in Christ Jesus. The law shows us our need of a Saviour; but it is Christ who delivers us from its stern demands.

Legalists teach that the ceremonial law as represented by the sacrifices has been done away, but not the moral law which was engraven on tables of stone. But Paul does not teach this doctrine, and Paul wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God!

In 2Co 3:7-11 he tells us that “the ministration of death, written and engraven in stone . . . is done away!” If you let this passage grip you, my friend, you will never be bothered with the question of the Ten Commandments. Here Paul is contrasting the covenant of grace with the covenant of law; and he says that “the ministration of death” and “of condemnation” has been “done away.”

Turn now to Rom 7:1-4, where the Apostle Paul gives us a familiar illustration of this truth.

Try to imagine the wretched condition of a woman who is married to a stern husband. She is eager for deliverance, but she is “bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man” (Rom 7:2-3).

Then Paul draws the comparison, saying: “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom 7:4).

The application is unmistakable.

A believer cannot be under law and under grace at the same time. The law is described as a stern husband; but death came; God sees us identified with Christ in His death and resurrection; and by faith we are “married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.” Under the law the struggling soul cries out in despair: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the the body of this death?” But under grace the wretchedness is turned to victory: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom 7:24-25).

Since the “keeping of the Sabbath” is the question usually raised at this point, let us look closely at what the Bible has to say on this particular subject.

A careful study of the matter will reveal a striking contrast between the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Lord’s Day. Let us look at this contrast in outline:

The Jewish Sabbath 1. The 7th day of the week. 2. Commemorated God’s creation rest on the seventh day. 3. Commemorated a finished creation. 4. Compulsory obedience demanded. 5. “Whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death” (Exo 35:2; compare Num 15:32-36). 6. Represents the old creation. 7. Given to Israel under the law.

The Christian Lord’s Day 1. The 1st day of the week. 2. Commemorates Christ’s resurrection from the dead on the first day. 3. Commemorates a finished redemption. 4. Voluntary worship and service expected. 5. Christ went about doing good on the Sabbath Day to show that He is Lord of the Sabbath, as well as “the end of the law to him that believeth” (Mat 12:1-8). 6. Represents the new creation. (See 2Co 5:17). 7. Given to the Christian under grace.

Many Christians call the first day of the week the Sabbath Day.

They mean well, but the Bible never calls any day the Sabbath other than the seventh day. Moreover, all of the New Testament teaching regarding the Sabbath or seventh day observance proves unmistakably that this belonged to Israel under the law, and in Christ has been done away.

God is not resting now in the old creation. He made the heavens and the earth in six days; then He rested until sin entered to break His creation rest. Now He is resting in the finished work of Christ. “When he had by himself purged our sins,” He “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb 1:3 and many other similar references) .

Why did the Lord remain in the grave “till the Sabbath was fully past?” Because in His death the old creation passed away; “therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Co 5:17).

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Col 2:16-17).

God has blotted out “the handwriting of ordinances” (i.e., the law) “nailing it to his cross” (Col 2:14).

Again, those who adhere to the seventh day Sabbath are self-deceived if they think they are observing it.

Under the law a man was put to death for gathering sticks on the Sabbath Day. (See Num 15:32-36). This, of course, he did in open defiance of God. But the law is stern. Let me ask you, my friend: Do you gather sticks on the seventh day, yet call that obedience to the law?

If you are trying to keep the law, then do not turn one finger to do any work.

- Do not ride the street cars; for in so doing, you cause others to work.
- Do not turn on the electric lights; for in so doing you cause others to work.
- Do not wash a dish or pick up a broom.

Moses said to Israel under the law, by the express commandment of the Lord: "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day" (Exo 35:3).

The law is stern; it demands perfect obedience.

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jas 2:10).

"The law was given by Moses," but thank God! "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). "Ye are not under the law, but under grace," if you believe in the finished work of Christ. (Compare Rom 6:14).

"The Law Of The Spirit Of Life In Christ Jesus" But some go to the other extreme and erroneously say: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (Rom 6:1).

Paul voices this question of the man who says that "liberty is license." No, my friend, liberty is not license! Though we have been delivered from the law of sin and death, yet there is no excuse for our being lawless.

Shall not the very fact that we have been delivered from the law, a stern husband, as it were, not make us all the more eager to please our new Husband, even Christ? Because we are not under the law, shall we steal and kill? No, if we truly love the Lord, we shall delight to please Him.

The law condemns, but Calvary breaks our hearts. When we look into the face of Jesus Christ and see what grace is, then we love Him and we want to please Him. Then the Lord's Day does not find us on the golf course or at the place of amusement. One-seventh of our time still belongs to God! And the more we know Him who redeemed us from the curse of the law, the more we shall love Him, seek His presence seven days in the week, and delight to do His will at all times.

Mount Sinai or Mount Calvary? Where will you take your stand, my brother? At the foot of Mount Sinai or at the foot of Mount Calvary? At Mount Sinai you see "blackness, and darkness, and tempest." There you struggle and strive and "fear and quake." (See Heb 12:18-21; compare Heb 12:22-24). But at Mount Calvary you see "mercy and love flow mingled down." You see the bleeding form of Him who was "wounded for our transgressions," and "bruised for our iniquities." You see Him taking your place and mine, bearing the curse of the law, and "nailing it to his cross." Take your stand at Mount Calvary, and then your heart can sing the words of the sinner saved by grace - and grace alone:

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee.

“Not the labor of my hands

Can fulfill Thy law’s demands.

“Nothing in my hands I bring;

Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

~ end of chapter 6 ~

07 The Meaning Of The Cross

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS In our former studies on “God’s Plan of the Ages” we have repeatedly noted two striking facts of Old Testament times:

- (1) The ever-increasing evidence of the sin and guilt of fallen man; and
- (2) the ever-unfolding plan of God to send into the world a Redeemer.

We have called attention to the fact that on our chart the line of sin gets blacker and blacker as each age goes on; whereas, side by side with the development of sin in the earth, the line of sacrifice becomes plainer and plainer.

Let us look at the chart just here. On the one hand we see the blackness of sin: corruption in the days of Noah, degeneration at the Tower of Babel, and the rejection by Israel of her Messiah.

On the other hand we see, from the time of Adam to the cross, the line of sacrifice. If ours were a colored chart, this line would be red; for it indicates the shedding of innocent blood for sinful man.

Through promise and prophecy, through shadow and type, God was painting a portrait of the coming Saviour, even Jesus, the Lamb of Calvary. But with His cross the line of sacrifice ends; for since He died for sin “once for all,” “there is no more offering for sin” (Heb 10:18). The Messianic Prophecy When an artist draws a portrait, he first puts on the canvas mere daubs of paint. Then under his skillful hand there later appears - a face.

Likewise, in the Old Testament, God first showed through the animal sacrifices that “it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev 17:11).

Even in these animal sacrifices He was pointing sinners to the Saviour who was to come. But as time went on, He placed the emphasis not upon the type, but upon the reality, not upon the animal sacrifice, but upon a Face, both human and divine. In the Messianic prophecy we see the portrait of the Face in minute detail, revealing the love that from the beginning was in the heart of the God of grace.

- It was Moses who wrote first of Him, saying that He should be “the seed of woman” (Gen 3:15).
- It was Moses who wrote also that He should come from the nation of Israel and from the tribe of Judah (Gen 12:3; Gen 49:10).
- To David God promised through Samuel the prophet, that his family should give to the world this Saviour (2Sa 7:12-16).
- Then seven hundred years before Jesus came into the world, Micah, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, named the very place where He was to be born (Mic 5:2).

- Seven hundred years before Bethlehem's manger, Isaiah prophesied that He was to be born of a virgin (Isa 7:14), that He was to be "a son," "a child," "a ruler," "The Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6-7).
- Dan 9:26 tells the very time of His coming into the world; and Daniel lived six hundred years before Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea.
- Psalmist and prophet foretold in minute detail His sufferings, even the manner of His death (See Isaiah 53; Psalm 22).
- David foretold His resurrection (Psa 16:8-11) and His ascension (Psa 68:18).

Pages and pages in the Old Testament are given over to the painting of the portrait of the promised Redeemer and the coming King. As "the seed of woman," He was to be the Redeemer of the whole human race. Then the line of prophecy was narrowed down - to the nation, the tribe, the family, the time and place of His birth - all, that we might know Him when He did come as the promised One of God! Then at Malachi the Divine Artist put down His brush. The portrait was finished. The Messiah was at hand.

He came to fulfill all the promises. And in coming, He has devised "means, that his banished be not expelled from him" (2Sa 14:14). The "means" He devised was His cross.

The Christ of prophecy became the Christ of history, that His banished ones, banished from His presence by sin, might not be expelled from Him forever!

This is the meaning of the cross, my friends. Man sinned; God promised a Redeemer; men and women of Old Testament times were saved because they believed God's promise and put their faith in the coming Messiah.

Then He came; He died; He rose again! He ascended into heaven, where He now intercedes for His blood-bought children.

And He is coming again to reign "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psa 72:8). It is the cross that saves from sin; and "the way of the cross leads home."

What Calvary Reveals

Nearly two thousand years ago wicked men crucified the Lamb of God, "and sitting down they watched him there" (Mat 27:36). As we turn the eye of faith upon that scene of tremendous significance, we see something of the meaning of the cross.

1. The Fearful Reality of Sin.

As we behold the bleeding wounds of the Lamb of God, we see revealed the depravity of the human heart, its hatred of God, its preference for darkness rather than light, murder, lawlessness, the length to which sin will go - all this we see revealed at Calvary. Sin crucified the eternal, holy Son of God - your sins and mine and the sins of the world.

2. "The Wages of Sin" we see revealed at Calvary.

And "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom 5:12).

What is death? Cessation of existence? No! The death that comes as a consequence of sin is not physical death only; it is that and more; it is eternal separation from God. Sin separated Adam from God, who is the Fount of all life. Sin separated Cain from God; and in bitter remorse the murderer cried out to a holy God: "From thy face shall I be hid" (Gen 4:14).

- Sin in the home separates husband from wife;
- Sin in the business world separates employer from employee;
- Sin in the heart separates the sinner from the Saviour.
- Natural death separates soul and spirit from the body;
- Penal death separates soul and spirit from God.
- Sin spells separation!

That is why there was a supernatural darkness at the cross.

A holy God was hiding His face from the Sin-Bearer. That is why the holy Son of God cried out in that dark hour: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

You will note that He did not say, "My Father . . . why hast thou forsaken me?" though He was the only begotten Son of the Father. In this moment He was addressing God as the Supreme Ruler and Judge. And a holy God cannot look upon sin. Sin separates!

At Calvary all the demerit and sin and transgression and guilt of the race were rolled upon the Lord Jesus. The agony of the cross was not the physical suffering; it was the separation it brought between Him and His Father in heaven, with whom He had ever known unbroken fellowship, before whom He had always been well-pleasing.

If we could see hell opened, even that would not reveal the full manifestation of the character of sin. We must look to Calvary to see "the wages of sin."

Our sins crucified a holy God! And but for His death as our Sin-Bearer, our sins would forever separate us from God. My unsaved friend, your sins will forever separate you from God unless you accept Jesus as your Substitute. He has borne the penalty of your sins. He bids you to go to His cross, and by faith behold him, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

While I was in Australia recently, I met a childhood friend who had lapsed into Unitarianism - a creed which denies the deity of Christ and the necessity for His atoning work on Calvary. As I talked with this man, he asked me the question that many are raising today, and have raised since the days of the Apostle John: "Is God not a Father? Why doesn't He forgive me as I forgive my children?" And my friend pointed to his boy and girl playing on the carpet before him. "I forgive them freely," he continued, "without bloodshed. Why shouldn't God do the same?"

Now the reasoning which that man followed springs from his ignorance of who God is and what sin is. God is a Father; but God is also a Sovereign and a King.

The president of our United States is a father; but he is also a chief-executive; and as such, he is responsible to see that the laws of the land are obeyed, even by his own children. God is the Father of all in the sense that He is the Creator; but let us note first that the unsaved man cannot address God as his Father. Only the redeemed child of God can call Him "Father," on the basis of the shed blood of His Son, our Saviour, who identified Himself with us, as a Man, that He might call us His brethren. (See Heb 2:17).

Then in the second place, let us remember that our sins sent Him to the cross.

He did not overlook our sins; He paid the penalty for them. Could any earthly father do as much for his erring children? Never! Because no human father could possibly suffer as our sinless Saviour suffered in becoming our Substitute on Calvary! It is ignorance of who God is and ignorance of what sin is that blinds men's hearts to this fundamental truth.

When they crucified the Lord from heaven nearly two thousand years ago, they sat down and "watched him there."

When we behold our Sin-Bearer, with the eye of faith:

- We see sin in all its character;
- We see Satan in his hostility to God;
- We see the depravity of the human heart; and
- We see what sin does, bringing physical and spiritual death upon a ruined world.

All these things are brought into the light of the noonday when we look at Calvary.

It was noonday when our Lord was crucified; and in the searching light of the cross, we see sin as it is - a fearful reality, bringing death upon a fallen race.

3. The Supreme Vindication of the Law of God.

Calvary reveals not only the fearful reality of sin and the wages of sin; it reveals also the supreme vindication of God's holy law.

We have seen that God is a Sovereign Judge, as well as a loving Father. And in this sense - I say it reverently - in this sense God never forgives sin. Strictly speaking, He punishes sin and judges it. He does not set aside His holy law.

His love and mercy are made manifest not in that He overlooks sin - but in that He died, "the just for the unjust" - on Calvary. God did not lay the sins of the world on another; He laid them upon Himself; for "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2Co 5:19).

Yes, He is merciful; but His mercy is always based on justice. Human mercy is not so. When an earthly judge begins to be merciful, he ceases to be just; and when he is just, he ceases to be merciful. But God is both merciful and just. He never shows mercy at the expense of justice and His righteous law. On the contrary, He magnified and vindicated His law when He bore the curse of the law "in his own body on the tree."

- The Lord our God is holy; therefore He cannot tolerate sin.

- He is just; therefore He judges sin.

- He is merciful; therefore He devised "means, that his banished be not expelled from him." And the "means" He devised was His cross! My dear friends out of Christ, He uttered the forsaken cry from the cross because of your sins and mine. He bore the separation that sin brings, that you need not be forever separated from Him. He uttered that forsaken cry, that you need not have to utter it. But His holy law must be vindicated. If you reject Him, you will cry that cry - when it is too late. He will say to you in that day, "Depart from me, ye cursed."

As a righteous Judge, He will have to punish your sin. And there will be no second chance after death. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27). But by His cross He has provided a way of escape. He has borne the penalty of your sins. Yet you must accept His pardon. He does not force it upon you. He wants your voluntary allegiance and your willing love. "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb 3:7-8).

4. The Supreme Evidence of the Love of God.

As we look at Calvary, we see something more; we see that "God is love."

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

The measure of the love of Christ is determined by the extent of His sufferings. And for Him the cross meant indescribable sufferings, unspeakable shame, physical death, separation from His Father in the hour of His agony. God poured all of His love and mercy into the death of His Son.

Again, the love of Christ is seen in the fact that He gave His life not for the lovely and the lovable; "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

- It is a vision of Calvary that makes us love Him, "because he first loved us."

- It is a vision of Calvary that makes us love one another, because His love is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Rom 5:5).

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Can you reject the "unspeakable gift" of God's love, my friend? Look at Calvary, and that love will break your heart.

What Calvary Provides

Thus far we have been viewing Calvary from the Godward side. We have been seeking the meaning of the cross in the eyes of a holy, yet merciful God. Now let us behold Christ crucified and see, from the human point of view, what Calvary provides for the redeemed children of God.

Again let us look at our chart and note the rays of light proceeding from the cross - light and life that the believer in Christ receives as his inheritance by faith in Him. These rays of light we have named in the terms of Bible phraseology: Redemption, justification, righteousness, peace, sanctification, access and glory.

Let us consider briefly these seven terms in the light of the Word of God, to see the meaning of Calvary to the human heart.

1. Redemption.

“Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1Pe 1:18-19).

The word “redemption” means “to buy back by the payment of a price.” It implies that we have sold ourselves to sin. Adam sold himself to sin; and as his posterity, all mankind has received in Adam the heritage of sin and death. This bondage to sin cannot be broken except by personal faith in a personal Saviour who bought our redemption for us by His own “precious blood.”

Mr. Moody, during an evangelistic campaign in England, noticed that a certain young man drove in the carriage just ahead of him each morning as he went to the service.

Upon asking who the young man was, Mr. Moody was told that he was the son of a man who had once been very wealthy. But the father had gambled away his estate. Then the son went to work and bought it back.

My dear friend, something like this occurred when Adam through sin lost his first estate, for himself and all his descendants. But the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, has bought it back by the payment of a price. That price was Calvary’s cross. And remember! That price was costly!

2. Justification.

We have been “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus . . . justified by faith . . . justified by his blood” (Rom 3:24; Rom 5:1; Rom 5:9).

This means complete justification before a holy God. It means justification not in heaven only, but now also, the very moment we put our faith in His shed blood.

Justification means far more than forgiveness. If I should steal a thousand dollars from you, by an act of grace you might forgive me, but you could not justify me. I should still be a thief. You could wipe out the penalty, but not the guilt. God can do both - because Christ died.

Suppose I were tried for murder, and the jury rendered the verdict, “Not guilty.” Then I should be justified in the eyes of the law of the land. Something like this took place when I accepted Christ as my Saviour. He forgave me - and more; He justified me in the eyes of His holy law, because He bore the penalty in my stead.

3. Righteousness.

“The righteousness of God . . . is manifested . . . even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe” (Rom 3:21-22).

Righteousness fits a man for the presence of God. Since Adam lost his garment of light, unregenerate man has been ashamed and afraid to stand before God. But the righteousness of God, which is “unto all” is “upon all them that believe.”

As a garment it is upon the redeemed child of God. It is a covering for his sins. Our robes in heaven shall be made "white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14).

And this righteousness God imputes - bestows freely upon the sinner the moment he goes for cleansing to the "fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins." We do not have to wait until we get to heaven to be made righteous before God!

4. Peace.

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1).

"Having made peace through the blood of his cross," He has "reconciled" us "unto himself" (Col 1:20). "For he is our peace . . . having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace" (Eph 2:14-15).

We cannot make our peace with God; we can only accept the peace which God has made for us. "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

5. Sanctification.

"Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb 13:12).

Sanctification does not mean sinless perfection in this life, but separation from sin unto God. We have been "set apart" for His glory, "that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom 6:4).

Through the Word of God, as it is applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we are sanctified, separated unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. (See John 17:15-19; 2Co 6:14-18; Jas 1:27).

6. Access

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God . . . let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:14-16).

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb 10:19-22).

In these passages of Scripture we are reminded that the Holy of Holies in the Jewish tabernacle and in the temple was God's dwelling place. Only the high priest could enter that sacred place once a year, on the Day of Atonement, not without blood. The veil shut this room from the gaze of man. But when Christ died, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain" (Mat 27:51).

And from that moment the redeemed sinner has had access into the very presence of God through prayer. He needs no human priest to intercede for him, because he has a Great High Priest, even Jesus, the Son of God, who "ever liveth to make intercession" for him (Heb 7:25).

This is a precious truth to the Christian; but there is another and a deeper meaning to the word "access." It has reference to the abode of the holy dead since the risen Lord ascended on high and "led captivity captive." Before Christ died, the spirits of the saints went into a place of bliss called Paradise; since He ascended into heaven, "the dead in Christ" go immediately into His presence.

We shall consider this point more fully in our next lesson as we study about the resurrection and ascension of Christ. But here suffice it to say that the believer in Him has access now into His presence by faith through prayer, and his spirit goes into His presence the moment he dies - all because of Calvary!

7. Glory.

Shortly before He went to the cross, the Lord Jesus prayed to His Father, saying: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory" (John 17:24).

And John, writing later in Revelation, gives us a beautiful picture of the saints in glory, "arrayed in white robes . . . made . . . white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (Rev 7:13-15).

Redemption - Justification - Righteousness - Peace - Sanctification - Access - Glory!

What a heritage for the child of God - all wrought on Calvary! If you do not know the meaning of the cross, my friend, turn your eyes upon Calvary, and behold "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

~ end of chapter 7 ~

08 The Resurrection And Ascension Of Christ...

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST

AND THE HISTORY OF THE RIGHTEOUS DEAD In our former studies we have seen that throughout Old Testament times there were two distinct lines of development in the earth:

- (1) The development of sin; and
- (2) the development of the Messianic promise.

We have seen that God's purpose in passing man through the various dispensations was to show him the enormity of sin, its blackness, its hellishness. And side by side with this line of sin, we have another line of development, that of the Messianic promise, which was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.

In our last study we saw how Jesus died on Calvary as a Substitute for sinners. The purpose of the Old Testament' dispensations was to show man his utter failure, his helplessness, his utter inability to redeem himself; it was to show him that his redemption must be accomplished by Another, and God has provided that redemption in the person of His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In our study today, as we consider Christ risen and ascended into heaven, where He is interceding at the right hand of God for His blood-bought children, we shall see the marvelous provision that God has made in Jesus Christ to meet our need - in this life and in the life to come; not only for us as sinners, but also for us as saints and worshippers. The History Of The Righteous Dead When the Lord Jesus died on Calvary, His body rested in Joseph's new tomb three days and three nights, while His Spirit went to Paradise, the abode of the righteous dead from Adam to Christ. We have seen that through His death on the cross, Jesus opened the way into heaven, God's dwelling place.

And thereby He made it possible for the redeemed of the Old Testament days that were in Paradise, a waiting place, to ascend with Him into the presence of God.

In this lesson today we shall see that Paradise in Old Testament times was not identical with heaven, though it has been since the resurrection and ascension of our Lord. According to the Scriptures, Christ rose again from the grave; and the spirits of the righteous dead from Adam to Christ went to heaven, forever to be with him. Because death could not hold Him, all the New Testament saints go immediately into His presence the moment they die.

In order to understand what took place when Christ died, went to Paradise, and then ascended up on high, it is necessary for us to search the Scriptures carefully to see what they teach concerning the abode of the righteous dead in Old Testament times and since the cross. In other words, we shall find the answer to such questions as these:

(1) What is meant by “Sheol” or “Hades”?

(2) By “Paradise”?

(3) Was Paradise identical with heaven before Christ died?

(4) Is it identical with heaven now?

(5) What are we to understand by the statement in Eph 4:8 : “When he [Christ] ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men”

(6) Where do “the dead in Christ” go now, since He ascended into heaven?

These are questions which God has answered for us in His Word; and before we consider the nature of the resurrection body of our Lord, with all the hope and assurance which such a study gives to the Christian’s heart, we need to understand what took place when He went to Paradise, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and “led captivity captive.”

1. The Old Testament Saints Went to Paradise.

Abel, Noah, Abraham, David - none of the Old Testament saints went directly to heaven when they died. Their bodies, of course, went into the grave and are still awaiting the resurrection; but their spirits went to a place called Paradise, to the place where the Lord Jesus went while His body lay in the tomb, to the place where the repentant thief on the cross went when he died. Luk 23:43 is familiar to every Christian: “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise”

But let us turn the pages of our Bible back to a remarkable prophecy, written by David as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

It is found in Psa 16:8-11, and foretells the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead. Both Peter and Paul quote this prophecy to prove the resurrection of Christ.

Pause here to read very carefully both the Psalm and these two quotations from it, as recorded in Acts 2:25-31; Acts 13:32-37.

If you happen to be reading from the King James or Authorized Version, you will be perplexed as to the meaning of Psa 16:10 and Acts 2:27 : “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.” These words were spoken by the Son of God to His Father in heaven, as the following statement makes clear: “Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

We know that Jesus’ body did not “see corruption,” for it arose from the dead. But did His soul go to “hell” during the three days and three nights following His crucifixion? The answer is, emphatically, “No.” And the explanation of this verse is this: The Hebrew word used in Psa 16:10 is not “hell,” but “Sheol”; while the word used in Acts 2:27 is “Hades.” The Revised Version so translates them, accurately so. “Sheol” and “Hades,” therefore, refer to the same place, and are simply the names given by the two different languages, Hebrew and Greek, for “the place of the departed spirits.” According to this translation, the Psalm might well read on this fashion: “Thou wilt not leave my soul in the temporary place of the departed spirits.”

Just here let us look at our chart to see the diagram which sets forth the Bible teaching regarding Sheol. You will note that, from the time of Adam, the “death line” led to this place called “Sheol.”

You will note also that it is divided into two realms or compartments:

(1) Paradise; and

(2) an awful prison, a place of torment.

Between the two there is “a great gulf fixed” (Luk 16:26). The exact location of Sheol we do not know; but the Lord Jesus said that, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the great fish, so should “the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Mat 12:40). And Paul in Eph 4:9 wrote: “He also descended first into the lower part of the earth.” Jesus went to Paradise, we know, according to Luk 23:43. Paradise was one of the two realms of Sheol. But further than this, God has not revealed the location of Sheol. Certainly it is the place of death.

Turn to the story of Luk 16:19-31. This is not a parable, as some would have us believe. The Lord Jesus did not use personal names in His parables, and here he speaks of Lazarus, Abraham, and Moses. Moreover, He said: “There was a certain rich man . . . And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus.”

The one beheld the other, yet they were in the different realms of Sheol. They conversed with each other; yet one was in a place of enjoyment, comfort, and peace; the other, in a place of remorse, sin, and torment. Between them there was “a great gulf fixed.”

2. Christ “Led a Multitude of Captives Captive.”

That place of enjoyment was the place to which the spirits of all the Old Testament saints went when they died - from Adam to the repentant thief on the cross. But it was not heaven.

Since the cross of Christ, Paradise has been identical with heaven. In other words, it has been taken up into heaven. Paul identifies Paradise with heaven in 2Co 12:4, but Paul was writing on this side of the cross. On the other side of the cross Paradise was a beautiful place, a place of bliss; but it was a waiting place. How do we know this? Because the Lord who had said to the dying thief, “To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise,” said also to Mary three days later, after He rose from the dead, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17).

At that time He had not ascended into heaven, and yet He had been in Paradise.

Do you not see, my friend, that before Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, Paradise was one of the realms of Sheol? But with His ascension, He took Paradise up with Him into Heaven itself. Furthermore, all those who looked forward to the coming of the promised Redeemer went to Paradise to wait for “the way into the holiest of all” to be opened (Heb 9:8).

They were waiting for the rending of the veil of the temple; for no human being can stand before God, except on the basis of a finished atonement. As we have already seen in former studies, the rending of the veil was a type of “his flesh” that was bruised and broken for our sins at His crucifixion on Calvary. (See Heb 10:19-22).

Only when the redemptive work of Christ was actually accomplished, and He cried out in triumph, "It is finished" - only then was "the veil of the temple . . . rent in twain" (Mat 27:51).

That veil separated the Holy of Holies, where God dwelt, from the Holy Place, where the priests ministered. It shut sinful man out from the presence of a holy God. But since that barrier has been done away, redeemed sinners may go directly into the presence of God - not only by faith through prayer, on the basis of a finished work on Calvary's cross; since the rending of the veil, the spirits of all the Old Testament saints and of all the New Testament saints have been able also to stand before a holy God - on the basis of a finished atonement.

Christ died and went to Paradise, in order to take out of that waiting place all who had put their faith in His shed blood as an atonement for their sins. And He took them out of that waiting place called Paradise when He "ascended up on high" and "led captivity captive."

Turn now to Psa 68:18, and read another prophecy of David concerning this very event: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive." Now read Eph 4:7-10, where this prophecy is quoted, enlarged upon, and definitely applied to the ascension of Christ into heaven. How marvelous is fulfilled prophecy!

But who are those referred to by psalmist and apostle as a great multitude of "captives"?

They are the Old Testament saints, for many centuries kept in that waiting place called Paradise, now willing captives of the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord. "When he ascended up on high," then He "led a multitude of captives captive."

Then Abel and Noah and Abraham and David and all the righteous dead of Old Testament times, even unto the thief on the cross - the spirits of all those went with the risen Lord into the presence of His Father. And since that day, Paradise has been identical with heaven, the very presence of God. (*See chart).

What a sight that must have been! A great host of redeemed spirits ascending with the risen Lord into heaven! The very gates of Paradise must have reverberated with the shout of victory over death. No wonder David was "glad" that his own soul, as well as the soul of the Lord Jesus of whom he wrote, was not going to be left in Sheol! No wonder Abraham rejoiced to see "the day of Christ" and was "glad"! (See John 8:56).

The saints of all the ages had access into heaven itself when the Lord Jesus died and rose again; for the veil of the temple was rent in twain, and a multitude of willing captives ascended up on high with Him who partook of "flesh and blood . . . that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14).

3. The New Testament Saints "Absent from the Body" Are "Present with the Lord" (2Co 5:8).

Paul wrote to his fellow Christians, saying that he had "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ" (Php 1:23). And where is Christ? At God's right hand. Do you want to know where Stephen and Paul and D. L. Moody and John Knox are, my friend? They are "with Christ."

Stephen said as he was dying, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56).

Do you want to know where your mother or father or son or daughter who died believing in Christ is today? Your loved one is with the Lord. And where is He? "On the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Heb 8:1).

It is a false teaching that tells us of an intermediate stage, a purgatory, or a "soul-sleep." "The dead in Christ" go immediately into His presence the moment they die. Their spirits wing their way into heaven itself, there to wait for the resurrection, when their bodies shall be raised, reunited with their spirits, forever to be "with the Lord."

We shall go fully into the subject of the first and second resurrections when we consider the return of Christ to the earth; but here suffice it to say that in the first resurrection the righteous dead shall be raised; in the second resurrection, the unrighteous dead; and between these two events there will be the millennial reign of our Lord. (See Rev 20:4-15).

It is a solemn thought that, while Paradise is no longer in Sheol, yet that awful prison, the place of torment, is still inhabited by the wicked dead of all the ages. It is a solemn thought that one day, at "the great white throne" judgment, that compartment, too, will be empty.

In that day "death and Hades" (or Sheol) will deliver up their dead, and shall be "cast into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:13-14; compare Mat 5:22; Mat 5:29-30, and other references. The Greek word for "hell" in these passages is "Gehenna," and refers to the lake of fire).

The only spirits now in Sheol or Hades are those of the lost souls of men of all times. A thousand years before the great white throne judgment, the first resurrection will have taken place. The "dead in Christ" shall have been with Christ already for a thousand years, body and spirit having been reunited - for all eternity. But the souls of those who are now in that awful prison, who shall one day be cast into the lake of fire, body and spirit having been reunited - these shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.

My friend out of Christ, will you not "flee from the wrath to come?"

My Christian friend, indifferent to the lost souls of men all around you, will you not tell them of the Saviour who alone can deliver from eternal condemnation? One day we shall all stand before Him; for He is the Judge of all the earth. Shall it be "forever with the Lord"? Or shall it be "in outer darkness" - for all the endless ages? The Nature Of The Resurrection Body Of Christ

We have seen what God's Word tells us about the abode of the righteous dead, but it tells us more than that. As we search the Scriptures, we find also very definite teaching about the nature of our resurrection bodies. They will be like Christ's own glorious body; for in Php 3:20-21, we read: "Our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (See also Psa 17:15; 1Jn 3:2). "We shall be like him!" And we shall be satisfied when we awake with His likeness!

Concerning our Lord's resurrection body we know some certain truths. As we consider them, let us keep in mind the blessed fact that "we shall be like him."

1. The Resurrection Body of Christ Is Real.

It is a body of “flesh and bones”; for He actually rose from the grave. The resurrection always speaks of the physical body, for the spirit does not die. The body without the spirit is dead, but the spirits of the saints are with Christ. Their bodies are in the grave, waiting the resurrection day.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept . . . Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” (See 1Co 15:20-23).

“But some will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” (1Co 15:35).

Since our resurrection bodies are to be like Christ’s, we want to know what kind of a body He has. Luke gives us the clearest picture of the humanity of the Lord Jesus from the manger to the empty tomb. Let us turn to the last chapter of his Gospel to find there the minute details concerning our Lord’s resurrection body. He walked and talked with the two on the way to Emmaus. He showed the disciples His hands and His feet, saying, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (1Co 15:39). To prove to them that His body was real, He ate before them (1Co 15:42-43).

Just here let us remember that He did not have to eat for sustenance; He had His glorious, incorruptible, immortal body. Let us remember also that He did not say that He had a body of flesh and blood; He said that He had a body of “flesh and bones.

In His human life on earth He partook of “flesh and blood” (Heb 2:14). “The life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev 17:11). But the Lord Jesus had shed His blood on Calvary! “It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev 17:11). And in His death on the cross, He poured out His blood to redeem us from sin. In His resurrection body there was not a drop of that blood; it was a body of “flesh and bones.”

Further proof that His body is real is seen in John’s record of Christ’s words to Thomas.

After that disciple had doubted the fact of His resurrection, Christ appeared unto him, and said: “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing” (John 20:27).

Then did Thomas still doubt? No; he cried out in words of worship and trust, saying to the risen Christ, “My Lord and my God.”

Do you want to know what kind of body your loved one whose spirit is now with Christ will have in the resurrection, my friend? It will be a body of flesh and bone - like unto Christ’s glorious body. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1Co 15:50), but “flesh and bone” can!

2. The Resurrection Body of Christ Is a Spiritual Body.

It is not a vapor or a mist; it is real; yet it is spiritual - the same body, and yet not the same.

“That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him” (1Co 15:37-38).

So it is with Christ’s resurrection body and with ours.

His was a body of “flesh and bones,” and His disciples recognized Him; yet He was able to pass through closed doors after He rose from the grave. He was able also to vanish entirely out of the disciples’ sight as He willed to do so.

Even as the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies before it brings forth fruit, “so also is the resurrection of the dead . . . It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (1Co 15:42; 1Co 15:44). My natural body governs my spirit; in the resurrection my spirit will govern my body. My spirit could not have come to the radio broadcasting station this morning without my body; but in the resurrection my spirit will take my body wherever it will. In my spiritual body I shall not be subject to physical laws.

3. The Resurrection Body of Christ Is an Incorruptible Body.

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was weary; He was hungry; He wept; yet He was without sin. He partook of flesh and blood, that in His death and resurrection He might change our bodies of humiliation, and fashion them like unto His own glorious body. In His resurrection He is never weary; He never hungers; He does not weep. He has His incorruptible body. And in the resurrection we shall never know the sorrows and pains of the flesh.

I wonder if I am talking to someone who has a weak body? A sick body? My friend, your body is not redeemed yet. Every day it is being dissolved. Age leaves its impress on your face, your hair, your eyes. You are waiting for the redemption of your body (Rom 8:23). But one day you will have an incorruptible body - like Christ’s own glorious body!

And “as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1Co 15:49).

In my family there were eight brothers and sisters, each with a separate personality; yet we all bore the image of our father. So also in heaven, we shall have our separate personalities; yet we shall be like our Heavenly Father. The garment of light which Adam lost when he sinned will shine again! We shall be very beautiful in heaven, with our glorified bodies!

And we shall know each other there. Paul, writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, wrote: “Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1Co 13:12).

My friend, your loved ones and mine who have died trusting in the finished work of Christ are even now “with the Lord.” Their spirits are in His presence. They behold His face.

If the Lord tarries and you and I die before the church is caught away to be with Him, our spirits, too, will “depart to be with Christ.” But one day the trump of God shall sound, and “them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (i.e., the spirits of the righteous dead); “and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (i.e., the bodies of His saints shall rise and be reunited with their spirits).

“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” (1Th 4:13-18).

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1Jn 3:2).

* Chart wasn’t included in this module.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

09 Christ In Glory - Our Great High Priest

CHAPTER NINE

CHRIST IN GLORY - OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST In our last study we considered the meaning of the resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ for the saints of all ages. We saw that when He ascended into heaven, He “led captivity captive,” taking the spirits of the righteous dead of all time into heaven itself, there to await the resurrection of the body; that is, He took Paradise up with Him into the very presence of God.

We saw in our last study that even now the spirits of all the righteous dead, from Adam to our own day, are “with Christ,” and that in the resurrection, their bodies and spirits will be reunited, to be with Him throughout the endless ages.

Today we want to consider the present work of our crucified, risen and ascended Lord for us, His blood-bought children, who are still on earth.

Now let us look at our chart, noting the following outline facts:

- (1) Christ in the glory is even now our Advocate and Intercessor - our Great High Priest;
- (2) during this present age, while He is in glory, His Holy Spirit is in the world, calling out the church, composed of Jew and Gentile;
- (3) the calling out of the church began at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended in great power, and will continue right through this dispensation until the rapture or translation of the church, when Christ returns for His saints.

In other words, Christ is in glory, interceding for His own, while His Holy Spirit is in the world, building His church by adding unto it sinners saved by grace. That is why the Church Age is called the Age of Grace.

In our next lesson we shall consider this church period - from Pentecost to the rapture. Today we want to center our thoughts upon the priestly work of Christ in glory, on behalf of those members of His church who are still on earth.

“Christ Sitteth On The Right Hand Of God” (Col 3:1).

Many Scripture passages tell us that the Man, Christ Jesus, is seated “at the right hand of the throne of God.” Turn to the following references and read them carefully: Mark 16:19; Rom 8:24; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; Heb 8:1; Heb 10:12; Heb 12:2. The very attitude of Christ in glory speaks to us of some highly significant facts. Let us see what these are:

1. A Finished Work.

“When he had by himself purged our sins,” He “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb 1:3).

When He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, He cried out in triumph, "It is finished!" The work of redemption was done! That is why you and I cannot do one thing to be saved, my friend. "The wages of sin is death" but "Jesus paid it all." He has finished the work of redemption, while you and I can only accept His salvation as a free gift. All we can do is to go to Him in repentance and pray the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The moment we do that, He regenerates the heart and saves us by His grace.

When Christ finished His redemptive work on Calvary, there was no longer a need for the offerings and sacrifices for sin.

In Old Testament times, however, the priests offered "oftentimes the same sacrifices," which could "never take away sins" (Heb 10:11). Their animal sacrifices were only types and shadows of the promised Redeemer and Lamb of God. But the Lord Jesus, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God" (Heb 10:12).

Had you ever thought of the significant fact that in the Jewish tabernacle and in Solomon's temple there was no chair? There were beautiful and costly pieces of furniture, but the priest's work was never done, and the chair is for those whose work is done. Century after century, year after year, day after day, the priest stood, fulfilling the duties of his office. His work was never finished, because it always pointed on to Christ. Thus the Holy Spirit wrote to the Hebrew Christians after Christ had died "once for all," saying that they should not continue to follow the blind leaders of the Hebrew nation who still observed the Jewish ritualism, even after their Messiah had come and had fulfilled the types. And this is what He wrote: "Every priest standeth" to minister in his priestly office; "but this man (the Lord Jesus), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb 10:11-12).

When the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, you see, the temple in Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed. The Roman emperor, Titus, later destroyed that temple, in the year 70 A.D. But until that event, the Jewish nation who had rejected their Messiah continued to offer the daily sacrifices.

That is why the Holy Spirit wrote to the Hebrew Christians, saying: "Every priest standeth" to minister in his priestly office, in spite of the fact that, since Christ had died on Calvary, there was "no more offering for sin" (Heb 10:18).

But the blindness of the Hebrew nation does not alter the fact that God's redemptive work is finished!

"When he had by himself purged our sins," He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." His very attitude speaks to us of a finished redemption. And none of us shall get to heaven by any merit of our own; our salvation is a free gift of the grace of God.

2. "His Rest."

Christ in glory is seated - in an attitude of rest. His creation rest was broken by sin; and He could not rest until the penalty for sin was paid. Then, "when the fulness of the time was come," He went along thirty-three years of sorrow and heartache and trial. He knew what it was to be weary, to find no place to lay His head. As the Man of Sorrows, He went all the way to the cross. From the time sin entered the world, His creation rest had been broken; but since Calvary's cross, He has been resting in His finished work - "a new creation."

It is this rest into which He invites you and me to enter when He says, "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28). Our Heavenly Father sees us identified with His Son, our Saviour, in His death and resurrection; He sees us also seated with Him "in heavenly places" (Eph 1:3). And He bids us enter into His rest by faith.

Chapters three and four of the Epistle to the Hebrews dwell fully upon this fundamental truth.

Read them carefully, prayerfully, repeatedly; for they have a distinct message for the weary, burdened Christian in this day of stress and strain.

As you read this portion of the Word of God, you will note that the Holy Spirit uses two illustrations or types of God's present rest in His redemptive work:

(1) His creation rest (Heb 4:4); and

(2) the Canaan rest which only Joshua and Caleb enjoyed - of all the redeemed company which left Egypt on the night of the first Passover.

"Not all that came out of Egypt by Moses" grieved the Lord through unbelief. (See Heb 3:16). Caleb and Joshua had faith to believe that the Lord God could and would deliver them from the hand of the enemy, and lead them safely into the Promised Land. Therefore, God let them enter into the land and enjoy rest from the weary journey through the wilderness.

But all the others of that great multitude "sinned . . . because of unbelief"; therefore, their "carcasses fell in the wilderness" (Heb 3:17-19). They were not permitted to enter the Canaan rest because of their lack of faith.

This, of course, does not apply to Moses, whom God buried near Mount Nebo, and who was not permitted to enter into the land for another reason.

But, my friend, Canaan was only a type of heaven - and rest - even as Egypt was a type of the world; and the wilderness journey, a type of the Christian's pilgrimage from the cross to the very presence of God.

The real rest of God which He finds through restored fellowship with His redeemed children was only faintly illustrated by the Canaan rest many centuries ago. "For if Jesus [Joshua]" - note that this is the Greek translation of the word "Joshua" - "For if Joshua had given them rest (God's rest), then would he (God) not afterward (through David, 400 years later than Joshua) have spoken of another day" of rest, as He did in the ninety-fifth Psalm, quoted by the Holy Spirit in the fourth chapter of Hebrews. (See Heb 4:7-8; compare Heb 3:7-11). "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Heb 4:9).

This rest for the Christian is yet future in the fullest sense; for until heaven is reached, there will be weariness and sorrow and suffering.

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." But even now the redeemed soul may enter into that rest of God by faith. How? By ceasing "from his own works," as a means of salvation, "as God did from his" - not only in His creation rest, but in His finished redemption on Calvary! (See Heb 4:10).

Do you not see, my brother, that you can find rest of heart only by faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ? Our salvation is a gracious gift of God, received by faith, and by faith alone.

But it is possible for us to have “peace with God” - to be saved from the penalty of sin - and yet miss altogether the “peace of God,” because we do not enter unreservedly into this rest by faith?

Worry and anxious care rob many Christians of the rest of heart which God has for them, even in this wicked world of sin - and worry is a form of unbelief. “Come unto me,” the risen Lord is saying to us, whatever the care or burden may be. “Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest.”

“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief,” even as Israel missed the Canaan rest through murmuring and fear and lack of faith in the God who had redeemed them from Egyptian bondage. (See Heb 4:11).

3. Our Accessibility into His Presence.

The very attitude of the risen Lord, as He is seated in the glory, is inviting to us.

I well remember how, when I was a lad, if I wanted my father to do something special for me, I did not go to him during his busy hours. I waited until I saw him seated in his arm chair, slippers on his feet, paper in his hand. Then I went in to ask of him whatever was on my heart.

His very attitude was inviting.

And our Great High Priest is seated; He bids us enter into His presence without question or fear.

We have seen in our former studies that “the way into the holiest of all,” even heaven itself, was forever opened when the Lord Jesus died on Calvary’s cross. We have seen that the rending of the veil of the temple in that hour was symbolic of the fact that we no longer need a human priest to intercede for us before the Lord.

Every Christian, by faith in the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, has access into His presence through prayer!

And the risen Lord, our great High Priest, invites us to enter boldly into His presence, even “into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way,” by the way of His cross. (See Heb 10:19-22; compare Heb 4:14-16).

Because Christ identified Himself with us in His life on earth, we may call God “our Father.”

The Old Testament saints could not do that; it was Christ who taught His disciples to pray, saying, “Our Father who art in heaven.” And as we pray to our Father in heaven, in the name of His Son, our Saviour, “we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1Jn 5:15).

- No unsaved person need try to pray any prayer to God except, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

- No man who refuses to take Christ as his Saviour can call God “Father.”

The Father hears and answers the prayers only of those who approach Him “in the name” of His Son. And because we have received His Son, then we are “the sons of God,” and have access into the throne-room of His presence.

Some years ago a little boy on his bicycle pedaled along the streets of New York City until he came to the entrance to the First National Bank. There he stopped, entered confidently, walked past the customers, past the policeman, past the tellers, past the vice-president, right on to the office of the president. While others stood outside, and looked at a sign which read, "No admittance," or waited vainly for entrance, the little lad opened the door and walked right in. Addressing the white haired man behind the desk, he asked, "Daddy, have you got anything for me today?" To which the president of the big bank replied, "Yes, Johnnie; you won't lose it, will you?" And off the little boy went with his request granted.

Do you know, my friend, you and I could not do that.

The president of that bank was the lad's father; therefore, his office door was always open to his own child. But you and I have a Father whose ear is ever attuned to our petitions.

In Old Testament times there was "no admittance" into His presence. Only the high priest in Israel could enter the Holy of Holies, and that but once a year, not without blood.

Since the rending of the veil of the temple, however, the humblest child of God may look up into heaven itself, and cry, "Abba, Father."

In the hour of darkness, when you need a friend, my brother, when you do not know which way to turn - then you need not go to an earthly priest. You have a Great High Priest in the Holy of Holies, even heaven itself; and the Father hears your petitions because you love His Son.

And remember! The Son of God, seated at the Father's right hand, invites us to talk to Him in prayer. He bids us go into His presence with our needs, for He knows all about them.

"We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (or apart from sin). Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:15-16).

My friend, we look into the open heavens and see our Great High Priest. "He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He knows when poverty and sorrow and suffering press heavily upon us. By faith we see Him seated at the right hand of the throne of God, inviting us to approach Him without fear. "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace" in prayer!

4. His Intercession for Us.

Christ in glory, seated at God's right hand, is praying for us!

Since the veil of the temple was rent in twain, we do not need an earthly priest to intercede for us. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1Ti 2:5).

In Old Testament times the priest represented sinful man to a holy God. But since the rending of the veil, since "the way into the holiest" has been made manifest, the Man, Christ Jesus, represents us before the Father. He is our Advocate, our Intercessor, our Great High Priest.

Since the rending of the veil, all believers in Christ are priests, and have the right to enter into the holiest of all (1Pe 2:9; Rev 1:6).

Thus it is that, as our Great High Priest, the Lord not only offered one sacrifice for sin forever; He also ever lives to appear “in the presence of God for us” (Heb 10:12; Heb 9:24).

Having paid the penalty of sin for us on the cross, He now pleads our cause as our Advocate and Intercessor.

To learn something of the nature of His present ministry for us, we turn to the seventeenth chapter of John, and read His High Priestly Prayer for His disciples.

But let us examine closely the reason why we need an Intercessor.

(a) He meets “The Accuser” and Pleads for Us.

Satan, “the accuser of our brethren,” has access to the presence of God. (See Job 1:6-12). As “the god of this world,” he tempts us to sin; and when he succeeds, he wings his way into the presence of God, there to accuse us before Him “day and night” (Rev 12:10).

He knows that “the wages of sin is death”; and he knows that God is holy. But are we helpless? Are we at his mercy? Thank God! No! “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1Jn 2:1), and He “ever liveth to make intercession” for His own (Heb 7:25).

When I listen to the voice of the tempter and fall into sin, Satan goes into the presence of God, there to accuse me before Him. Then I think I can hear my Advocate say: “All the accuser says is true; but, Father, do you see these wounds in my hands and feet and side? I was wounded for that man’s transgressions; I was bruised for his iniquities; and whatever is his demerit, put it on Me.”

Charles Wesley, while meditating upon the blessed High Priestly work of our Lord Jesus, wrote the well known words that have been such a stimulus to thousands of discouraged Christians:

“Five bleeding wounds He bears, Received on Calvary;

They pour effectual prayers;

They strongly plead for me:

‘Forgive him, O forgive’ they cry, ‘Nor let that ransomed sinner die!’” My friend, Satan cannot touch us if we are trusting in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ as an atonement for our souls.

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:33-34).

(b) He Presents Our Worship to God - Our Praise and Our Prayer.

“We know not what we should pray for as we ought”; but He looks upon the heart, and He presents our feeble petitions and praises upon the Father in all the power and efficacy of the Great High Priest that He is.

How meaningful are the words with which we often close our prayers: “In Jesus’ name”!

As we have already seen, no prayer ever reaches the Father except through the name of His Son, our Saviour. There is no other approach to the throne of grace!

(c) He Receives the Confession of Our Sins.

When we sin, a cloud comes between us and God. Our communion and fellowship with Him are broken, though we do not cease to be God's children. Your own child does not cease to be your child just because he goes contrary to your wishes. When we sin, we lose for a time the joy of fellowship with Christ; but when "we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1Jn 1:9).

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1Jn 1:7).

Then we must believe what He says, take Him at His Word, and never again mention the confessed and forgiven sin.

Even as a parent wants a penitent child to believe him when he says he forgives him of some disobedience, not asking him over and over again to forgive the same sin, so also God wants us to deal with Him in finality. It grieves Him when we go to Him repeatedly with the same sin, for He has told us that He will remember our sins "no more for ever" (Heb 10:17).

"A Royal Priesthood" Our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord is in the glory. If you want to see a picture of Him, my friend, turn to Rev 1:12-20. There we see Him, dressed as our Great High Priest, in the midst of the lampstands, which represent believers shining in a dark world. He is there, that we may shine for Him, that we may give a good testimony for Him before a world lost in sin.

Our Great High Priest faithfully represents us before the Father. And He has left you and me to represent Him on earth. What if He were as careless about us as we are about His work?

If we let Him, He will use us to make known His love to others who have not found in Him the only Saviour and Great High Priest. His own Word speaks to us very plainly, saying:

"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation; a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1Pe 2:9).

And as we witness for Him, He intercedes for us, cleansing us from sin, meeting our needs, empowering us for service, and blessing the testimony to His own glory. Our Great High Priest is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God; and he "ever liveth to make intercession for us!"

~ end of chapter 9 ~

10 The Church Age

CHAPTER TEN

THE CHURCH AGE

There are several terms which aptly describe the age in which we live: The Church Age; The Age of Grace; Man under Grace; From Pentecost to the Rapture, or Translation, of the Church. All these are terms applied to the period of time which began with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, nearly two thousand years ago, and which will come to a close when the church is caught "up to meet the Lord in the air," forever to be with Him.

It is this period of time, about which we are to study today. A glance at the introduction to our last lesson will remind us of the very important fact that, while the Holy Spirit is in the world, calling out the church, the risen Lord is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, ever living to make intercession for the blood-bought members of His church. As the Holy Spirit in the world convicts men of sin and regenerates hearts, the Son of Man in glory appears in the presence of God for these same sinners saved by grace. And so the building of the church goes on, even as believers in Christ are kept by His almighty power.

This is God's purpose for this age; and that is what I want you to see in our lesson today. In other words, I want you to get firmly fixed in your minds these fundamental truths: God's eternal purpose for this age; the difference between the church and the kingdom; and the relationship between Christ and His church.

God's Purpose For This Age - The Building Of The Church

Let me remind you again that the division of time into "ages" or "dispensations" is not a secret thing; for the Word of God clearly marks the beginning and the ending of each age. So it is that the Church Age had a definite beginning and will have a definite ending. And, as in other dispensations God dealt with man in very definite ways, so also He is dealing with man now in a certain, definite way.

For Scripture concerning these ages, turn to Eph 3:1-6, and read this passage carefully.

Note the expression, "the dispensation of the grace of God"; these words, as well as those already suggested, might well be used as the theme of our lesson today. Then note especially verses five and six, which plainly state that the building of the church, composed of Jew and Gentile, was not revealed to men "in other ages."

What a clear statement of the orderly arrangement of the ever-unfolding purpose of the eternal God! "In other ages!" "From the beginning of the world," that is, throughout the ages God knew that He was going to build His church (Eph 3:9); but in His wisdom He withheld this great revelation concerning Christ and the church until He gave it to the world through the Apostle Paul. Therefore, that apostle could write the words which we have just read:

“By revelation he made known unto me the mystery . . . which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men” (Eph 3:3, Eph 3:5).

Just here let us remember that in the Word of God a “mystery” is not something mysterious. It is, rather, a term used in a special sense and meaning “something not hitherto revealed.” That is why Paul writes of “the mystery” concerning the church. It was “not made known unto the sons of men” “in other ages.”

We have seen in our former studies that each dispensation is marked at the beginning by some new probation, and at the end by judgment. Each time, as God has given man a new chance, man has failed; and God in His holiness and righteousness has judged sin.

Likewise, in the Church Age God offers man - not another trial - man’s testing time has passed, and the verdict has been rendered: “All the world” is “guilty before God . . . For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:19; Rom 3:23). But in this Church Age God is offering man a full and free salvation. As we shall see in the progress of our study, this age, too, will end in judgment. Yet God’s eternal purpose for this age is being fulfilled in the building of His church.

It is very important that you grasp this truth, my friend. God does not promise the church that through her He will convert the world, or “win the world for Christ,” as many ardent Christians believe. God does tell the church to evangelize the world. But only the coming of the King will bring in the golden age of peace and righteousness! Nothing is more pathetic than to see Christian men who are sincere, but who are burning their lives out in efforts doomed to fail. Reformers, seeking to “bring in the kingdom” while the King is away, are like workmen trying to construct a building without knowing the blueprint.

The very word “church” in the Greek is “ecclesia,” and means “the called out ones.” James realized this when, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he spoke at the first Church Council in Jerusalem, saying: “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name” (Acts 15:14). “And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down . . . Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:15-18).

What a significant statement is that last sentence! “Known unto God” was His great plan for this present age of grace, “from the beginning of the world”! The little flock of disciples in Jerusalem began their work on the Day of Pentecost. They began to preach and to evangelize. Three thousand souls were saved on that memorable day; but Jerusalem was not converted; nor was it later. Yet the apostles were preaching the Word in all its purity. The Lord took out three thousand souls.

Philip preached in Samaria, and there was a great revival; but not all the Samaritans were saved.

Paul preached in city after city; and the Gospel was “a savour of life unto life”; but it was also “a savour of death unto death” - to those who accepted it, life; but to those who rejected it, death.

So all through the ages the power of God can save even the brutal jailer; yet it can also be rejected. No city has ever been wholly converted. Few families are all Christian.

But some will ask, “Then is the Gospel a failure?”

Let me put the question in this way: "A failure to do what?" Look at the nations today with their rumors of wars, the race for armaments, the wave of crime and lawlessness. If the church were supposed to convert the world, then we might well grow discouraged, to say the least.

My friend, the day will come when the world will be converted - when the King comes back! But God has another purpose for this age; He is calling out the church, "a people for his name."

Then let me ask again: Is the Gospel a failure? No, never! Throughout every country, wherever the Gospel of our crucified and risen Lord is faithfully preached, the Holy Spirit is saving souls, uniting them into one body, building the church, which is the bride of Christ. How necessary it is that we understand God's purpose for this age! This is the age of "the called out ones."

Moreover, this is the age when Christians are to evangelize the world, not to amuse the people or entertain them in the house of God, in the name of Christianity. "Go ye into all the world," Christ said, "and preach the gospel to every creature."

When the last soul is saved to complete the body of Christ, then the church will be caught away to be with Christ. And every soul saved brings the church that much nearer to completion. What an incentive to be a winner of souls! Yet God has not revealed the time when the body of Christ will be complete. He has told us to preach the Gospel, to point sinners to the Saviour - and to be ready for His coming!

Yes, God is working His purpose out. The Church Age had a definite beginning on the Day of Pentecost. It will have a definite ending at the translation of the church. And in between these two great events His eternal purpose for this age is being fulfilled in the building of the church of our crucified and risen Lord.

This purpose which Paul declared was foretold by the Lord Jesus while He was still on earth; for in Mat 16:18 He expressly stated: "I will build my church" - not "I have built," and not "I am building," but "I will build."

Again, He said to His disciples:

"It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John 16:7).

The Holy Spirit could not come to accomplish His purpose for this age until the Lord Jesus was crucified and glorified. That is what Christ meant when He uttered the significant words which we have just quoted. The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost; and then the building of the church began - not before then.

Now it is quite true that the Holy Spirit was in the world from the beginning. In Gen 1:2 we read that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Throughout the Old Testament we read that He came upon individual men, upon Saul, upon David, Samuel, Solomon, and many others. But let us remember that He came upon these men, as individuals, for special service. He was not in the world then as He is today, uniting believers into the body of Christ, which is His church.

This point is made very clear in John 7:37-39, especially John 7:39. Referring to Himself as the "living water," and looking forward to the Church Age when believers in Him should have dwelling

in them and with them, His own Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus spoke these words, and at that time “the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39).

Do you not see, my friend, that the church did not begin to evangelize until the Holy Spirit came in great power on the Day of Pentecost, in fulfillment of these prophecies of the all-wise Son of God? (See also Luk 24:49; Acts 1:8; and other such predictions of Christ, fulfilled at Pentecost).

Now let us turn to the second chapter of Acts and read the account of the beginning of the church. As we read, let us keep in mind the eternal truth that the Holy Spirit is a living Person, the third Person of the Holy Trinity. Even though some ten or fifteen false creeds today deny the personality of the Holy Spirit, yet God’s Word is forever true. The Holy Spirit is not an influence; He is not some inanimate thing. The Lord Jesus always referred to Him as a living and a powerful Person. (See chapter one of this series, “The Eternal Spirit.”)

Space will not permit an exposition of this wonderful record, found in the second chapter of Acts. But I trust you will read prayerfully and repeatedly this story, noting the miracles attending the descent of the Holy Spirit; the significance of the Jewish feast day on which it occurred (compare Lev 23:15-22; see also our radio lectures on “The Feasts of Jehovah”); Peter’s remarkable sermon, with its statement of fulfilled prophecy, and with its exaltation of the crucified and risen Lord; the brotherly love manifested by this first church. What a marvelous chapter it is!

Then if you will turn to the tenth and eleventh chapters of Acts, you will find the story of how the Holy Spirit came in like power upon the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius.

The record in chapter two has to do with Jews (Acts 2:5); in chapters ten and eleven, with Gentiles.

“The gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”; (1Co 12:13; compare Gal 3:28).

In Christ all barriers are broken down, for “God is no respecter of persons!” “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom 11:33).

Such was the miraculous beginning of the church. The whole of the book of Acts tells of her early growth; and the whole of the New Testament tells of God’s plan for her - here on earth and for all eternity. **The Difference Between The Church And The Kingdom**

Much confusion seems to exist in the minds of many regarding the difference between the church and the kingdom.

A clear understanding of this subject will help us to see God’s plan for this age through the church. The earthly kingdom was no “mystery . . . in other ages hid in God”; that is, not revealed to man. On the contrary, the coming kingdom was the theme of all the prophets. It is described in detail in the Old Testament, Then in the fulness of time John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Himself heralded the kingdom, saying: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” But Israel

rejected her King, and the kingdom was postponed. Then it was, and not until then, that Christ announced His eternal purpose in the building of His church, as already referred to in Mat 16:18, "I will build my church."

The kingdom always refers to this world; the church is a heavenly body.

- The kingdom is to be a physical, literal reality on earth. The church has a heavenly inheritance; she is the bride of Christ.

- The kingdom is to be established when the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, returns in power and great glory to rule; the church is being formed now by the Holy Spirit, as believers are baptized into the one body, which is the church.

- Jerusalem will be the metropolis of the world, and Christ will sit upon an earthly throne, the throne of His father, David; the church will reign with Him in glory for a thousand years, and will share His glory throughout the endless ages.

Briefly, this is the difference between the church and the kingdom; and once it is understood, God's great plan concerning future events is clearly seen.

I do not refer to any particular branch of the church - I refer to all born-again souls, to all who have put their faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus as the only Way of salvation.

Have you done that, my brother? Are you baptized into the body of Christ by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit of God? Unless you let the Holy Spirit regenerate your heart, you will not share the glory of Christ when He comes back to earth - and for all eternity. You will live forever in outer darkness and remorse and anguish of soul.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). The Relationship Between Christ and the Church As we consider the figures used to describe the church of Christ, we begin to see something of the marvelous relationship between the great Head of the church and the members of His body. Let us look briefly at some of these:

1. The Church Is the Body of Christ.

Read carefully Eph 1:17-23. Christ is here called "the head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Eph 1:22-23). This speaks of union with Him and life in Him. Without the head, the physical body dies; and apart from eternal life in Christ, there is eternal separation from God.

But this figure speaks to us of yet another vital truth. Let me ask you: What is your body for? Is it not for the manifestation of your personality? Your spirit can exist without your body; but you need your body to manifest your spirit. Your body executes your purposes. Your tongue speaks for you; your feet go for you; your hands serve for you.

My Christian friend, God has a great purpose to carry out. And in this age He is manifested to the world only through His church. Through her He seeks to carry out the will of the unseen Christ.

Paul says in Col 1:24-27 that "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints" is this: "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

May I ask you, my brother: Are you carrying out the will and purpose of the unseen Christ before a world that does not know Him? As you and I preach and live the Gospel of the unseen Christ, the Holy Spirit saves sinners, adding the members to the body of Christ, and hastening the day when she will be complete, translated - forever to be with Him.

2. The Church Is the Bride of Christ.

Turn to 2Co 11:2 and Eph 5:25-30 to find two very clear references which use the figure of the bride and the bridegroom, as illustrating the relationship between Christ and the church. This figure speaks to us of union, affection, tenderness, nearness.

Our "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ . . . And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:4-6).

Even as a queen sits beside the king, so the bride of Christ shall rule and reign with Him who will one day be acknowledged by all the world as King of kings and Lord of lords.

In our next lesson we shall consider, among other things, the marriage supper of the Lamb, at which time we shall study it more fully. But here let us read the Bible record of that time of rejoicing. It is found in Rev 19:7-10.

- No wonder "the Spirit and the bride say, Come"! (See Rev 22:17).

- No wonder the child of God looks beyond the strain and stress, sorrow and suffering of this present life, and prays: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"! (See Rev 22:20).

3. The Church Is the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

In Old Testament days God came down in the Shekinah Glory and dwelt in the tabernacle and temple. During this age He dwells, not in a material house of brick and stone, but in a living temple.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1Co 6:19-20). (See also 1Co 3:16; Eph 2:19-22; 1Pe 2:5; and other references).

What a solemn thought this is!

How it should make us want to please Him!

Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit; we are not our own; we are bought with a price, the precious blood of Jesus! He wants to speak through our tongues, to serve through our hands, to send our feet on soul-saving errands. How are we using these members? They belong to Him!

When He was on earth, the Lord Jesus cleansed the temple, the house of God.

What must He think as His all-seeing eye looks down into these temples which He has purchased on Calvary?

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"

“Unto Him Be Glory In The Church” The church will ever be an object-lesson of the grace of God.

“In the ages to come” the church will “shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:7). The grace, wisdom, and love of God will be made manifest through the church.

The distinctive characteristic of this age is grace; in the millennium it will be righteousness.

God permits evil today, for His grace is withholding judgment. Under the Law of Moses the Gentiles had no claim to the covenants and promises. But now, in Christ, God has taken us up, without the promises, apart from the covenants; and in so doing, He manifests His grace.

If I wanted to manifest my grace, my friend, I should not bestow it upon my own child. I should choose someone who has less claim on me than anyone else in the world. I should adopt that person, educate him, take him into my home - and manifest my grace upon him.

Do you not see that God has done this, and more? Our great sin manifests His limitless grace. His love for us “while we were yet sinners” will, through the endless ages, be to the praise of His glory. For “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

The holy angels know something of the power and glory and majesty and holiness of God; but only a redeemed sinner can know His grace.

We deserved judgment, but God's grace saved us. Your sin and mine and the sin of the world crucified the Lord Jesus. This is the story we shall tell throughout the endless ages, my Christian friend. Before principalities and powers we shall make known “the manifold wisdom of God.” We shall be kept busy in eternity, telling the angels and cherubim and seraphim and archangels what the grace of God has done for us.

Are you not glad you are a Christian, a member of the bride of Christ, which is His body? My unsaved brother, will you not this moment bow the knee before Him who loved you and died for you, that He might bestow upon you the riches of His grace? At any moment the church may be complete. At any moment the Lord may take His bride, forever to be with Him. Will you not let the Holy Spirit make your body His temple? If you will, then you will be able to sing, with the Apostle Paul, the praise of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us - now and forevermore: “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Eph 3:21).

~ end of chapter 10 ~

11 The Translation Of The Church, The Judgment...

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE TRANSLATION OF THE CHURCH THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

AND THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB In our last lesson we saw that God's purpose for this age is the building of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today we want to consider the future events which will take place "in the air" and in heaven as soon as the body of Christ, which is His church, is complete. These events, about which we are to study today, will begin with the translation of the church, and will culminate in the visible, bodily return of Christ in glory, with the church, to establish His millennial kingdom on earth.

Just as the first coming of our Lord into the world nearly two thousand years ago covered a period of time - thirty-three and one-half years - so also His second coming will cover a period of time.

Between the two events which mark the beginning and the culmination of the second coming of our Lord; that is, between the translation of the church and the return of Christ in glory with the church to rule and reign - between these two great events the seventieth week of Daniel will run its course in the earth.

In our next lesson we plan to consider this earthly scene foretold by the Prophet Daniel, by the Lord Jesus Himself, and by His apostles.

Today, however, it is our purpose to consider only the heavenly scene which will be enacted while the seventieth week of Daniel is being fulfilled in the earth.

A glance at our chart will indicate, in outline, just what will come to pass during this period - both in heaven and on earth. Leaving the earthly scene for the present, let us look at what the chart indicates regarding the events to take place "in the air."

As "the bright and morning star," our Lord will come to take out of the world His saints; this is what we call the translation or rapture of the church. Then at "the judgment seat of Christ" the believers' works will be judged, and rewards will be given for service rendered in His name. At some time during this period, possibly as it draws to a close, "the marriage supper of the Lamb" will take place. And then, as the "Sun of righteousness," Christ, with His bride, will return to the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. These are the outline facts which we want to consider as fully as space permits today. The Translation Of The Church

1. The Church Will Not Go through the Great Tribulation.

Our chart indicates the fact that the church will not go through the tribulation; but as many Christians are confused in regard to this question; let us take time to see what the Bible says about it.

Some hold that the church will go through this “time of Jacob’s trouble”; others, that it will not; yet others, that there will be a partial rapture, some believers being delivered out of it, while others pass through this time of great tribulation on earth.

By “the Great Tribulation” we mean that period of terrible suffering still in the future.

Concerning it Jeremiah and Daniel uttered grave warnings. And concerning it Christ said: “Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Mat 24:21).

The major part of the book of Revelation tells of it in no uncertain terms. We shall study about it in our next lesson, but here let us remember that this time of trouble will run its course during the last three and one-half years of the seventieth week of Daniel. The sufferings will be terrible. Men will desire to die, but will not be able to escape by death. Therefore, the question that has been raised is an important one to every Christian: Will the church go through the tribulation?

Let us put the question in this way:

Who will go through the tribulation? The Scriptures divide all mankind into three classes: “The Jews . . . the Gentiles . . . the church of God” (1Co 10:32).

The nation of Israel, still rejecting Christ as her Messiah, will pass through this time of sorrow, described as “the time of Jacob’s trouble.”

The Gentile nations will also go through the Great Tribulation, for it will cover the whole earth. It will be universal. The whole world will be under the rule of the Antichrist.

According to Rev 7:9-14, John saw coming “out of great tribulation” “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues.”

These will be the martyrs of that period, who refuse to worship the Antichrist. But “the church of God” will be translated before that time of sorrow comes upon the earth. As we well know, in the church of the Lord Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile. God has broken down all barriers of race and color and nation and tongue. The church is “a new creation” in Christ Jesus, and in Him all national distinction passes away.

As members of His body, we are all one in Him. Therefore, when God’s Word tells us that Israel and the Gentile nations will go through the tribulation, it does not refer to the church, in which God sees neither Jew nor Greek. In the church all are one in Christ Jesus.

It is true that the saints are exhorted to glory in sufferings for Christ’s sake, yet there is a great difference between suffering at the hands of men and suffering from “the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Rev 19:15). How could the church pass through His wrath? Did not God deal with our sins when He died for us? It is a strange doctrine that can teach such a theory when the church has been washed in His shed blood, and has been promised by Christ Himself that she “shall not come into judgment” (John 5:24).

Both of Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians deal almost entirely with the second coming of Christ, and 1Th 1:10 says that the Lord Jesus has “delivered us from the wrath to come.” (See also 1Th 5:10).

In chapter four of this epistle we have one of the clearest of Scripture passages regarding the rapture of the church. Then in chapter five “the day of the Lord” is mentioned; this expression always refers to His visible return in glory to put an end to the Great Tribulation, and to set up His kingdom.

Please note the order here: first the translation of the church; then “the day of the Lord.”

Again, there is no Scripture to support the theory of a partial rapture.

1Co 15:23 tells us that “they that are Christ’s at his coming” shall be changed. No matter how immature, no matter how weak, all believers will be translated, forever to be with Christ. Great or small - everyone who is trusting in the finished work of the Lord Jesus on Calvary - these are among the number “that are Christ’s.”

Another crushing argument to the interpretation of a partial rapture is seen in the fact that, although many events must precede the tribulation, such as the revival of the Roman Empire, the return of the Jews to Palestine in unbelief, the apostasy in professing Christendom, the increase in lawlessness on the earth - while we are definitely told that these events must precede the tribulation period, yet we are not told to wait for these things. We are told, rather, “to wait for His Son from heaven . . . even Jesus” (1Th 1:10).

And yet another positive proof that the church will not go through the tribulation is seen in 2Th 2:7-8 :

“The mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who letteth [hinders] will let [hinder], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked (Lawless one) be revealed.”

Read all of this chapter prayerfully, my friend. The wicked one is none other than the Antichrist. And who is He who is hindering Satan’s work in the world? It is the Holy Spirit of God, He “will hinder” the manifestation of the Man of Sin - how long? “Until he be taken out of the way!”

The meaning here is unmistakable. The Holy Spirit who dwells in the church, which is His temple, will be “taken out of the way” at the translation of the church. “Then shall that Wicked (one) be revealed!”

Since the Great Tribulation does not begin until the latter three and one-half years of the seventieth week of Daniel, since the seventieth week of Daniel does not begin until the Antichrist is revealed, and since the Antichrist cannot be revealed before the Holy Spirit, with the church, is “taken out of the way,” do you not see that the church cannot go through the tribulation?

What a “blessed hope” it is to know that, so far as God has revealed the future to us in His Word, the very next event will be the translation of the church! At any moment our Lord may call to His saints, saying, “Come up hither!”

2. The Church Will Be Secretly Translated.

The world will not see the Lord when He meets the church “in the air” (1Th 4:17). When He comes in glory to set up His kingdom, after the tribulation period, Israel will receive Him as her Messiah. “His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives” (Zec 14:4). But to Israel He said as He wept over Jerusalem before He went to the cross, “Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say,

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Mat 23:39). And before Israel says that, she will have gone through “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” Then she will hail the Lord from heaven as her Messiah and Deliverer - not until then. It is then that “every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him” (Rev 1:7). But only the church will see Him when He comes for His saints. The risen Lord appeared only to believers after He arose from the grave. The last glimpse the world had of Him was on the cross. And the world will not see Him henceforth until He returns in power and great glory to reign.

The world will know that some significant event has taken place when all true Christians are gone, but there is no intimation in Scripture of any physical phenomenon.

There will doubtless be a great stir for a time. Families will be separated from loved ones. Unsaved husbands will wonder where their Christian wives have gone. Unsaved wives will wonder about their Christian husbands. Parents will miss their Christian boys and girls; and all children who have not reached the age of accountability will be taken to be “with the Lord.” “As a thief in the night,” He will come; and only the ears of the redeemed will be tuned to hear “the voice of the archangel” and “the trump of God.” Let me ask you, my friend: Is your whole family ready for the coming of the Lord for His saints? Are your loved ones waiting for “that blessed hope”? Are you?

As “the bright and morning star,” Christ will come for His church; and the morning star shines in the darkest hour of the night, just before the rising of the sun.

The world is now in the darkness of sin and chaos and lawlessness and rumors of wars. At any moment the Morning Star may appear! Are you eagerly looking for His “appearing”? When He comes as the “Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings” (Mal 4:2), then “every eye shall see him.” But when He comes for His saints, He will call them away, to meet Him “in the air.”

Do you not want to be ready for His coming? You may, by letting Him into your heart as the only Saviour from sin, by faith in His shed blood on Calvary’s cross.

3. The Church Will Be Translated, That Sin May Come to a Head.

As we have already seen, “the cup of iniquity” will not be full until the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit is taken “out of the way.” The church is His temple, and must be taken away before the Antichrist can be revealed. God never executes judgment in the earth until “the cup of iniquity” is full.

When Satan, in the person of the Antichrist, is worshipped on the very spot in Jerusalem which God designated as the place where Israel was to worship Him - then sin will have come to a head. Then the cup of iniquity will be full, and the godless world will be ready for the purifying judgments of God. But before that day, the church for which Christ died will be with Him!

4. The Church Will Be Translated, That She May Escape the Purifying Judgments which are to come upon the world.

Believers on the Lord Jesus Christ are His representatives before a God-dishonoring, God-rejecting, Spirit-resisting world. The whole Church Age is likened unto the night.

Jesus, the Light of the world, was crucified; and now the Sun is away. He has left us, His blood-bought children, to shine “as lights in the world,” “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation” (Php 2:15). But before He cleanses the earth by His purifying judgments, He will take His witnesses, His representatives, His church, to be with Himself.

5. “That Blessed Hope” (Tit 2:13).

Are you looking for “the bright and morning star,” my brother? If so, what joy fills your soul!

Let us examine briefly some Scripture that tells of His appearing for the saints. In 1Th 4:13-18 we find comfort and hope concerning our loved ones who “sleep in Jesus.” And beginning with 1Th 4:16, we read that “the Lord himself shall descend.”

He will not send Michael or Gabriel or some of the angels to take us home to heaven. He Himself will come for us!

He “shall descend” in His glorious, resurrection body. He shall descend from heaven “with a shout.” With what word? With the invitation, “Come!” “Come up hither!” (Rev 4:1).

His very first word to us was, “Come unto me.” And He will call to us again “with a shout” - the shout of victory over death and the grave. “‘Come up hither,’ My redeemed children,” the Lord Jesus will say when He comes for His saints.

At His word “the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

In every part of the habitable globe “the dead in Christ shall rise.” It is estimated that more than three million Christians were buried in the catacombs of Rome. Think of the countless numbers in the sea, in lonely graves, in unmarked tombs! But the Lord knows where the bodies of His saints sleep!

“The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up.”

Like Enoch and Elijah, all the saints living when Jesus comes will be changed, translated, not to pass through death. Would you not like to be among that number, my friend - never to die? “Together with them” - together with our loved ones now with Christ - “in clouds”; i.e., “in clouds of saints” - together with them in clouds we shall “meet the Lord in the air”! We shall meet the One who died for us, the One “altogether lovely.”

Is it any wonder the Apostle Paul added this statement: “Wherefore comfort one another with these words”?

Is it any wonder he wrote again in 1Co 15:55 : “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (Read carefully all of I Corinthians 15 in this connection).

“Behold, I shew you a mystery” (something not hitherto revealed), Paul wrote as he was guided by the Holy Spirit. “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1Co 15:51-52).

I am so glad we are going to have new bodies in that day, free from weariness and pain and suffering and sorrow.

“We shall all be changed” from weakness to power, from mortality to immortality, from humiliation to glory, from our natural bodies, to be “fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Php 3:21).

One moment we shall be treading the soiled streets of this earth; the next, walking the streets of the New Jerusalem. Therefore, let us deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts . . . live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Tit 2:12-13).

“The Judgment Seat Of Christ” When we are translated, forever to be with the Lord, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2Co 5:10; Rom 14:10). This will be a time of heart-searching.

Let us see what the Word of God teaches concerning it:

1. Only Christians Shall Stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

If you read carefully the context of the two references just quoted, you will note that these words were written to Christians only. All unbelievers, all the wicked dead, will be judged at “the great white throne” described in Rev 20:11-15; but that event will not take place until after the thousand years’ reign of Christ on earth. Between “the resurrection of life” which will take place when “the dead in Christ shall rise” at the translation of the church - between this “resurrection of life” and “the resurrection of condemnation” spoken of by our Lord Himself in John 5:29 - between these two resurrections Christ will reign on earth for one thousand years. (See all of Revelation 20, especially verses 5, 6, 12-15).(Rev 20:5-6,Rev 20:12-15)

Here we read: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power” - and “the second death” is “the lake of fire” (Rev 20:14).

A great multitude of the redeemed will appear before the judgment seat of Christ when the church is translated. But why “the judgment seat”? Have our sins not been judged at the cross? Has God not promised to remember them no more forever? Yes, He has blotted them out. We shall not meet our sins when we stand before Him. Thank God! They have been washed away in His shed blood! Then why are we to stand before His “judgment seat”?

The answer is clearly given:

2. “The Fire Shall Try Every Man’s Work of What Sort It Is” (1Co 3:13).

Read carefully 1Co 3:11-15, and you will find the description of what will take place at the judgment seat of Christ. The question of salvation is not in the picture at all. Every man who appears in that great company will be there because his hope is fixed upon the “one foundation,” even Jesus Christ (1Co 3:11).

It will be, rather, a time of testing our works, for reward or for loss of reward. Salvation is not a reward; it is a gift. And it is received down here on earth if it is received at all. We shall be rewarded as servants of God; and we cannot become His servants until we are His children.

You will note that the works which we build upon the one foundation - Christ Jesus - are compared to “gold silver, precious stone, wood, hay, stubble” (1Co 3:12). And “the fire shall try it.”

The fire of God's holiness will consume all that is as "wood, hay, stubble."

All that I have done in the name of Christianity for my own glory, for the glory of my church, for my family's glory - all that will be burned up. I shall have received my reward down here on earth, from the praise of men. I am afraid much of our so-called Christian service will not be "to the praise of his glory" in that day.

But let us look further: Gold in the Word of God is a symbol of His deity and glory. Silver is a type of redemption; Israel always paid the redemption money in silver, according to the express command of the Lord God. And the precious stones speak to us of souls won for Christ: "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels" (Mal 3:17).

- Every time we exalt the Lord Jesus Christ in His deity, as the eternal Son of God, we are laying up gold, as it were, building upon the one foundation a work that shall abide.

- Every time we tell the story of redemption, we put silver upon that foundation, and it shall abide.

- Every time we win a soul to Christ we are building a precious stone upon the one foundation, and it shall abide - to the praise of His glory, throughout the endless ages.

Let me ask you, my friend: "What kind of material are you putting into that building that must stand the fire of the holiness of God?"

He does not ask for the things the world calls great. He is not hard to please. Even a cup of cold water, given in His name, will not lose its reward. Your salvation is not in question here. The thief on the cross had no time to serve God after he was saved; and the Lord does not count anything we do until after we accept Him as a personal Saviour; yet the repentant thief was saved. He was "saved, yet so as by fire" (1Co 3:15).

This is a comforting fact; it assures us of eternal security, regardless of service rendered, so long as we are trusting in the finished work of Christ. But are we willing to meet the Lord without something that shall glorify and honor Him in that day?

Some years ago in Dallas, Texas, a large hotel burned. Some of the guests got out with their baggage; others had time only to escape in night attire. Yet they themselves were just as safe as if all their clothes had not been burned up. So it is that at the judgment seat of Christ many will be saved who will receive no rewards. Shall you? Shall I?

"Shall I go, and empty handed?"

Shall I meet my Saviour so?"

All our works, all our words, all our thoughts from the time we accepted the Lord as our Saviour - all these will be judged in that day. (See 1Co 4:5). All the unknown and unsung words and deeds of mercy; all the silent praises and prayers; all the selfish motives and idle words and bitter thoughts - these will go on parade before the all-seeing eye of the Son of God.

What a solemn thought this is!

3. "If Any Man's Work Shall Abide . . . He Shall Receive a Reward" (1Co 3:14).

Do you remember the prize day at school, my friend? There is a day coming when God will give out His own rewards for service rendered in His name and for His glory. We have space here only to name them.

(a) "The Crown of Life" (Jas 1:12).

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [trials]: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

I wonder if I am talking to someone who is enduring sore testings, as unto the Lord? "Blessed is the man who endureth trials!"

(b) "A Crown of Righteousness" (2Ti 4:8).

At the close of his life on earth Paul wrote these words: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Paul has been in heaven more than eighteen hundred years, and he has not yet received that crown. It is to be given to him "at that day." And it is to be the reward of all who "love his appearing" and are faithful in service.

(c) "An Incorruptible Crown" awaits every believer who runs the Christian race with singleness of purpose, his eye upon the goal (1Co 9:25). And this requires temperance "in all things."

(d) "A Crown of Glory" (1Pe 5:4).

To the undershepherd who faithfully feeds "the flock of God" is this reward promised

"And when the chief shepherd shall appear," the Lord says to him, "we shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

To every pastor, evangelist, Sunday School teacher, father, mother - to every undershepherd who has diligently given out the Word of God to those entrusted to his or her care, the Lord will give this "crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Christ crucified, risen, ascended, interceding, and coming again - this is the message, for the preaching and teaching of which the crown of glory is promised. It is a solemn thing to be a pastor, a Sunday school teacher, a parent! Any other message, no matter how benevolent or kind, will lose its reward.

(e) The Martyr's Crown.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev 2:10).

This passage of Scripture is often linked with Jas 1:12, and the two crowns mentioned are thought to be one, bestowed for enduring trials, whether less severe or even "unto death." Be that as it may, we like to think that God will reward in some special way those who lay down their lives for His name's sake.

(f) The "Crown of Rejoicing" (1Th 2:19-20).

This is the soul-winner's crown. And what a crown it will be for the Apostle Paul who wrote these words! Not only the Thessalonian Christians, but all the hosts of others whom he led to Christ, will be his crown of joy "in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming."

But some will say: "My duties keep me at home. How can I go out and win souls?"

My friend, your family, your neighbor, your delivery boy, the stranger who goes to your door - how many of these have you led to Christ? And as you intercede for the lost, God honors your prayers just as much as He does the spoken word of the minister of the Gospel.

"He that winneth souls is wise . . . And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Pro 11:30; Dan 12:3).

"Behold, I come quickly," the risen Lord is saying to you and me today. "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be . . . Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev 22:12; Rev 3:11).

Some years ago a man in a certain city stood on a street corner, giving out tracts and Christian literature. A working man dressed in overalls took one of these tracts, read it, and accepted Christ as his Saviour. Later the new convert went back to that street corner to thank the man who had been the human instrument in his salvation; but the man was not there. Supposing him to be sick or perhaps to have moved away, the young convert took the place of his unknown friend.

About a year later, in a testimony meeting, he told the story of his conversion, and his unknown friend was in the audience. Then it was that he, too, arose and said:

"My friend, I got discouraged - and you have taken my crown."

Are you discouraged in your appointed place of service, my Christian brother?

"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Jesus is coming, and He will not forget "your work and labour of love" (Heb 6:10).

4. All of God's Ways with Believers Will Be Vindicated at the judgment seat of Christ.

- Then you will know why God has permitted you to have a weak body.
- Then you will know why He let your fortune slip away from you,
- Then you will know why the sorrow and heartache and pain.

God's ways with us are beyond our understanding now, for "we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face" (1Co 13:12). Then all the mysteries will be understood; all the problems will be solved. And "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18).

Again, at the judgment seat of Christ we shall find out what will be our place of service in His millennial kingdom. Some will have authority over five cities; some, over ten cities. And our place of service will be determined, not by our success here, but by our faithfulness.

“Wherefore we labour, that . . . we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2Co 5:9-10).

“The Marriage Supper Of The Lamb” At some time between the translation of the church and the visible, bodily return of Christ in glory with His saints “the marriage supper of the Lamb” will take place. (See Rev 19:7-9).

It seems very clear that this will follow the judgment seat of Christ. And very probably it will be toward the close of this period, during which the seventieth week of Daniel will be running its course on the earth. It will be a wonderful scene! The church, which is the bride of Christ, will be presented to Him at the marriage feast! No wonder Revelation 19 opens with the “Hallelujah” cry ringing out in heaven!

1. The Bride “Hath Made Herself Ready” (Rev 19:7).

“To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev 19:8).

Here the Greek word is “righteousnesses”; it is in the plural.

While the sinner is redeemed by the imputed righteousness of Christ, yet in this passage the word refers to the righteous acts of the believer, acts which have made him more and more beautiful, more and more like Christ, more and more “ready” for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

When a bride-to-be looks forward to her wedding, she fills her hope-box with fine linen.

Stitch by stitch she embroiders initials and lays away the articles, that she may be “ready” to meet her bridegroom.

This is but a faint illustration, my friend, of the meaning of Rev 19:7-8. You and I have a hope-box, wherein God puts every righteous act. Thus, you see, this scene is linked with the judgment seat of Christ. When you and I stand before Him and our rewards are displayed, then we shall be presented to Him - to the praise of His glory. What have you put in your hope-box this morning? What did you put in it yesterday? In that day we shall be beautiful, first in the righteousness which Christ gives to us the moment we put our faith in His atoning work on Calvary; and we shall be beautiful in the righteousnesses which will make us “approved” of Him at His coming.

2. “Blessed Are They Which Are Called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev 19:9).

Who are the “called”? The bride is not “called.” The wedding guests are invited or “called” to the feast. And who are they here? Some would make Israel the bride; but this is a heavenly scene, and Israel is an earthly people. Who are the “called”? Adam, Eve, Abraham, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, David, Solomon - all the Old Testament saints; John the Baptist, “the friend of the bridegroom”; all who died trusting in the Christ of prophecy and the Christ of history before the church began on the Day of Pentecost - these are among the “called.” Then all the tribulation saints, both Jew and Gentile, all who refuse to worship the Antichrist, thus becoming martyrs of Jesus - these, too, will be “called” to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

You and I will be there if our garments are washed in the blood of Calvary; but we shall not be the guests; we shall be the members of His bride! “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him”

(Rev 19:7). We shall look upon His face, and we shall be like Him. We shall spend all eternity in the light of His presence. There will be no more sin, no more curse. Even our crowns shall be to the praise of His glory.

My unsaved brother, will you not join that blood-washed company which loves His appearing? Then with the bride you can sing even now, and throughout the endless ages, the song of the redeemed.

“The bride eyes not her garment, But her dear Bridegroom’s face;

I will not gaze at glory, But on my King of grace -

Not at the crown He giveth, But on His pierced hand:

The Lamb is all the glory Of Immanuel’s land!”

~ end of chapter 11 ~

12 The Events Of The Seventieth Week...

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE EVENTS OF THE SEVENTIETH WEEK OF DANIEL In our last lesson we saw that, in so far as God has revealed the future to us in His "Word, the next great event will be the translation of the church. The day or the hour of that event God has not revealed to us, and it behooves us to avoid all teaching which sets dates for the Lord's return.

While we have reason to believe, according to the Scriptures, that this age is rapidly drawing to a close, yet to advance human theories as to the time of the second coming of Christ is not according to the Scriptures. We do know that when the last member of the bride of Christ has been added to the church, then she will be translated, forever to be with Him. But this Church Age is a period of unmeasured interpolation upon God's plan for the nation of Israel.

Immediately after the rapture of the church the judgment seat of Christ and the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place in heaven, while on the earth the seventieth week of Daniel will run its course. We studied last time about this heavenly scene; today we want to outline the events which will transpire on earth during the brief period known to students of the prophetic Word of God as "the seventieth week of Daniel."

It is impossible to make an analytical study of this period in our present series of lessons; in fact, it is our purpose here, rather, to get a bird's-eye-view of God's great plan of the ages - from the past eternity to the future eternity.

If we want a detailed study of the seventieth week of Daniel, we shall find it in the books of Daniel and Revelation. In our lesson today, however, we shall attempt only to outline the events of this darkest period of the world's history, yet to come to pass.

A glance at our chart will remind us that, from the time of Adam, there have been two lines of development in the earth:

- (1) The line of sin; and
- (2) The development of the Messianic promise.

We shall see in our lesson today that under the Antichrist, who will reign over the earth during the seventieth week of Daniel, there will be the heading up of all sin, the characteristics of which have been revealed in other dispensations. And the Messianic promise, which was fulfilled in part from the Incarnation to Calvary, and which is being fulfilled in the High Priestly work of our risen Lord, will find its complete and final fulfillment in the personal, visible, bodily return of Christ in glory - to put an end to the reign of the Antichrist, and to establish the millennial kingdom.

If men would but follow these two lines of development, as set forth in the Word of God, they would realize the awful reality of sin, and kneel at the cross of Christ, the only Saviour and Lord. But false teaching today minimizes sin, even denying its existence, thus denying also the Saviour of

sinners.

The day will come when men shall see sin fully developed in the person of the Antichrist. He will be devil-possessed and devil-controlled. And unregenerate man will find out in that day that our patient God, who throughout past dispensations has sought to turn men away from sin unto Himself, will execute judgment upon a God-dishonoring, Christ-rejecting, Spirit-resisting world. His patience will have come to an end when He returns to purify the earth with His righteous judgments. It is a solemn lesson with which we have to do today! The Prophecy Of The Seventy Weeks As we begin to consider the events that are to take place on the earth between the translation of the church and the return of Christ in glory, with the church, to establish His kingdom, let us get clearly in mind the Bible record concerning Daniel's vision of the seventy prophetic weeks of years. In this connection, let us quote a few excerpts, adapted from our study of some months ago on "The Great Prophecies of Daniel."

If we are to understand this portion of the Word of God, we must keep three facts clearly in mind:

1. That the seventy weeks were 'determined upon' Daniel's people and Daniel's holy city: 'Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city' (Dan 9:24). This particular prophecy, therefore, has nothing to do with the Gentiles; nor has it anything to do with the church of this dispensation.

2. That the seventy weeks were to be seventy weeks of years, not days. Seventy sevens, as it is in the Hebrew, was the specified time given, in which certain events in connection with Israel were to be fulfilled. At the end of the program of the seventy weeks, the Messiah will usher in everlasting righteousness and begin His reign. Of course, seventy weeks of years are: 70×7 , or 490 years. Therefore, 490 years was the specified time for the fulfillment of the prophecy.

3. That the seventy weeks were to be divided into three parts:

(1) 7 weeks, or 49 years;

(2) 62 weeks, or 434 years;

(3) 1 week, or 7 years.

In other words, God mentioned three events that were to take place as the 'Jewish clock' ticked off the seventy sevens of years. The first of these was to occur at the close of the first seven weeks; the second, at the close of the next sixty-two weeks; the third, in connection with the seventieth week.

Turning now to Dan 9:25, we learn what these three events were to be:

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times."

This is exactly what happened. It was forty-nine years, or 'seven weeks' of years, between the beginning and the completion of the work of rebuilding Jerusalem; and this was done 'in troublous times.' Thus was the first event of the prophecy fulfilled, as recorded in the book of Ezra.

Following the close of the first seven weeks, there was another period of sixty-two weeks, totaling thus far sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three years. At the close of this second period the Messiah was to be 'cut off, but not for himself (Dan 9:26). And that really happened - the second event in Daniel's prophecy. Able chronologists, such as Sir Robert Anderson, have shown that from the time of the commission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem unto the cross of Christ, there were exactly sixty-nine sevens, or four hundred and eighty-three years.

The Jewish clock had been ticking all the while; and at the time when the Son of God was crucified, it had ticked off sixty-nine sevens of years. The clock then stopped; and for more than nineteen hundred years there has not been another 'tick' from it. The last was at the end of the sixty-ninth week; and after the crucifixion of the Messiah Daniel's 'people' and Daniel's 'holy city' were set aside.

Christianity fills up the interval, which has already lasted more than eighteen centuries. With these centuries of Christianity, Daniel's seventy weeks have nothing to do. They were 'determined' upon Daniel's people and Daniel's holy city.

When the end of Gentile dominion is reached, and when the church has been translated, then the last of the seventy weeks will run its course, Jerusalem and the Jews once again occupying the center of the stage.

You will have no difficulty in understanding the great interval between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth weeks if you bear in mind the fact that God never reckons time with the Jews when He is not dealing with them as a nation; when He ceases to deal with them as a nation, the Jewish clock stops.

At the close of the sixty-ninth week the Messiah was 'cut off'; the destruction of Jerusalem followed; the Jews were scattered among the nations of the world; and for nearly two thousand years God has ceased to deal with them as a nation. Thus it is that between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, there comes this present Church Age, which is a great parenthesis in God's program for Israel.

Paul tells us in the third chapter of Ephesians that 'the dispensation of the grace of God' was 'not made known unto the sons of men . . . in other ages.'

After the Church Age is complete and the rapture has taken place, God will reach down and take hold of the pendulum of the Jewish clock, as it were, and start it going again. Then it will tick off the seventieth week, which will culminate in the personal, visible, bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ, thus bringing to pass the third event in the threefold division of the seventy weeks of Daniel, and completing this great prophecy in every detail.

The sixty-nine weeks were weeks of years; therefore, we know that the seventieth week will be a week of years, and that the period between the translation of the church and the return of Christ in glory will be seven years. To summarize what we have been saying, let us quote again the Prophet Daniel:

Dan 9:24 - "Seventy weeks (70 X 7 = 490 years) are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city." Dan 9:25 - "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem . . . seven weeks (7 X 7 = 49 years)." Dan 9:26 - "And after threescore and two weeks (62 X 7 =

434 years) shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.” The parenthetical period, known as the Church Age, intervenes between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. Dan 9:24 - Only the seventieth week is yet to be fulfilled - “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins . . . to bring in everlasting righteousness . . . and to anoint the Most Holy.”

Now looking further into the prophecy, we see that the seventieth week is to be divided into two periods of three and one-half years each, the latter half being shortened “for the elect’s sake” (Mat 24:22); that is, for the sake of the Jewish remnant in that day.

Continuing our reading in Dan 9:27 we find that the Antichrist “shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.”

This will be a covenant with Daniel’s “people,” to extend throughout the seventieth week, according to the promise of the Antichrist. He will guarantee to Israel protection and religious freedom, in return for their allegiance to him as their sovereign. The temple worship will be restored; but in the midst of the week; that is, after three and one-half years, the Man of Sin will break his covenant with Israel, causing “the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (Dan 9:27).

He will demand that he be worshipped as God; Israel will refuse to worship him; and the persecution which he will bring upon God’s Chosen People is what the Bible calls “the Great Tribulation.”

This time of great sorrow will take place during the latter three and one-half years of the seventieth week of Daniel, referred to in Dan 7:25 as “a time (one year) and times (two years) and the dividing of time (one-half year)”; that is, three and one-half years. Rev 13:5 describes this same period as “forty and two months”; and Rev 11:3, as “a thousand two hundred and threescore days.” These, of course, are other ways of designating the extent of this period as three and one-half years, of three hundred and sixty days each.

In order to deliver His people out of this “time of Jacob’s trouble,” the Lord Himself will return in glory, purify the earth, and set up His kingdom of peace and righteousness. And, as we have already seen, this will bring to a close the seventieth week of Daniel. The Revelation Of The Man Of Sin

Now let us go back over the ground we have sought to cover in outline, in order to fill in a few brief details.

In our last study we saw that the Antichrist cannot be revealed until the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit is “taken out of the way” (2Th 2:7). In other words, the church, which is “the temple of the Holy Spirit,” must be translated before the seventieth week of Daniel begins to run its course. Then that “lawless” one will be revealed, “whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (2Th 2:8-9; compare Rev 19:11-21; Rev 20:10). This Man of Sin is described by prophet and apostle, and by the Lord Jesus Himself. His satanic personality is graphically portrayed in the very names by which the Holy Spirit calls him. Here are some of them: “The prince that shall come,” “the king of fierce countenance,” “the king who understandeth dark sentences,” “the man of the earth,” “the shaker of nations,” “he that cometh up out of the pit,” “the man who maketh the earth to tremble,” “the wicked one,” “the

lawless one," "the man of sin," "the man whose coming is after the power [energy] of Satan," the man who says, "I will be like the Most High." His portrait is given on many pages of the Word of God.

With supernatural power - with satanic power - and with amazing rapidity he will do three striking things:

- (1) He will bring to pass the revival of the old Roman Empire in a league or confederacy of nations;
- (2) he will unify professing Christendom - the true church will have been translated, but the apostate church will be in accord with him;
- (3) he will make Zionism a political factor by forming a covenant or treaty with Israel, who will be established as a nation once again in the land of Palestine.

This Man of Sin will be the last world-emperor under Gentile dominion. Not only will he unify the political forces on the ground of the old Roman Empire, but he will also consolidate professing Christendom. Church and State will once more link hands. And to Israel he will make fair promises. He will give to the Jews full possession of the land of Palestine.

Whether the Mosque of Omar, which now stands on the old temple site, will be destroyed, or whether it will be converted into a Hebrew temple, we do not know; but we do know that the Jews will have their temple worship restored - on that very spot; for the Mosque of Omar is built upon the very site of the Jewish temple of old. Israel will be deceived in these fair promises, which Jeremiah describes as "a covenant with hell."

With Europe in its present state of chaos, with persecuted Israel building her hopes on Zionism, it seems as though the time were drawing near for the appearance of Satan's superman. The world is looking for a leader. And he will come "with lying wonders"! The Preaching Of "The Gospel Of The Kingdom" By The 144,000

Even during this darkest period of the world's history, God will not leave Himself without a witness in the earth. The true church, as we have seen, will be with the Lord; but God always has a testimony to Himself in the world. During the seventieth week of Daniel His missionaries will be 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe; and they will go throughout the nations, preaching "the gospel of the kingdom."

You will remember that in our study of Matthew we noted the difference between "the gospel of the grace of God" and "the gospel of the kingdom."

John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, the twelve disciples, then the seventy preached "the gospel of the kingdom," saying: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

That kingdom and its King were rejected by Israel; and since then "the gospel of the grace of God" has been preached for nearly two thousand years - the gospel of salvation by faith in the finished work of Christ on Calvary.

When the 144,000 Jews go forth, preaching "the gospel of the kingdom," they will proclaim the same message which John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, and His disciples heralded.

It will announce the soon coming of the King.

- The gospel of grace points to a Saviour and a Bridegroom; it offers to the bride citizenship in heaven and joint-heirship with Him.
- The gospel of the kingdom will offer citizenship in His millennial kingdom, a literal, earthly kingdom.

At least fifteen cults in America alone claim to be the 144,000, but, my friend, this company will be composed entirely of Jews. Moreover, it will not be "sealed" until after the translation of the church. (See Revelation 7; compare Mat 24:14).

This faithful remnant in Israel will present the claims of Christ and His kingdom, setting them over against the claims of the Antichrist. Many will respond to their message, both Jews and Gentiles, and will enter into the kingdom of peace and righteousness which will cover the earth when the Lord Jesus returns in glory to reign. Many will become martyrs in that day, because they will refuse to worship the Antichrist. They will come "out of the Great Tribulation," having "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14).

"The Abomination Of Desolation"

Earlier in this study we referred to the fact that the Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week. During the first three and one-half years he will have consolidated his position. Then, although he will exercise greater power than any Caesar ever had, yet he will aspire to divine honors - and he will want to be worshipped on the very spot where God has been honored. This has ever been Satan's desire, to be worshipped, to be "like the Most High." He even tried to get the Lord from heaven to worship him!

In order to compel all men to pay divine honors unto him, the Antichrist will set up his image "in the holy place" in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, demanding that he be worshipped as God. In so doing, he "shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation (the Jewish temple worship) to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate." Thus Dan 9:27 describes this climax of blasphemy.

Now an "abomination" to an Israelite is an idol of some sort. The Lord Jesus, referring to these words of Daniel, and looking forward to the time of the faithful Jewish remnant in the day of the Antichrist, said: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place . . . flee into the mountains" (Mat 24:15-16 and following verses). The Antichrist's covenant with Israel, made earlier in the seventieth week of Daniel, will guarantee religious liberty; but he will count this covenant as a mere "scrap of paper." He will rob Israel of the right to worship the Lord God, and will demand that he be worshipped as God. Moreover, those who refuse to receive "the mark of the beast," giving allegiance to him, can neither buy nor sell in that day. His ultimatum will be: "Worship me or starve!"

"The Great Tribulation" The refusal of Israel to worship the Antichrist will be the signal for the beginning of "the Great Tribulation." Then "the people of the wandering feet" will once more be persecuted, hunted, slain; "for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be" (Mat 24:21). Read carefully Mat 24:15-26 for the Lord's description of this "time of Jacob's trouble."

We believe that the Jewish remnant will flee in that day to the land of Moab on the east of the Jordan River, where for thousands of years the cities of Petra have stood, preserved for this time of great sorrow.

In Dan 11:41 we read that the land of Moab “shall escape out of his (the Antichrist’s) hand.” And these remarkable cities in this “wilderness” seem to be God’s place of refuge for His Chosen People in this hour.

Moreover, God will bring to a speedy end the seventieth week of Daniel; for “except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake (for Israel’s sake) those days shall be shortened” (Mat 24:22).

The Lord Jesus will return in glory; He will hear the cry of His people, and come down to deliver them and a sin-weary world from the dominion of the Antichrist. He will purify the earth with His righteous judgments; then He shall reign “from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.”

I wonder if I am talking to someone who is rejecting Christ as Saviour and Lord?

My friend, if you reject Him as your Saviour, you will meet Him as your Judge. He died on the cross to save you from sin. Will you not accept Him before it is too late? Will you not join the blood-bought company, which is His church, and meet Him “in the air” before the darkest period in the world’s history begins to run its course? It will be a time of anguish and sorrow and “Great Tribulation” - and outer darkness forever to all who refuse to take Him as a personal Saviour.

“As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Mat 24:27).

“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way” (Psa 2:12).

If you reject Him as your Saviour, you must meet Him as your Judge!

~ end of chapter 12 ~

13 The Return Of Christ In Glory

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE RETURN OF CHRIST IN GLORY

We have seen in our former studies that, even as the first coming of Christ into the world nearly two thousand years ago covered a period of time - from Bethlehem to Calvary - so also will His second coming cover a period of time - from the translation of the church to His return in glory with the church to establish His millennial kingdom in the earth. We have seen that during this brief period there will be enacted an earthly and a heavenly scene: while the judgment seat of Christ and the marriage supper of the Lamb are taking place in heaven, the seventieth week of Daniel will be running its course in the earth.

“The Sun Of Righteousness” Shall “Arise” (Mal 4:2) This darkest period of the world’s history, this “time of Jacob’s trouble,” will be brought to an end when “the Sun of righteousness” shall “arise with healing in his wings.” Then the darkness will be dispelled by “the brightness of his glory,” as the Son of God returns with His saints to rule. He will hear the cry of His people, Israel, in their time of great tribulation. Then He will arise from the marriage feast and come down to deliver them.

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Rom 11:26-27).

With the return of Christ, the “times of the Gentiles” will come to a close, as the last Great War ends with the battle of Armageddon.

In this terrible battle the King of kings and Lord of lords will overcome the Antichrist and purify a war-torn and sin-weary world. “The beast . . . and with him the false prophet” shall be “cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Rev 19:20). Satan shall be bound a thousand years (Rev 20:2). And “the God of heaven” shall “set up a kingdom” “wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

In our next study we want to consider this glorious kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Today we shall see what the Bible teaches concerning His personal, visible, bodily return in glory to establish that kingdom of peace.

“The God Of Heaven” Shall “Set Up A Kingdom” (Dan 2:44)

Already we have sought to outline the events which will follow one another in rapid succession during the seventieth week of Daniel. Satan’s masterpiece, the Antichrist, will be worshipped by those who receive “the mark of the beast” in that day. But Gentile dominion, which began with Nebuchadnezzar, will speedily be brought to an end as the Son of David comes in glory to reign.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Daniel gives us a picture of what will happen to “the kings of the earth” and their kingdoms when Jesus comes again. In the second chapter of his prophecy he

outlines the full extent of Gentile dominion, beginning with the Babylonian Empire under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, and ending with the revived Roman Empire just prior to our Lord's return. History has seen the fourth kingdom of "the iron rule" divided into two parts, as typified by the two legs of the image, symbolic of the Eastern and the "Western divisions of the Roman Empire. But the last stage of that kingdom is yet to be fulfilled in the revived Roman Empire, as foreshadowed by the ten toes of the image, "part of iron, and part of clay."

The ten kings of this coming world empire will give allegiance to the Antichrist; they will form a league or confederacy of nations, of which he will be the head. The "iron rule" of autocracy will be side by side with the "clay" of democracy - the will of the people.

"They shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" (Dan 2:43-44). The Lord Jesus is the smiting "stone . . . cut out of the mountain without hands." And as Daniel beheld the vision, he saw the stone smile "the image upon his feet."

"Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan 2:35).

Now a mountain in Scripture represents a kingdom. And the Word of God often refers to Christ in the figure of a "stone." Moses smote the rock in the wilderness, and the thirsty Israelites drank from the stream that came forth from the smitten rock. Paul, referring to the typical significance of this event, tells us in plain words: "That Rock was Christ" (1Co 10:4).

"Smitten of God, and afflicted" for our sins, He became the Fountain of living water to the thirsty soul, the "Rock of Ages," cleft for sinning, erring man. Again, the Psalmist prophesied, saying: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner" (Psa 118:22); and the Lord Jesus applied these words to Himself (Mat 21:42).

Rejected by Israel nearly two thousand years ago, He became the foundation Stone of the church. (See Mat 16:18; Rom 9:32-33; 1Co 3:11; 1Pe 2:4-8). And as the smiting "stone," He will put an end to Gentile world power when He comes in glory to reign.

Christ Himself is the stone "cut out without hands" - this will be the work of God, not of man. And His kingdom, as a "great mountain," shall fill "the whole earth." Isaiah uses a similar figure when he says concerning it:

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa 11:9). In that day "the God of Heaven" shall "set up a kingdom." My friend out of Christ, will you not drink of the "living water" that flows from "the Rock of Ages" before "that great and terrible day of the Lord" comes? He was "smitten of God, and afflicted," that you might behold and share His glory forever.

Do not wait for the smiting "stone" to fall in judgment. He is "the God of all grace," but He is also holy. And He must judge sin.

"Behold, The Lord Cometh With Ten Thousands Of His Saints" (Jude 1:14)

“Enoch . . . the seventh from Adam, prophesied . . . saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 1:14-15).

Enoch, who was translated “that he not see death,” looked down the centuries and saw the Lord coming “with ten thousands of his saints.” And who are these saints? They are the bride of Christ, His church, which will have been translated, forever to be with Him and to share His glory.

“Behold, he cometh with clouds” (Rev 1:7). And “when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory” (Mat 25:31).

Not only will myriads upon myriads of His redeemed saints come with Him in glory, but “all the holy angels” will also appear with Him when He comes again.

“When he (the Father) bringeth in the first begotten (from the dead - His Son) into the world [inhabited earth], he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb 1:6).

Daniel also tells us of the hosts who shall stand before “the Ancient of days” when He returns: “Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him” in the vision Daniel saw (Dan 7:10).

My Christian friend, since you have put your faith in the atoning work of Christ on Calvary, you will not only see Him when He comes as “the bright and morning star” to take away His church; you will also “appear with him in glory” when, as “the Sun of righteousness,” He arises to bring light and glory and peace to this earth.

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4).

“His Feet Shall Stand . . . Upon The Mount Of Olives” Zec 14:4 When Jesus comes again, He will bring His saints with Him; the holy angels will attend Him; Gentile dominion will come to a speedy, certain end; and His chosen people, Israel, will receive Him as their Messiah and King. He will remember His covenant with Abraham and with David, to fulfill it, even as He said.

We have seen that Israel, during the reign of the Antichrist, will refuse to worship his image which will be set up in “the holy place” of the temple in Jerusalem. Such blasphemy will be, to Israel, “the abomination of desolation”; and from it she will turn away. We have seen that the Antichrist will, in turn, persecute the Jews, and that “the Great Tribulation” will run its course. We have seen also that “for the elect’s sake” - for Israel’s sake - the last three and one-half years of the seventieth week of Daniel will be shortened. Jesus himself will come down to deliver His ancient people, Israel, when He comes in glory to reign.

“His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives” (Zec 14:4).

“And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends” (Zec 13:6).

“They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zec 12:10).

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him” (Rev 1:7).

The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah will be the prayer of penitent Israel in that day. Though he will not come as the Man of Sorrows, “despised and rejected of men” - He will come with power and great glory - yet Israel will look back to Calvary, and see that on the cross she crucified her Lord. She will see Him as her Saviour and she will “mourn for him,” saying:

“We hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:3-5).

“This Same Jesus . . . Shall . . . Come” Acts 1:11 The Christ of Calvary is the Christ of Glory. The smiting “stone” upon Gentile dominion, the “stone which the builders (Israel) refused,” the “chief corner stone” upon which the church is built, is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal Son of the eternal God. Concerning Him “the prophets” wrote, testifying “beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1Pe 1:10-11).

Then at the Incarnation God came down to dwell among men, to die for their sins, and to be raised again for their justification. When He ascended into heaven, His disciples “looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up.” And “behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:10-11).

“This same Jesus” is coming again! Even as Thomas saw the wounded hands and feet and side, so also will Israel “look upon” Him “whom they pierced.” His return will be personal, bodily, visible; and “every eye shall see him.”

“This same Jesus” is coming again, but not in humiliation, not to be despised and rejected and betrayed. He is coming “in like manner” as He went up into heaven nearly two thousand years ago. He is coming “with clouds” in great power and great glory.

He is coming as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

“All Kings Shall Fall Down Before Him” Psa 72:11

If you want to see a picture of the returning King, read Rev 19:11-16. Here John writes: “I saw heaven opened.” Stephen was the last to see the heavens opened, but once again “the clouds shall be rolled back as a scroll,” and the King shall descend. Here He is called “Faithful and True”; before Him all that is unfaithful and false will quail. “His eyes” will be “as a flame of fire,” searching out iniquity, purifying the earth with righteous judgment. Those eyes which wept at the tomb of Lazarus, those eyes which were filled with tears over the unbelief of His beloved city, will flash with the flame of sincerity and truth and indignation against all that is corrupt and unholy and untrue. Little wonder the wicked will cry for the rocks and the hills to hide them from those all-seeing eyes in that day.

“On his head” will be “many crowns.” Nearly two thousand years ago that head was crowned with thorns; but when He comes again, it will be as King of kings. And He shall have “a name written,

that no man" shall know, "but he himself." When He walked the earth as the lowly Jesus, He revealed unto men the name of God; but when He comes again, it will be with a cold and terrible reserve toward His enemies. Moreover, "his vesture" shall be "dipped in blood," the blood of his adversaries - "the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him . . . and against his army" (Rev 19:19).

"And his name is called The Word of God." There is no question as to His identity. In John 1:1; John 1:14 we read that Jesus, the eternal Son, is called "The Word of God." He is the Living Word, of whom the written Word speaks. And when He comes again, He will judge all men by His eternal Word, described here and in other portions of Scripture as "a sharp, two-edged sword" (Rev 19:15; compare Heb 4:12; Eph 6:17).

Today that Word invites sinners to accept the Saviour; when Jesus comes again, that "sharp sword" will "smite the nations" which have rebelled against Him.

"The armies . . . in heaven" - angels and saints - will come with Him in the day of His glory, as we have already seen, and as verse fourteen clearly states. His mighty army will meet the army of the Antichrist, arrayed against Him.

Then He will tread "the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

It is an awful picture we have here. And "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," unsaved, unclothed with His righteousness. (See Heb 10:31). My brother, "now is the day of salvation." Do not neglect the most important of all human experiences. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way" (Psa 2:12). As "King of kings, and Lord of lords," He is coming again.

The day of grace will then be over; and you will have to meet "the Judge of all the earth." He has paid the penalty for your sins on Calvary; you need only accept His free gift of salvation.

"There Shall Come In The Last Days Scoffers . . . Saying,

Where Is The Promise Of His Coming?" 2Pe 3:3-4

There are many today who scoff at the doctrine of the personal, bodily, visible, imminent, premillennial coming of Christ; but God said it should be so. (Read carefully the third chapter of II Peter, especially verses 3-10).(2Pe 3:3-10)

Such as these are saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2Pe 3:4).

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2Pe 3:8-9).

Satan has succeeded in causing many to scoff by mingling the teaching of the second coming of Christ with different forms of fanatical and false teaching. Thus he has sought to bring the doctrine into disrepute. He wants to rob men of the quickening, purifying power and zeal which inevitably accompany the preaching of our Lord's return. But Satan always offers a counterfeit or a perverted

doctrine.

Why, therefore, should orthodox, evangelical Christians give up this “blessed hope” and sure promise of Christ’s literal kingdom on earth, just because many cults have incorporated some truth regarding the Lord’s return with much error regarding this and other doctrines, even setting dates for His second coming?

The kingdom of the Messiah was the theme of the prophets.

The Lord Jesus taught plainly, saying: “As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Mat 24:27).

Paul, Peter, James, John, Jude - all the apostles wrote much upon this theme. There are two hundred and sixty chapters in the New Testament, with three hundred and eighteen references to Christ’s second coming. Some of the greatest evangelists and ministers of the Gospel in modern times have cherished this “blessed hope” - John and Charles Wesley, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, D. L. Moody, James Hudson Taylor, R. A. Torrey, and a host of others whose labors God has abundantly honored.

Yet thousands of the Lord’s people have never heard a sermon upon this great event which seems to us so near at hand; or if they have heard the subject mentioned from the pulpit, it has been only to hear it cynically ridiculed or classed as fanaticism and heresy. Let us not heed Satan’s wiles, as he seeks to rob the Christian of “that blessed hope,” and as he seeks to lull the sinner to sleep by a false sense of security regarding things to come. The Word of God abounds in warning to the sinner and in comfort to the saint, based on the promise of the sure return of the Lord Jesus to earth.

“The Coming Of The Lord Draweth Nigh” Jas 5:8

Moreover, “the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

Space forbids our dwelling here upon “the signs of the times”; but many fulfilled prophecies point to the soon coming of our Lord:

- “perilous times” in the earth,
- increased lawlessness and godlessness,
- the wave of apostasy in professing Christendom,
- the return of the Jews to Palestine in unbelief,
- the political conditions which make a confederacy of nations on the ground of the old Roman Empire a not unlikely fact even in our own day.

These are some of the “signs of the times” which our Lord Himself gave as evidence of the fact that the Church Age is rapidly drawing to a close.

“Every Man That Hath This Hope . . . Purifieth Himself” 1Jn 3:3

It is a sanctifying truth. It grips the soul and changes the life.

It converts idle Christians into zealous soul-winners. The thought that, at any moment, the church may be caught away to be with Christ, makes the child of God want to be ready for His coming. The desire to snatch sinners as brands from the burning before it is too late makes one go out into the highways and byways to win men and women and boys and girls to Christ. It leads to personal evangelism in its purest, most apostolic form. No truth causes a man to hold so loosely to the things of time as does this doctrine.

“Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1Jn 3:3).

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1Jn 2:28).

“Behold, I come quickly,” the risen Lord is saying to us today.

My friend, can you pray from an eager heart the last prayer recorded in the Word of God, uttered in response to this promise of the glorified Christ? It is the prayer of all “who love his appearing”:

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20).

~ end of chapter 13 ~

14 The Thousand Years' Reign Of Christ...

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE THOUSAND YEARS' REIGN OF CHRIST ON EARTH From Genesis to Malachi we find a note of praise, as lawgiver and historian, psalmist and prophet constantly refer to the Kingdom Age, when the Messiah shall reign.

From Matthew to Revelation we find first John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus, then all His apostles taking up the theme, filling in many details concerning His kingdom of peace and righteousness. The "millennium," we call it, though this word is not found in the Bible. Derived from two Latin words meaning "a thousand" and "year," this term has been applied by man to the thousand years' reign of Christ on earth. Six times in the twentieth chapter of Revelation we are told that the Kingdom Age will last a thousand years. And we believe the record to be the inspired, infallible, inerrant, eternal Word of God!

In our study today we want to see what the Holy Spirit tells us in the written Word regarding the blessedness of this age of righteousness and peace. Pages and pages of our Bible are given over to this theme; we can do little more than cull a few selected passages for our study today.

To David and to his house God promised a "kingdom" and a "throne" to be "established for ever" (2Sa 7:8-17; Psa 89:3-4; Psa 89:20-37; and many other passages). That is why the Jews were looking for a King as their Messiah, the "Prince of the House of David." They blindly overlooked the prophecies concerning His first coming into the world as a suffering Saviour, because there are so many more prophecies of His earthly reign.

In fulfillment of God's covenant with David, Jesus, the Son of David, was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, the king. The Angel Gabriel had announced His coming to Mary in these wonderful words:

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luk 1:32-33).

Then Jesus came. He presented Himself to Israel as her King, but Israel rejected Him. Jew and Gentile crucified "the King of the Jews" and the Saviour of the world. With Calvary's cross the Age of Grace began, this Church Age in which we are living. God is now calling out the bride of Christ, composed of Jew and Gentile - "to take out . . . a people for his name" (Acts 15:14).

We are not left in doubt as to what will follow this age; for the Lord speaks plainly through the pen of the inspired writer, saying

"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle 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.

Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:16-18).

This golden age, long heralded by the inspired writers, from Genesis to Revelation, will surely come to pass upon the earth; for “all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen” (2Co 1:20). And, even as God has said in His Word, it will be a time of glory - glory for the Lord Jesus, glory for His church, glory for Israel, glory for certain Gentile nations, and glory for the physical creation.

Glory For Christ

Nearly two thousand years ago the first part of the prophecy of Isa 9:6 was fulfilled: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.”

When He returns to rule, the latter part of that prophecy will be fulfilled: “And the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever” (Isa 9:6-7).

When He came to suffer and die, He laid aside His eternal glory - not His deity; when He comes again, it will be with great power and great glory. In His resurrection body He will return, and His kingdom will be literal and real.

As the omnipresent God, He is with us now. “Lo, I am with you always,” He tells us; and this is very true. In the person of His Holy Spirit He never leaves us or forsakes us. But as a Man, the Lord Jesus is not on the earth today. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). The world thrust Him out at the point of a spear. And now He sits at the Father’s right hand, interceding for us, waiting until His enemies shall be made His footstool (Psa 110:1; Heb 1:13). But that day for which He is waiting will come - it seems to be even at our doors. The heavens will open, and the crucified, risen, glorified Lord Jesus will come back to earth. “His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives” (Zec 14:4).

From this and other Scriptures, we saw in our last study that His return will be personal, visible, and bodily.

The Father’s Word to the Son will be fulfilled in that day: “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psa 2:6). And again. “Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Heb 1:8-9; Psa 45:6-7).

His sway will be limitless; His dominion, more autocratic than that of any earthly king. “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth” (Psa 72:8).

By His Word He will rule over every government, over every nation. It is optional now whether or not we obey the Word of God, because we are living in the day of grace; but then He will rule in holiness and righteousness and justice. Happy will be that man who obeys the King when Jesus comes; but if he disobeys, he will be “cut off” as were Ananias and Sapphira when they let Satan fill their hearts “to lie to the Holy Ghost” (Acts 5:1-11).

When God says He will set His King upon His “holy hill of Zion,” He means that Jerusalem will be the metropolis of the world, the capital city of the King. Many portions of the prophetic Scriptures declare that His Word shall go forth from Jerusalem, even unto the ends of the earth.

It will be glory for Christ, when He comes again!

Glory For The Church When Jesus comes back to reign, it will be glory for the church.

In our former studies we have sought to make very clear the Bible teaching concerning God’s purpose for this age, the translation of the church, the seventieth week of Daniel, and the return of Christ with the church when He comes to establish His millennial kingdom. We shall not go into these events here, except to remind ourselves of a few of the many reassuring passages that guarantee this glorious future for the bride of Christ.

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we “also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4).

We shall “ever be with the Lord” (1Th 4:17).

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together . . . The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom 8:16-18) We are made “kings and priests,” or “a kingdom of priests unto God” (Rev 1:6).

We shall have our resurrection bodies, our spiritual bodies, with no physical limitations. Distance and space will mean nothing in that day; for as the risen Lord, “the firstfruits of them that slept,” could pass through closed doors and ascend up into heaven, so we too “shall be like him”; our bodies shall be “like unto his glorious body” (1Jn 3:2; Php 3:21).

It will be glory for the church in that day to be back on a renovated earth, restored to its Edenic state. We shall come back to the scene where our battles with Satan have been fought, where we have struggled and been misunderstood. The Lord Jesus is preparing us now for that time when we shall know why we were led by sorrow’s ways. He was the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. And He knows the end from the beginning; He knows that one day we, too, shall understand. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2Ti 2:12).

Christ, the King, will exercise authority in that day; and with Him will be associated the twelve apostles. In Mat 19:28 we read the Lord’s own promise to them: “In the generation when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Isa 1:26 will then be fulfilled - a promise to His chosen people: “And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.”

A judge’s office in ancient Israel was not judicial; it was administrative. Christ will be King indeed; but, as members of His bride and joint-heirs with Him, these twelve apostles will judge their kinsmen according to the flesh, then reestablished in their own land of promise.

A hint regarding the way in which the Gentile world will be governed is suggested in the Lord's parable of the ten pounds, recorded in Luk 19:11-26. To one faithful servant the King shall say, "Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities"; to another, "Be thou over five cities."

Now, my friend, heaven is one city; and it is very plain that this "authority" will be exercised on earth, in a literal kingdom, over which will be a literal King, the Son of David, seated on David's throne. Thus the church will rule "and reign with him a thousand years" (Rev 20:6) - the twelve apostles judging the twelve tribes of Israel; other members of His body exercising "authority" over the Gentile nations - all in the name of the King of kings and Lords of lords.

It will be glory for the church when Jesus comes!

Glory For Israel

It will be glory for Israel when Jesus returns to rule.

God's unconditional covenant with Abraham will then be fulfilled. The hopes and dreams of all the prophets will be realized, when the King comes back to reign!

Regathered to her own land, trusting in the finished work of her Messiah on Calvary, this nation which, in spite of bitter persecution, has been miraculously preserved by God throughout the ages, will enjoy the chiefest place among the peoples of the earth. A fountain of cleansing will be opened for Israel "a fountain filled with blood," the blood of Christ her Passover Lamb. And God's chosen people will know then that their redemption is all of grace.

In Chapter Five of this series on "God's Plan of the Ages" we studied about "The Two Covenants," outlining Israel's future in the millennial kingdom.

Will you, my friend, turn to that study and read again this description based upon the eternal Word of God concerning the future of the nation of Israel? We shall merely restate here the five thoughts developed in this former study:

- (1) Israel will be regathered in the land of Palestine;
- (2) Israel will be reconciled to God by the acceptance of Christ as her Messiah;
- (3) Israel will become a "praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame";
- (4) Israel will occupy the religious leadership of the world;
- (5) Jerusalem will be a city of righteousness and the metropolis of the world.

It will be glory for Israel when Jesus comes! Never again will she be plucked from her own land. And she will know of a surety that the God of Abraham is the Lord Jesus Christ, her Messiah and King.

Glory For Certain Gentile Nations

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the

sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Mat 25:31-34; Mat 25:39. Read this entire passage carefully). This prophecy of our Lord concerns the judgment of the Gentile nations when He returns in glory; and the reward for receiving His “brethren” and their message is entrance into “the kingdom,” the millennial kingdom of Christ.

Now the Lord’s “brethren,” according to the flesh, are Jews; and those referred to here are the hundred and forty-four thousand Israelites who will preach “the gospel of the kingdom” during the seventieth week of Daniel.

We have repeatedly referred to these messengers and their message in our former studies.

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Mat 24:14).

All the Gentile nations will have the opportunity to receive or to reject the message. Some nations will receive it; and to them the King will say when He comes in glory: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Other nations will reject the message of the coming King and His kingdom; and to them the returning Lord will say: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat 25:41). Their punishment they will have brought upon themselves, because they rejected the “gospel of the kingdom” and the coming King.

God alone knows which nations will enter into that glorious kingdom; but it would seem to us that those nations which have “trodden under foot the Son of God, and . . . counted the blood of the covenant . . . an unholy thing” would be among those who, with “strong delusion,” shall “believe a lie” - Satan’s lie as presented to the world in the person of the Antichrist. (See Heb 10:29; 2Th 2:11).

Possibly, the heathen nations which for many generations have been, in large measure, in gross darkness will be among those which will receive the message of “the gospel of the kingdom” in that day. God alone knows. But it behooves any nation to trust in the living God.

Blessed will be those nations which enter into the millennial kingdom. In that day Christ “shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa 2:4; Mic 4:3).

The world today is torn with strife and envy and hatred and rumors of wars. There will be no lasting peace until Jesus, the Prince of Peace, comes back to take the reins of government. But He is coming again. And how the world needs the King of glory!

Glory For The Physical Creation

One of the most beautiful pictures in all the Word of God is that of a renovated earth, restored to its Edenic state.

The Garden of Eden was beautiful - before the curse came, as a result of sin. There were no thorns before Adam and Eve disobeyed God, but the ground was cursed for man's sake; and ever since Adam lost dominion over the earth, "thorns and thistles" has the ground brought forth (Gen 3:17-18).

It was more than nineteen hundred years ago that the Lord Jesus went to Calvary, wearing a crown of thorns, in His death bearing the very symbol of the curse. And as the Lord of all the earth, He purchased redemption for the earth, as well as for fallen man - on Calvary. That is why He is called "the last Adam" (1Co 15:45); He has brought back the estate which "the first Adam" lost - and more.

There were no thorns in Eden; and Adam had dominion over a very beautiful earth. When Jesus comes, the curse that came when Adam fell will be removed. Then "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Isa 55:13).

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad . . . and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. . . . In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert" (Isa 35:1-2; Isa 35:6).

Animal life was not ferocious in the Garden of Eden; and when Jesus comes, even the animal kingdom shall be at peace.

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa 11:6-9).

"We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom 8:22). But when Jesus comes, "the creature [creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21).

It will be a time of glory for the physical creation when Jesus comes again! The New Jerusalem

Somewhere in God's great universe there is "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:10). It is the New Jerusalem; and when Jesus comes to earth again, that city will come down and shine, as a great chandelier, over the earth (Rev 21:10). The saved nations will walk in the light of it (Rev 21:24). Later it will ascend again, while the earth is being purified by fire, and while the new heaven and the new earth are being brought forth.

In our next study, in which we shall consider the events to follow the millennium, we shall refer to this subject in some detail.

- We shall see why Satan is to be "loosed out of his prison" for "a little season" (Rev 20:3; Rev 20:7).

- We shall see why the “fire” comes “down from God out of heaven,” purifying the earth for all eternity.

It is during this “season” that the New Jerusalem will ascend again. Just here, however, let us note these two descendings of the heavenly city:

(1) In Rev 21:1-8 we have a picture of the eternal state; and in point of time concerning things to come, this last book of the Bible really closes here - though, of course, all that follows is the inspired Word of God;

(2) from Rev 21:9 to the end of the book we have a kind of postscript, wherein the Holy Spirit reverts to the millennial reign of Christ, taking us back, as it were, to show us the New Jerusalem in its relation to the kingdom of Christ on earth during the thousand years.

In other words, by the time we read as far as Rev 21:8, we have gotten the outline picture of the events which will come to pass, not only during the millennium, but from the close of Christ's earthly reign even unto the eternal state as well. Then with Rev 21:9 the Holy Spirit takes us back to the tribulation period and “the seven vials full of the seven last plagues,” filling in many details concerning the New Jerusalem in its relation to the millennial earth.

In this connection, let us note also that the New Jerusalem is a heavenly city; whereas the earthly Jerusalem in Palestine will be the capital city of the world during the reign of Christ on earth.

Again, “the gates” of the New Jerusalem “shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there” (Rev 21:25; Rev 22:25); but in the earthly city His servants “shall serve him day and night” (Rev 7:15). They “shall serve him day and night in his temple” - the Jewish temple in the earthly Jerusalem; but John wrote of the New Jerusalem, saying, “I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Rev 21:22).

The New Jerusalem, “having the glory of God” (Rev 21:11), will be the home only of those whose names are written “in the Lamb's book of life” (Rev 21:27).

My brother, “Is your name written there?” Accept Jesus as your Saviour, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Then you will reign with Him when He comes in glory. Then you may “enter in through the gates into the city” where “there shall be no more curse,” where there shall be “joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

~ end of chapter 14 ~

15 From The Reign Of Christ On Earth...

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

FROM THE REIGN OF CHRIST ON EARTH TO THE ETERNAL STATE In our study today we have come to the last lesson in the series on the general theme, "God's Plan of the Ages."

We have considered something of the eternal purpose of the eternal, triune God in His dealings with man, as that purpose has been unfolded from age to age - from the past eternity to the future eternity, from creation to recreation. We have seen it repeatedly proven that, apart from the grace of God, man is a helpless, hopeless sinner; and we have seen that God has, through the ages, offered to sinful man a Saviour, Christ Jesus, the Lord.

In our last lesson we dwelt upon the glories of the Kingdom Age, yet future, but surely to be brought to pass. Today we want to see what God's Word tells us about the events to follow the thousand years' reign of Christ on earth, even unto the eternal state. And in this study today we shall see but another proof that fallen man needs a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A careful reading of the twentieth chapter of Revelation will show us what we have sought to outline on our chart concerning these final events in the world's history. With the chart before us, let us read these graphic, unmistakable words from the inspired record, noting three facts:

(1) During the millennium Satan will be bound (Rev 20:1-3).

(2) "And after that he must be loosed a little season," when he will lead one more great rebellion against God (Rev 20:3; Rev 20:7-9).

(3) Satan's doom, together with that of all his followers, will be "the lake of fire" (Rev 20:9-10). The Last Rebellion Against God But some will ask: If Christ reigns supreme for a thousand years, why will there be a rebellion against Him at the end of that Kingdom Age of peace? Will the millennium not see a converted world? And the answer is that the world will be converted at the beginning of the millennium.

But children will be born into the world during the earthly reign of Christ, though the curse of Gen 3:16 will be lifted.

Three times in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah (in Isa 11:6 and Isa 11:8) we read that there will be little children in the Kingdom Age. And Zec 8:5 tells us "that the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."

Just as it is necessary in this age for the children of godly parents to be converted, to accept Christ as a personal Saviour, so it will be during the reign of Christ on earth. And just as today many children of Christian parents are Gospel-hardened, so in the coming day many will be glory-hardened.

All will have to obey the King of kings, for He will rule “with a rod of iron.” But some will render feigned obedience. Acts of rebellion against Him will be dealt with speedily, but voluntary heart-allegiance will be required of the redeemed citizens of the kingdom of Christ.

In every age it is the cross of Calvary’s Lamb which must be accepted or rejected by the sinner! The moment Satan is “loosed out of his prison” after the millennium, all those who will have rendered feigned allegiance to the King will enter into the last great rebellion against the God of heaven.

Two significant facts are seen in this dark picture:

(1) The record here of rebellion against God proves the inspiration of the Word of God. A human author would have closed the book of Revelation with the golden age of peace, but God states facts as they are.

(2) the incorrigible character of man’s nature is seen in the fact that, apart from the grace of God, even the millennium will not change it! Nothing but the blood of Calvary’s Lamb can change the sinful nature of a human soul - not even the glorious, perfect environment of Christ’s own millennial reign!

Think of it - Eden will be restored! And yet, as soon as the restraint is removed, “the nations . . . of the earth,” which will have seen the kingdom of peace, “the number of whom is as the sand of the sea,” will follow Satan’s standard against the God of heaven!

This open rebellion will be but another proof of the eternal verity of the words of the Lord Jesus, spoken to all men of all ages: “Ye must be born again!”

“Ye must be born again,” my unsaved brother. Will you not go to that “fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel’s veins,” there to receive from Him a “new nature”? He offers it as a free gift. And He is not satisfied with feigned obedience. Church membership and ritualism and benevolence and morality will not save you. “Ye must be born again!”

Evidently there will be hundreds of thousands of rebels against God after the millennium.

Among these will be “Gog and Magog” (Rev 20:8). Chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel foretell this rebellion, as well as that of the battle of Armageddon just before the millennial reign of Christ. Even the names “Gog and Magog” are mentioned in this prophecy.

“That the primary reference is to the northern (European) powers, headed up by Russia, all agree . . . ‘Gog’ is the prince; ‘Magog,’ his land. The reference to Meshech and Tubal (Moscow and Tobolsk) is a clear mark of identification” - footnote on Eze 38:2, Scofield Reference Bible.

Russia today is attempting to obliterate the name of God from the earth; and it is easy for us to conceive of such a rebellion as that described in Rev 20:8-9, when we see with our own eyes what Russia is doing today in bold defiance of the living God.

Satan’s Doom

Just here let us note that before the millennium and during that reign of righteousness, Satan will be “bound . . . and cast into the bottomless pit” (Rev 20:3); whereas “the beast and the false

prophet” will be cast into “the lake of fire” before the millennium begins (Rev 19:20).

It is after the millennium and after the last great rebellion against God that Satan is to be “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are,” to be “tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev 20:10).

Why will Satan be cast into “the bottomless pit” and not “the lake of fire” during the millennium? Because one never returns from the lake of fire! God foreknows how the millennium will end; therefore, He will cast Satan into “his prison,” then release him “for a little season,” in order that feigned obedience to Him may be revealed, and that sinful man’s need of Calvary may be forever established before men and angels, before principalities and powers.

It seems as if Christ will veil His glory for a time. Satan will be loosed; and a worldwide, but short-lived rebellion will run its course

“The camp of the saints” and “the beloved city,” Jerusalem, will be the center of attack. But God will quickly put an end to this terrible scene of rebellion and sin. “Fire” will come “down from God out of heaven,” and Satan’s doom will be forever sealed.

Nor will he be a king in hell. He will be the most miserable of all creatures, “tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

This twentieth chapter of Revelation explains why few people, even few Christians, read this last book of the Bible. Satan does not want us to know of his coming downfall and his eternal misery and shame. He seeks to lead men to believe that he does not exist, that there is no hell, thus leading them away from the only Saviour by a false sense of security. But Satan is a powerful being, and he is not in hell today, though he will be throughout eternity.

Space forbids a detailed study here concerning the history of this evil one; but the following Scripture passages should be read carefully and prayerfully by every Christian, that the Lord’s people may “put on the whole armour of God,” to withstand the mighty forces of evil.

We can only outline these passages from the Word of God.

- (1) The description of Satan before he fell through pride (Eze 28:12-14);
- (2) the record of his fall (Isa 14:12-14; Luk 10:18);
- (3) the first prophecy of his eternal condemnation and torment (Gen 3:15);
- (4) the statement and proof that he is “the accuser of the brethren” (Job 1:6-11; Rev 12:10);
- (5) some descriptive terms which prove that he is a powerful enemy of the souls of men and “the god of this world” - the Christ-rejecting world (Eph 2:2; Eph 6:12; 1Pe 5:8; John 14:30; John 16:11; 2Co 4:4; Luk 22:31-32);
- (6) the prophecy of his final and eternal doom (Rev 20:1-10).

It behooves us, as Christians, to “resist the devil” (Jas 4:7); and it behooves us, as soul-winners, to warn men to “flee from the wrath to come.” The Great White Throne Judgment

Closely linked with the doom of Satan is the judgment of the wicked, those of all the ages who have rejected the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning work on Calvary. This scene is described in Rev 20:11-15; and it will take place at “the Great White Throne.”

Let us pause and read the record carefully.

First let us get clearly fixed in our minds this truth: The Bible does not teach that there will be one general resurrection day; it definitely states that there will be two resurrections:

- (1) “The resurrection of life”; and
- (2) “the resurrection of damnation [condemnation]” (John 5:29).

These are the words of the Lord Jesus. We have seen in our former studies that “the resurrection of life” will occur at the translation of the church. Rev 20:5-6 refers to this event in these plain words:

“This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Now let us look at Rev 20:5, which says: “The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.” Therefore, the second resurrection can refer only to the wicked and unbelieving. We must remember also that the “Great White Throne” judgment is not “the judgment seat of Christ.”

In Lecture Eleven of this series we studied in some detail about the judgment seat of Christ, which will be the scene of the trial of believers’ works. No saved person will stand before the Great White Throne; only the wicked dead will be raised in the second resurrection, there to face the eternal Son of God, whom they rejected on earth.

Now let us look at our chart to see what we have just outlined above.

You will recall that in Lecture Eight, in our study of “The History of the Righteous Dead,” we noted briefly what the Bible teaches also about the unrighteous dead.

We saw that in Old Testament times the abode of all the dead, both believers and unbelievers, was a place called in the Hebrew language “Sheol,” the Greek or New Testament word for which is “Hades.”

We saw also that this place was divided into two compartments: “Paradise” and an awful prison; while between these two realms there was “a great gulf fixed.”

When the Lord Jesus ascended up on high, He took Paradise with Him into heaven itself. But that awful prison has not been emptied of the spirits of the wicked dead. Before the Great White Throne “death and hell [hades]” (Rev 20:14) will be “cast into the lake of fire.”

“Death” here speaks of the grave, and refers to the bodily resurrection of the wicked dead; while “hell” speaks in this instance of that awful prison where the spirits of the wicked dead are, and where they have been from the time of Cain.

In the second resurrection, body and spirit will be reunited, judged, and cast into the lake of fire. This is the Word of God!

The lake of fire is called “the second death” (Rev 20:6; Rev 20:14); that is, eternal separation from God, with all that this involves. It is not purgatory; it is not annihilation. “The beast and the false prophet” will be “cast alive into the lake of fire” before the millennium (Rev 19:20); and after the millennium they will still be there. (Rev 20:10).

My unsaved friend, will you not look to Christ and be saved from this awful, eternal torment? There will be no second chance after death. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth (present, progressive tense) on him” (John 3:36).

The Lord Jesus would not have uttered these solemn words if they had not been true!

“The book of life” will be opened at the Great White Throne; but none who stand there will have their names written in “the Lamb’s book of life.” “The books” will be opened, and “every man” will be judged according to his works. Those who stand before the Great White Throne will have rejected God’s grace; therefore, they will be judged according to His standard of righteousness. No one but the Lord Jesus has ever been able to keep God’s holy standard; “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

All will be “without excuse” in that day. Idolaters have had the witness of the creation - the sun, moon, stars, all nature - to testify to the existence of God. (See Rom 1:20). Those who lived before the Law of Moses had the ministry of angels; those under the law had the Ten Commandments and the whole Book of the Law; those who lived when Christ was on earth saw the manifestation of God in the flesh; all who have lived in this present Church Age have had the light of the complete Word of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world; those who live during the millennium will behold the glory of Christ.

“So that they are without excuse” who reject the grace of God.

And the verdict will be final - eternal! Once more, my unsaved friend; let me beg you to accept Christ. He will wash all your sins away, and you “shall not come into condemnation” (John 5:24). But if you refuse Calvary, you will meet Christ at the Great White Throne - not as your Saviour, but as your righteous Judge. You cannot escape meeting the Son of God!

“A New Heaven And A New Earth”

Following the Great White Throne judgment the earth will be purified by fire.

Peter describes what will take place, saying:

“The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up . . . Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2Pe 3:10-13; compare Heb 12:26-27).

How God will bring this to pass, we do not know; whether He will let the mighty forces of nature come into play, we cannot prophesy. But we do know that the earth is on the crest of a molten ball

of fire.

However God brings it to pass, the new earth will emerge from that baptism of elemental and judicial fire - clean, beautiful, holy. Every stain of sin, every mark of evil, will be wiped out. The condition of the earth as it was according to the record of Gen 1:1 will be restored - with a "plus." And the Son, as a Man, will hand the kingdom back to His Father (1Co 15:28), plus something He would never have gotten, but for sin. He will have a vast multitude of the redeemed to behold and to share His glory, trophies of His infinite love and measureless wisdom. The earth will be no longer His "footstool"; it will be His throne! The Eternal State

Even in the beautiful description of the New Jerusalem and the eternal state of the righteous, the Holy Spirit has not omitted a grave warning to those out of Christ. In Rev 21:8; Rev 21:27; Rev 22:11; Rev 22:15; Rev 22:18-19, we read these searching words. We need not dwell longer on this subject here, but we would have every unsaved soul drink from the fountain of "the water of life," so freely offered in these closing verses of the inspired record.

And to the saint, no word of ours can add to the sublime message of the closing chapters of the eternal Word of God! We would only pause to think upon some of the wonders which await the sinner saved by grace.

In our last lesson we noted the fact that, in point of time, the message of the book closes with Rev 21:8; and that from 21:9 to 22:21 we have a kind of postscript, which shows the relation of the New Jerusalem to the millennial earth.

We noted also the two descendings of this heavenly city:

(1) It will shine, as a vast chandelier, over the millennial earth, then ascend while the earth is being purified by fire; and

(2) it will come down until it is associated with "a new heaven and a new earth" in the eternal state.

For the sake of clearness and brevity, let us here contrast in outline the millennium with the eternal state of the redeemed.

But first let us note one more thing: In eternity all national distinction will pass away.

This is what John meant when he said: "And there was no more sea" (Rev 21:1). The figure of the "sea" in Scripture represents the nations.

In the beginning God did not divide men into nations; these came as a result of sin at the tower of Babel. Jeremiah likens the nations to "the troubled sea." "The beast" will arise "out of the sea"; i.e., the nations. But in the eternal state "there shall be no more sea"; all national distinction will pass away.

Only one nation, Israel, will continue forever (Isa 66:22); and Israel did not come into existence as a result of sin!

The Millennium 1. Jerusalem will be an earthly city. 2. The Jewish temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40-43; Rev 7:15).

The Eternal State 1. The New Jerusalem is a heavenly city. 2. There is “no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Revelation 21-22).

(A temple shuts man out of the Holy of Holies, where God dwells; and it shuts God in. There was no temple in Eden; until sin entered, God had unbroken fellowship with Adam. Then when sin came, a temple was necessary. In the eternal state it will be done away, for God's fellowship with man will be forever restored).

The Millennium 3. God's servants “shall serve him day and night in his temple” (Rev 7:15). 4. The sun will shine upon a literal, an earthly kingdom. 5. “The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light” of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:24; Rev 21:26). 6. Righteousness shall reign (Isa 11:4). 7. Christ shall rule with “a rod of iron,” though there will be feigned obedience on the part of some.

The Eternal State 3. “There shall be no night there” (Rev 21:25; Rev 22:5). 4. “They need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light” (Revelation 22:J). 5. There is “no more sea”; in heaven all national distinction passes away. 6. Righteousness shall dwell (2Pe 3:13; Rev 21:3). 7. “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth” (Rev 21:27).

In the millennium the twelve apostles will “sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mat 19:28). The reference to them and to the twelve tribes in Rev 21:12-14 is in perfect harmony with the relation between the New Jerusalem and the earthly city of the King. The twelve apostles were the first “stones” to be built into the mystical body of Christ, which is His church. Therefore, it is to be expected that their names should be engraven upon the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem. And through them God will administer justice to His chosen people, Israel.

The glories of the New Jerusalem are beyond human comprehension. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1Co 2:9). And this will be the eternal home of “the bride, the Lamb's wife” (Rev 21:9), His church, which He bought with His own precious blood.

Every scar of hypocrisy, every trace of death, every trail of the serpent, every sorrow and tear and pain will be done away. “And there shall be no more curse!” Throughout all eternity the redeemed shall behold the face of the Son of God - that face which was once marred - “and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there” (Rev 22:4-5).

My friend, have you ever looked by faith into the face of the Son of God, that you may behold His glory through all eternity? “Blessed are they that . . . may enter in through the gates into the city” - that “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Rev 22:14; Heb 11:10). “He which testifieth these things saith. Surely I come quickly . . . Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20).

~ end of book ~

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