

—QUOTE—

Seeking to walk with God in humbleness and brokenness of spirit, we (often) grow restive and rebellious; we quarrel with the circumstances instead of judging ourselves; and we seek, in self-will, to escape from the circumstances, instead of accepting them as the just and necessary consequence of our conduct.

C.H.M.

THE FUTURE (12)

—H. L. Heijkoop

The Millennium—A Thousand Years of Peace

We saw in Zechariah 14:4 that the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven to judge the enemies of Israel. His feet will stand on The Mount of Olives (v. 4), the place from where He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9-12).

First He will destroy the armies of the Roman Empire (Western Europe), which will fight against Him, and He will cast its leaders alive into hell (Rev. 19). After that, He will dispose of the King of the North (Asshur or the Assyrians; Dan. 11:45; Is. 30:31-33). He will also chasten the other nations around Palestine (Is. 11:14; Ps. 108:10, etc.). Finally, Gog (Russia and its allies) will invade the land but they will shamefully perish.

The Lord will then rule as David, slaying one by one the enemies that surround Him. Afterwards, when all resistance is broken, He will sit, as Solomon, on the throne of Jehovah in Jerusalem (1 Chr. 29:23), from where He will rule in judgment and righteousness. And, just as Solomon, He will first of all cleanse the kingdom by judging the wicked (1 Ki. 2).

The Judgment of the Living

In Matthew 25:31-46 we notice a most solemn event. We don't see a battlefield where the Lord cuts down those who openly resist Him but here He has come in His glory and is seated on the throne of His glory. And all nations stand before His throne. Many believe that this is the same event as in Revelation 20. But when we read these two accounts, we immediately notice that this is not so. In Revelation, we find the last judgment. There, the dead stand before the Great White Throne and are judged according to their works. And when all the dead have been judged, death and hades (the realm of the dead, sheol), the place where the unbelievers are kept until the judgment takes place, are also done away. After this follows the eternal condition (Rev. 21:1-8).

Here in Matthew 25, however, we don't see the dead but the living — the nations — standing before the throne of the Son of Man. That is not the same throne as in Revelation 20:11-15, where heaven and earth flee away before the face of Him Who sits upon the throne. Here, the throne stands on earth, in the kingdom of the Son of Man. Here is the judgment of the living. The Lord will judge the living and the dead: first the living in the Millennium and afterwards, the dead at the end of the Millennium.

The nations are not judged in this case for all their deeds but only for their attitude towards those who are called the brethren of the King. Whether or not they assisted the Jews and the faithful remnant is especially decisive for their fate. Those nations that have helped them will enter into the blessings of the Millennium; the others are condemned.

This judgment will be very severe. In Noah's time, only a small remnant was saved from the judgment, to live on the purified earth. With Israel, only a remnant will not come under judgment. So it will be with the nations.

All unbelievers in Israel will perish. Among the nations all to whom the testimony of God has been brought and who have not received it will be judged (Is. 66:15-17; see also 2 Th. 2:11-12).

All the others among the nations will experience the rich blessings of the Kingdom. And the remnant of Israel will go to them to relate to them the glory of God (Is. 66:18-19).

The Curse Removed from the Earth

When Adam sinned, the earth was cursed on his account. From that moment on, the earth produced thorns and thistles and man had to eat his bread in the sweat of his face. The animals also came under this curse (Gen. 3:14-19).

Romans 8 tells us that the creature is subjected to vanity. It groans and is in travail until now. It anxiously looks for the revelation of the sons of God for then it will be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

When the last Adam (1 Cor. 15) takes possession of His kingdom and when He will be revealed with His Own on the earth, then indeed the curse will be removed from the earth. Hundreds of verses in the Old Testament speak of that time. We will now refer to a few of them.

"And the cow and the she-bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the adder, and the weaned child shall put forth its hand to the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11:7-9).

"Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?" (Is. 29:17).

"The wilderness (will) become a fruitful field" (Is. 32:15).

"The wilderness and the dry land shall be gladdened; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.... In the wilderness shall waters break out, and torrents in the desert. And the mirage shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water" (Is. 35:1,6-7).

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress, and instead of the nettle shall come up the myrtle" (Is. 55:13).

And in Ezekiel 47:8, etc., we read that the Dead Sea will become a living sea with an abundance of fish.

Righteousness will rule

What a relief it will be for the ones who enter that kingdom. Abundance will be the share of every one. Then there will be no need to say to the employers, "Behold the wages of your labourers who have harvested your fields, wrongfully kept back by you, cry, and the cries of those that have reaped are entered into the earth of (the) Lord of sabaoth." No labourer will have to speak about a just dividing of the wealth of the earth. Neither will there be reason to say, "Ye have condemned, ye have killed the just; he does not resist you" (Jas. 5:4-6).

Then "shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity the meek of the earth" (Is. 11:4). "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm; as brooks of water in a dry place" (Is. 32:1-2).

"The wicked is not; and thou considerest his place, but he is not. But the meek shall possess the land, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of prosperity" (Ps. 37:10-11).

No more War

The wealth of the earth will no longer be used to bring about misery and destruction. They shall forge their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-knives: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah 4:3; Is. 2:4).

The Prince of Peace will rule in righteousness (Is. 9:5-6) and shall judge among the nations, and shall reprove them who practice sin (Is. 2:4). "Many people shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law and Jehovah's Word from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3).

Satan bound

Yet sin will not have been removed from the earth. The heart of man is evil. And all the blessings of the kingdom of peace will not alter this. At the end, it will become evident that man, after having enjoyed the blessings of the glorious reign of the Lord Jesus for a thousand years, still hates Him just as much as before. At the first call of Satan, they will put themselves under his power and follow him in his battle against the Lord.

But during the thousand years, Satan will not be able to deceive man. In the very beginning of the Millennium he is taken, bound and cast into the abyss (Rev. 20:2-3) together with his servants, the demons (Lk. 8:31; Isa. 24:21-22).

Unbelieving persons will therefore lack a leader. Only their own heart will cause them to openly resist God. Nevertheless, some will resist. But every public sin will be punished with immediate death (Isa. 65:20). "He that practiseth deceit shall not dwell within My house; he that speaks falsehoods shall not subsist in My sight. Every morning will I destroy all the wicked of the land; to cut off all workers of iniquity from the city of Jehovah" (Ps. 101:7-8).

That is why most people will be subject, but it will be in hypocrisy. They are powerless and must bow their knees to the Lord (Phil. 2:10). They must recognize that He is Lord, but their heart will not be genuinely for Him (Ps. 18:45; 66:3).

As a terrible warning to them, the judgments will take place in public: "they shall... look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me... they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh" (Isa. 66:24).

And as a reminder to the people of what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah, the swampy places around the Dead Sea will not be healed but will remain salty.

What Place will Israel occupy at that Time?

Israel will be the greatest nation in the world (Dt. 28:1) and Jerusalem will be the capital of the world. Palestine will stretch from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18, Ps. 72:8). Every tribe will have its inheritance in Palestine, but it will be divided along entirely different lines than those used at the time of Joshua (Ezek. 48). A prince out of the generation of David, who will also possess his own inheritance (Ezek. 48:21), will rule over them.

The temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt (Ezek. 40-42) and the glory of the Lord, the sign of the presence of Jehovah, shall fill it (Ezek. 43:1-5; 44:4). The priests out of the house of Zadok (44:15) will perform the service and will again offer sin-offerings, burnt-offerings, meal and drink-offerings in remembrance of the one offering on the cross of Golgotha (43:18-27; 44:29). In the same manner, the Passover, the feast of booths and the feast of the new-moon will be celebrated (45:21-25). However the feast of weeks will not be held since it has found its fulfillment and completion in the Assembly.

The entire nation of Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26) because God Himself will give His law in their inward parts and will write it in their hearts (Jer. 31:33-34). "They shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says Jehovah, for I will pardon their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." "Thy people also shall be all righteous" (Isa. 60:21).

Israel will serve God in His temple in Jerusalem. But further, *all* nations will come every year to Jerusalem to worship Jehovah and to keep the feast of booths (Zech. 14). They will bring the treasures of the earth with them: "For bronze I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood bronze, and for stones iron" (Isa. 60:17).

The Place of the Assembly

We previously saw that at that time, the Assembly will no longer be on the earth. Before the judgments of God fall on this world they will have met the Lord in the air to be for ever with Him (1 Th. 4). But this does not mean that we will not share in the glory of the Millennium.

We have been united with Christ and we, therefore, share with Him everything that He has obtained through His work on the cross.

For instance, when it is written in Ephesians 1:10 that God had purposed in Himself to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, there is immediately added that we are fellow heirs with Christ. And in the latter part of Ephesians 1 the Assembly is called His body. Romans 8:17 also says that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. We will therefore rule with Christ.

The Lord Jesus is as Son of Man, the Centre and the Head of the Kingdom of peace. We will have part in this position with Him. In Daniel 7:14, we read that the dominion and glory of the kingdom will be given to the Son of Man. In verse 27, however, we read that it is given to the people of the saints of the most high places, an expression that refers to the heavenly saints. In Revelation 20:4, we see those who have come with the Lord out of heaven, sitting on thrones and reigning. Those are the Assembly and the saints out of the Old Testament.

In Revelation 20:4, two other groups are mentioned which will also share in the blessings. These are the ones who have paid for their faithfulness with their lives after the Assembly has been taken up. These different groups live and reign with Christ a thousand years.

1 Corinthians 6:2 confirms this principle. "Do ye not then know that the saints shall judge the world?" But Scripture goes even farther in verse 3: "Do ye not know that we shall judge angels?"

Hebrews 2:8 gives the key to this. The Lord Jesus will be more than the Head of the earthly creation. God has subjected all things, all the works of His Hands, to Him. Therefore that includes all that is created: the heavens, the earth, the angels, the animals, etc.

1 Corinthians 15:27 refers to the same verse out of Psalm 8 as referred to in Hebrews 2:8, and there, only the Father Himself is exempted from being put into subjection. And in Ephesians 1:22, also with reference to Psalm 8, the Assembly is exempted.

The Assembly will, therefore, rule over all that is created as being united with Christ. In the Millennium, she will share the blessings on earth. She, however, will be the distributor of the blessings and the one who rules, while those who dwell upon the earth will be the subjects of the blessing and will be governed. Every member of the Assembly will have a part in this government, in proportion to his faithfulness in the service that God has given him at the present time in his life on earth (Luke 19:11-19).

What a tremendous position has God given us! Don't our hearts exult when we think of what His love and grace has given us; what He gave to us who were lost sinners; yes, even haters of Him?

To be cont'd

—QUOTE—

There is immense difficulty in walking humbly and patiently in the path which our own failure has rendered necessary for us.

C.H.M.

SIMEON'S SIGHT

—G. W. Steidl

How right can an old man be? Take Simeon for example. He lived in a depressing age; and in a country where feelings of hopelessness were not confined to senior citizens. In fact, to escape into the past and live vicariously amidst the glories of the good old days had almost become a way of life in Israel.

But Simeon looked to the future! And not in vain. His brief appearance on the Biblical scene is found in Luke 2:25-35. His attitudes and words remain relevant after nearly 2000 years because we also live in a depressing age — one in which many thinking people see no hope for human civilization.

I like Simeon's hope and expectancy — he was "...waiting for the consolation of Israel." Quaint language, but it simply means that he believed what God had written in the Old Testament Scriptures; and that he looked for Israel's Messiah. Simeon was not disappointed.

But how did he recognize the Christ in that tiny infant, brought into the temple by a young couple named Mary and Joseph? The answer is simple — "It was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit." This is not unusual. God always delights to reveal His Son to any who wish to see Him by faith; and the Holy Spirit works in the world today to make Christ known to all who are open to receive Him.

Simeon was a happy old man — God saw to that. As he took the baby Jesus up in his arms he confessed his readiness to die — life was fulfilled; he saw in the Christ child his own salvation, plus the salvation of all who would believe; he recognized that God's purposes were all centered in that Babe — a Babe who was born to die for the sins of all mankind.

What can we learn from Simeon? Better ask, what can't we learn.