

# **THE WORK OF RESTORATION<sup>1</sup>**

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To have, to lose, and to regain is the fundamental design of life. It is the basic story of human beings on the earth. It is the story of redemption. The Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi have to do with the work of the restoration of Jerusalem after the years of captivity in Babylon. As we meditate on this central topic of the Scriptures we begin to realize the pattern of restoration is the pattern of the history of the world and of every person of the world. It is the story of the prodigal son.

The concept of *restoration* is one of the most important ideas of the Scriptures. The restoration of the Temple of Solomon and the rebuilding of the wall of the city of Jerusalem are illustrations of what is to take place in the Body of Christ, which is the new Jerusalem, the Wife of the Lamb. The Book of Ezra portrays the restoration of the Temple of God. The Book of Nehemiah describes the rebuilding of the wall of defense of the city of Jerusalem. The program of the restoration of the Glory of God in the earth has continued to this day. We are living in an hour when the spiritual pace is accelerating. No longer is there time for people to plan their own life in such a manner that some small portion of it is assigned to Christ. Such lukewarmness will be brought to judgment very soon. Christ will have our whole life or we will not be able to enter our inheritance in the Lord.

From now on it is necessary to move forward in faith one day at a time, and may God grant us the wisdom to redeem the fleeting hours. Great rewards are offered to those who will lay aside every other consideration and begin to seek Christ in earnest. God proposes to do a final work that will result in everlasting righteousness. Let us rise to the occasion and make every day profitable for Christ.

## **Table of Contents**

Foreword

Introductory Scriptures

INTRODUCTION

Glory, Destruction, and Restored Glory

God Governs the Earth

Called to the Work of Restoration

Separation From the World

God Builds the Kingdom

Completing the Work

Purifying the Church

Two Messages

The Wall

Accepting Responsibility

The "third day"

Arising "in the night"

A remnant

Governing the tongue

Useless baggage

The "valley of decision"

The "dragon well"

The "dung port"

Rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem

The living waters

Small is the gate and narrow is the way

Returning to the old foundations

Gaining the Kingdom of God

THE GATES OF JERUSALEM

The Sheep Gate

The Fish Gate

The Nobles

**Foreword**

To have, to lose, and to regain is the fundamental design of life. It is the basic story of human beings on the earth. It is the story of redemption.

The concept of *restoration* is one of the most important ideas of the Scriptures. The Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi have to do with the work of the restoration of Jerusalem after the years of captivity in Babylon. The pattern of the Book of Joel, the prophet mentioned by Peter at the birth of the Christian Church, is a pattern of restoration.

The Old Gate

The Throne of the Governor; On This Side the River

The Goldsmiths

The Apothecaries

The Broad Wall

The Tower of the Furnaces

The Daughters

The Valley Gate

The Dung Gate

The Gate of the Fountain

The King's Garden

The City of David

The Sepulchers of David

The House of the Mighty

The Armory

The High Priest

The Tower Which Lieth Out

The Court of the Prison

The Water Gate Toward the East

The Horse Gate

The East Gate

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The "Goldsmiths"

The "Temple Servants"

The "Merchants"

Clergy and laity

The meaning of *disciple*

The "Muster Gate"

Three Levels of Attainment in Christ

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Ezekiel, a priest and prophet of the captivity, speaks of a restored Temple and restored blessings. Daniel, also of the captivity, describes his visions of final restoration, of the saints possessing the Kingdom of God. Many passages from the Prophets speak of restoration after judgment.

As we meditate on this central topic of the Scriptures we begin to realize the pattern of restoration is the pattern of the history of the world, and of every person of the world. It is the story of the prodigal son.

The pattern is:

Receiving our inheritance from the Lord.

Misusing and despising the value of the inheritance, and the laws of the God who gave it, because of our inexperience and rebellion.

The resulting weakness, humiliation, and slavery.

Repentance; the work of restoration, with God's help; a renewed appreciation of what has been lost, and finally an appreciation of the Lord Himself.

Receiving and eternally possessing our inheritance, now multiplied many times in glory.

This is the story of the prodigal son, of Samson (in part), of every saved human being.

This is the history of mankind on the earth, of the people of Israel, of the Christian Church.

The examples of Scripture teach us that whatever is to be possessed eternally must be received twice: the first time as an unearned, unappreciated gift; the second time as a highly appreciated possession that has cost our whole life to be able to receive properly.

This is true of the Presence of God. The parents of the human race lost the most valuable treasure of all—the Presence of God. Now we, the children of Adam and Eve, must devote our lives to seeking the Lord's Presence, to obtaining what Adam and Eve had received so freely.

We thirst for God's Presence all the day long. God hides Himself from us, but when we seek Him with all our heart He is found of us (Jeremiah 29:13). If we would possess God's abiding Presence we must devote our whole life to seeking Him.

Once we lose through neglect something of true value it may be exceedingly difficult (sometimes impossible) to recover it again. Every backslider who is attempting to regain the joy of salvation understands this fact.

Eternal life is the gift of God through Christ. But we are required to lay hold on eternal life and to sow to it, or else we may wake up one day to discover our spiritual life has been choked out by the weeds of the world. The process of recovering lost ground may be difficult indeed.

Satan, his angels, and Christ-rejecters will not finally be restored. Throughout eternity those who rebel against their Creator will remain bound in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. We understand lake to be located somewhere in the interior of the earth. It is a sobering thought to realize these stubborn, rebellious spirits will still be present in the creation while the saints are beholding the Face of the Father.

One of the dominant features of the new Jerusalem is the tremendous wall that surrounds the city. This wall tells us that throughout eternity it will remain possible for spirits to sin. Therefore, God will allow the Lake of Fire and its inhabitants to remain as a frightful demonstration to angels and people of the consequences of acting and thinking independently of God.

There will be a defense surrounding the Glory of God. The wall that will protect the holy city against all sin and sinners is being constructed now in the personalities of the Lord's saints, in those who are overcoming sin and self-will through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rebuilding the wall is an important part of the work of restoration (Nehemiah, Chapter Three).

The Scriptures reveal the pattern of restoration:

In the beginning, man was given His Divine inheritance: the image of God; the capacity for union; fruitfulness; and dominion over the works of God's hands.

Man lost his inheritance through inexperience and rebellion, having been deceived by the devil.

Man was brought under the power of sin and death.

God sent Christ that through Him man might be enabled to throw off the bondage of sin and death and regain his Divine inheritance.

Through the Lord Jesus Christ man regains his inheritance, now multiplied to a vast extent.

Thus the Scriptures are an account of restoration, of redemption (restoring to the original and rightful owners what had been removed from them by trickery, forfeiture, or force). This fact is emphasized in the following passage:

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:19-21)*

"Times of refreshing." "Times of restitution (restoration)."

The Greek word used in "times of refreshing" signifies a definite, suitable season of opportunity.

The Greek word employed in "times of restitution of all things" is a different term, signifying time as we generally think of time—not opportunity but *time* itself.

The first word can be found in Hebrews 11:15: "they might have had *opportunity* to have returned."

The second word is found in Luke 4:5: "in a moment of *time*."

Definite *times* in earth's history have been designated by the Lord for various aspects of the program of restoration. Also, God gives to us *opportunities* for refreshing.

The practical application of this distinction is as follows: there will come periods of time during which certain aspects of restoring mankind are to take place. During these periods of time there will be opportunities that were not as readily available in past eras and will not again be available once the season of opportunity has passed.

We must "make hay while the sun shines," so to speak.

The feasts of the Lord are proclaimed "in their seasons" (Leviticus 23:4). We must step into the waters when they are troubled. We march when there is "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees."

At any given time in history there is a part of the work of restoration that must be performed. Throughout this period there are opportunities for refreshing, for reviving, for claiming the lost inheritance. God's apostles and prophets of each age teach their own generation the present truth proceeding from the throne of the Father in Heaven.

The appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ on the earth was one such period of time. The return of the Lord Jesus from Heaven will be another opportunity for restoration and reviving. In between the two appearances of Christ there have been, and yet will be, particular aspects of restoration and opportunities for "whoever will" to avail himself or herself of desired attainments in the Lord.

Some people take advantage of the available opportunities while others do not. Some choose the good part, as did Mary, and listen to the Lord while He is available. Others, as Martha, are unable to understand and grasp the incredible opportunities that the God of Heaven unexpectedly presents to us.

No doubt there were many good housewives in Jerusalem and Capernaum who complained because of the dust stirred up as this Jesus of Nazareth and His followers kept going back and forth in front of their houses.

How must they have felt years later when they came to understand the Teacher from Nazareth was the Glory of Israel who dwelled between the golden wings of the cherubim in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle!

What would you have done? Would you have complained about the dust? Or would you have cried out, My Lord and my God?

You would have done what you are doing today. For either you are complaining about the dust on your furniture, so to speak, or else your life is centered on the Lord Jesus regardless of the inconveniences that arise as you serve Him.

There always is a "present truth" (II Peter 1:12). There always is a glorious revelation of Christ available to the persistent seeker.

A wonderful part of the work of restoration is taking place today because we are close to the return of the Lord Jesus. Those who are forsaking all else in order to press into Christ are discovering the hour in which we are living is one of unprecedented glory. The Kingdom is ready for the possessing, and it will be given to whoever will choose to cooperate with the Lord.

All true revival comes down from the Presence of the Lord God of Heaven. Christ is coming to us as the "latter rain" as a prelude to His majestic flaming forth in the clouds of heaven.

The heavens will hold the Lord Jesus until the time comes for filling the entire earth with the Glory of God. We see from the Scriptures that portray the end of the present age, that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ will be the climax of several powerful Divine acts of reviving and restoring.

Much restoration remains to be accomplished before the Lord Jesus returns. First, and most important of all, the Body of Christ must be built up to fullness of stature in preparation for the coming down of the Head from Heaven.

Second, the Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached to every nation on earth for a witness. If the Lord Jesus were to return now He would have to destroy much of the population of the world, including a substantial part of the people who are called by His name. Neither the world nor the Church is ready for the return of Christ to the earth.

From the beginning the holy prophets have told us God is going to restore everything that mankind lost in the garden of Eden, with unbelievably great glory added to it.

All worth saving will be restored completely. The creation will be perfectly restored and brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Everything of value that has been given to us by the Lord, including the image of God, union with God and with one another, universal fruitfulness, dominion over the works of God's hands—all will be restored.

Mankind and the remainder of the creation were redeemed legally on the cross of Calvary. The price of redemption has been paid. The remaining problem is that of disobedience on the part of God's creatures. The Kingdom of God is the solution to the problem of disobedience. That which was lost can be restored only as God's children learn obedience to Himself.

The Presence of God is in the process of being restored to the earth. The curse will be lifted and nature will be filled with life. All rebellion and sin will be destroyed completely out of both the heavens and the earth, resulting in the regaining of Paradise.

All things of worth, of love, of beauty will be made new in Jesus.

The destroyer and adversary, Satan, shall be crushed under the feet of the saints. All of God's creation that he has destroyed will be restored through the Lord Jesus. God shall make all things new in Christ.

We now are moving along in the time and opportunities of restoration. The work is of God. We are not working *for* God, we are working *with* God as God works in us.

God knows precisely what He is doing at every moment and in all places. Every creature to the smallest sparrow remains under His constant supervision. God is in control. His authority and power compel all nations to obey Him. Of course, God is not commanding or directing the abominations being practiced by demon-driven people. Nevertheless, God never yields control of the heavens or the earth.

Christ is Lord of Heaven and earth. Christ possesses all authority, all power, in Heaven and on the earth.

Only the Holy Spirit can reveal to us the particular times and opportunities of the present hour. Now the emphasis appears to be on building the Body of Christ and also on bringing the power and Word of the Kingdom of God to every human being on the earth.

The call today is for total discipleship. It is for cross-carrying obedience to Christ. If we are halfhearted, attempting to keep one foot in the world and one foot in the Kingdom of God, we are miserable.

The Divine work of restoration proceeds only from the cross. Christ brought to us access to eternal life by bearing His cross and by being crucified on the cross. Every saint who would minister the things of Christ must become crucified with Christ. The Life of Christ, the power of His resurrection, proceeds only from the fellowship of His sufferings.

If Christ would live we must die. Although it is painful we cheerfully, without complaining, are to accept our cross. We are to persevere in our cross, in our weakness, in our prison, in our death. The world is crucified to us and we to the world. The cross of Christ is our only glory, our only boasting.

In the work of restoration there is a time for kings to issue decrees; there is a time for prophets to prophesy; there is a time for administrators to build and govern. We are not obligated to perform all the work at once. Let us allow the Lord God of Heaven to build in His own way, using those persons whom He chooses.

One of the important lessons the Body of Christ will learn in the last days is to allow people to be what they are. The prophet is not to despise the administrator. The administrator is not to despise the prophet. We are not to despise people because they are not like us. We are not to attempt to create people in our own image. When our brother put his stone in the wall we are not to attempt to remove it.

We are not to resist even the governments of the world unless what they command us to do is contrary to God's will. Then we are to be ready to die without hesitation for the faith. But many times God will use the secular governments to accomplish His own ends, and we can profit from what God does if we will cease fretting about what we see happening. Let us accept what God is doing throughout the earth and perform what we personally are called to do, without attempting to make everyone like us; without resisting what God is doing. Let us flow with God without, however, becoming passive and careless. We always are to pray without ceasing so the true burden of the Lord may be performed in the earth.

The work of restoration is of God and it includes bringing to maturity the Body of Christ. All the peoples of the earth will benefit when God perfects His Church except those persons who refuse the lordship of Christ. They will be denied the Kingdom.

Let us keep on prophesying concerning what God will do. We never, never are to cease having faith that God will restore all that is of value, all that truly is desirable. *All* that God has promised, God shall do. The glory shall come to pass in God's time and in God's way. This applies to the entire creation and also to each believer personally.

If God has promised something to you, never, never stop believing. Every one of the wonderful promises of God, no matter how fantastic, will come to pass in your life if you only will keep on believing. Remember Abraham!

The Body of Christ must be brought to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Then God will fill the Body with the fullness of the Spirit of God.

We desire the fullness of the Spirit. But God desires the maturity and unity of the Body. God is not anxious to bless *our* programs. God intends to bless what He has instituted.

Our task is neither to put the Body together nor to breathe life of the flesh into that which God creates. Our task is to "speak to the Rock."

If we will prophesy of the restored Body of Christ as God has commanded, declaring what God tells us to declare, then God Himself will bring the bones together as they should be brought together. God Himself will breathe breath of Life into the formed Body of Christ as He also breathed into Adam and into Christ's Apostles (John 20:22).

The elders of the Jews heeded the prophets Haggai and Zechariah and they built and prospered, and finished the Temple of God.

God wants you and me today to build the Body of Christ as He directs us through His Holy Spirit. God desires that we "build the temple," that we prosper in the things of the Kingdom, and that through His grace we complete the work according to God's standards. God's Word promises success to those who obey Him.

If we remain faithful there will come a time when our work, our part of the great task, is finished. Then we can go to Jesus with the glorious satisfaction of a job well done.

God has a special work for *you* to perform. If you will follow Christ diligently your work will be performed successfully. Then you can go to be with Jesus. Everyone who works in the restoration of the Body of Christ has the wonderful knowledge within him that he is privileged to perform a certain task in the Kingdom. When that task has been completed, and when he has been perfected to the Lord's satisfaction, he then can go to be with the Lord.

Our food is to do the will of Christ and to *finish* His work.

We cannot build the Body of Christ by the wisdom, strength, and talents of human beings.

The ascended Christ ministers His holy body and blood and His eternal resurrection Life to His Body through the ministries and gifts of the Spirit of God.

Christ is the only true Apostle, Prophet, Teacher, Pastor, Evangelist, Gift of healing, Knowledge, Discernment, and everything else. The Holy Spirit takes of the Substance, Life, and abilities of the ascended Christ and gives a piece of that Substance, Life, and ability to each member, without exception, of the Body of Christ.

When we serve the Body of Christ, building it with the ability the Holy Spirit gives us, then it is the Personality and Life of Christ, His body and blood, that is building His own Body. All wisdom and power flow down from the ascended Head. The Body is built from the ascended Head and grows to maturity in the Head.

All true ministry is an expression in the earth of the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus Christ. Each of us contributes to the Body the piece of the ascended Christ that has been given us by the Holy Spirit.

The goal of all of us who are working in the restoration is that the Body of Christ attain the fullness of spiritual maturity, and perfect union with our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus is God's Standard of perfection and completion. Each member of the Body of Christ has a place of perfection according to his own calling, his own destiny, his own place in the Body.

A perfect physical body must have perfect fingers, perfect toes, perfect lungs. If one member of our body is not perfect and complete our entire body is imperfect and incomplete. The body is as complete and perfect as the least complete and perfect member for the physical body is one whole.

So it is true that in order for Christ to be perfect and complete, each member of the Body of Christ must be perfect and complete. Christ is perfect and complete in Himself. But as soon as He adds us to Himself He adds imperfection, immaturity, to Himself. His motive in doing this is His Divine love. He *wants* to add us to Himself.

Therefore each of us is being brought to perfection and completeness according to our own calling in Christ. As Christ is being brought to completeness in us we are being joined eternally to Him so there is completeness and perfection in Christ—Head and Body. The Head is perfect. The Body is being made perfect by receiving grace from the Head.

All mountains of difficulty will become a plain when the restoration workers are trusting in the Spirit of God rather than in the wisdom and power of the flesh. As soon as the Temple of God (Christ—Head and Body) has been completed the Head will descend from Heaven on the mature Body.

*Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. (Zechariah 4:7)*

The work of restoration will not be accomplished by the abilities of the flesh but by the wisdom and power of the Spirit of God.

*Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. (Zechariah 4:6)*

Christ will finish what He has begun.

*The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. (Zechariah 4:9)*

Christ will return as the crowning glory of the restored Church.

*When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. (Psalms 102:16)*

It is the good pleasure of the Father that the entire creation, the heavens and the earth, be filled with the Presence and will of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through the Church, the Body of Christ, that the full stature of Christ will be attained.

It is the members of the Body of Christ, the Wife of the Lamb, who will bear in themselves the Presence and will of Christ throughout the entire creation of God.

Consider the following verse:

*I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (John 17:23)*

We understand the Lord Jesus will not appear in glory until He builds the Church to His own standard of image and union, bringing it into perfect rest in Himself and the Father.

We understand also as soon as the Church has been built into oneness in Christ, and Christ comes and dwells in the Church, the world will know God the Father has sent Christ and that God loves the Church even as He loves Christ (compare Zechariah 4:9 above).

The more willing we are to do our part in the work of restoration the sooner we will bring back the King. The heavens must hold Christ until the times of restoration of all things.

Christ is coming *to* His saints today to cleanse them and to build them up in preparation for His coming *with* them and *in* them. The Kingdom of God that soon is to come to the earth is the Father in the Son in the saints ruling and bringing the Presence of God to the saved nations of the earth.

It is this coming revelation of God in Christ in and with the saints that will release the whole world from the bondage of sin and death. Then shall the peoples of the earth worship God and perform His will in the earth, in answer to the Lord's prayer.

*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)*

*And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. (Psalms 72:19)*

*Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice Before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth. (Psalms 96:12,13)*

This is the Good News of the coming of the Kingdom of God to the earth. This is the original Gospel of Christ and His Apostles: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!"

The Kingdom of God is the rule of Christ through the saints extended to all the creation.

The Lord Jesus must rule in our life today. Just because we have accepted Christ as our personal Savior does not mean we also have received Him as our personal Lord. It appears there is a multitude of people who have believed in Christ but who are not ready to serve Him and perform His will with a perfect heart.

The member of the Kingdom of God is that person in whom Christ is ruling. The Kingdom of God *is* the rule of Christ. Throughout the Scriptures we find references to the "third day." The types teach that the work of restoration will be brought to completion during the "third day."

*And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. (Luke 13:32)*

*After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. (Hosea 6:2)*

The "third day" corresponds to the third great annual gathering of the Israelites. The third gathering is the feast of Tabernacles, which includes the feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the feast of Tabernacles itself.

*Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty: (Deuteronomy 16:16)*

After we have been saved and have received the Holy Spirit we are to press onward toward the fullness of redemption. We are moving toward the spiritual fulfillment of the blowing of Trumpets, of the Day of Atonement, and finally of the feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus, Chapter 23). The spiritual fulfillment of the feast of Tabernacles is the "rest" of God spoken of in the fourth chapter of the Book of Hebrews.

The spiritual fulfillment of the feast of Tabernacles will complete the work of restoration in the Body of Christ. Finally the entire creation will be restored as God in Christ in the Body of Christ brings the Presence and will of Christ into every area of the heavens and the earth.

The feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24) speaks to us of the coming of King Jesus to us to drive out His enemies in preparation for the entering of the Father and the Son into us in fulfillment of the feast of Tabernacles. Each saint must experience spiritual deliverance at the hand of the Lord.

Spiritual warfare can be conducted only by people who themselves have been delivered. The land of promise is spiritual control of the material creation. Only spiritually cleansed saints are able to live in the Spirit and fight in the Spirit. They will wrest control of the creation from Satan as God enables them to do so. Believers who are walking in the flesh cannot wage spiritual warfare.

The feast of Tabernacles, as we have stated, portrays the "rest" of God. The rest of God is our inheritance, our goal in Christ. The fourteenth and seventeenth chapters of the Gospel of John tell us of that glorious Day when the Father and the Son take up their eternal dwelling in the overcomer—in the believer who actually keeps the Word of Christ.

When God and Christ through the Spirit are in perfect rest in us, and we in them, in spirit, soul, and body, the work of restoration has been completed in us as an individual.

Placed in between Trumpets (the coming to us of our King in judgment) and Tabernacles (our rest in Christ in God) is the solemn Day of Atonement (of Reconciliation).

The Day of Atonement, which is described in Leviticus, Chapter 16, speaks to us of reconciliation to God, of perfect marriage to Christ. Being the sixth in a series of seven observances (Leviticus, Chapter 23), the spiritual fulfillment of the Day of Atonement results in people in Christ's image and in union with Christ. The result of image and union is eternal fruitfulness and dominion. Image, union, fruitfulness, and dominion, these four aspects of man's inheritance, were proclaimed on the *sixth* day of creation (Genesis 1:26-28).

*Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. (Leviticus 23:24)*

The Day of Atonement was the only time of the year during which the veil protecting the Most Holy Place was drawn aside. The High Priest of Israel entered the Most Holy Place and sprinkled blood on the Mercy Seat and in front of the Mercy Seat.

Jesus informed us, as recorded in the fourteenth chapter of John, that He was leaving in order to prepare a place for us in the Father's house. Christ made a place for us in the Father's house by sprinkling His own blood on and before the Mercy Seat in Heaven. This was the first step in reconciling man to God.

As we press forward in the Holy Spirit we are to be confessing our sins to God, obtaining forgiveness and cleansing, the washing of the blood, so the work of reconciliation may enter ever more deeply into our personality. Through the Spirit, the blood of the Lamb, and the Word of God, we drive out of ourselves the lusts of our flesh, worldly thinking, self-seeking, and all the other effects of the bondages Satan has placed on mankind.

Through the authority and power of the grace of God in Christ we are overcoming the damage that the enemy has done to our personalities. In addition, Christ is being formed in us as the ministries and gifts of the Spirit bring to us the Substance, Life, and abilities of the resurrected and ascended Christ.

As the enemy and his works are driven out of our life, and Christ is formed in us, the image of Christ can be seen in us with increasing clarity. The absence of sin and rebellion and the Presence of the moral Nature of Christ enable us to come into an ever more complete union with Christ in God. We are being reconciled to God as Christ provides the Way, teaches us the Truth concerning Himself, and fills us with His own Life.

The work of reconciliation to God, of perfect, total union with God, is the part of the program of restoration accomplished by the spiritual fulfillment of the Day of Atonement. All of God's redemptive efforts are moving us toward the spiritual fulfillment of the feast of Tabernacles, which is the dwelling of the Father and the Son through the Spirit in the spirit, soul, and body of the saint.

We shall know the Day of Atonement has been completed and the feast of Tabernacles is here in *kingdom-wide fulfillment* when the loud voice proclaims from the new heaven: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Revelation 21:3).

We shall know the Day of Atonement (Day of Reconciliation) and the feast of Tabernacles (abiding) have been completed in us *personally* when the Father and the Son have come to us and have made Their eternal abode with us (John 14:23), and we are at perfect rest in them.

In the *kingdom-wide* fulfillment of the seven feasts of the Lord, the Day of Atonement is the thousand-year Kingdom Age (Millennium). The purpose of the Kingdom Age is first, to bring to perfection the Wife of the Lamb; second, to bring deliverance and justice to the nations of the earth.

The payment for our redemption was made two thousand years ago on the cross of Calvary. But there remains the original problem of disobedience. Mankind cannot return to the garden of Eden, cannot partake of the tree of life and live forever in the body, until the problem of disobedience has been solved. Christ, the obedient One, has been raised from the dead—the First of the Kingdom of God.

Next in order will come the Lord's firstfruits.

*And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. (Revelation 14:1)*

After the firstfruits, the remainder of the elect will be reconciled to God.

Finally the saved nations of the earth will be enabled to walk in obedience before the Lord God, making them eligible to partake of the tree of life that is in the midst of the Paradise of God (Revelation 2:7).

One misunderstanding in Christian thinking is that man can be restored to Paradise on the basis of forgiveness alone. It is believed that God's mercy and grace through the Lord Jesus are a "ticket" by which man is allowed back into Paradise and is permitted to eat of the tree of life and live forever in the body.

However, such is not the case. God's mercy and grace have provided forgiveness for us through the atoning blood of Jesus. But forgiveness does not give us the authority to enter Paradise and eat of the tree of life. Rather, forgiveness enables us to come to God in prayer so through the Virtue that is in Jesus we may experience moral reconstruction. It is the reconstruction of our moral nature plus forgiveness that finally open the door to immortality in the body and to Paradise.

There are three aspects of the new covenant: God placing the Divine law in our mind and writing it in our heart; our coming to know the Lord; and God forgetting our sins.

*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. (Hebrews 8:10-12)*

Mercy and the forgetting of our sins have been emphasized in evangelical teaching to the virtual exclusion of the first two aspects of the new covenant.

The thousand-year period and the new heaven and earth reign of Christ are the "times of restitution [restoration] of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." As we understand the Scriptures, during the thousand-year Kingdom Age there will take place a work of reconciling people to God—both God's own people and also the saved nations of the earth.

God's own people:

*For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. (Isaiah 54:7,8)*

The nations of the earth:

*And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, 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 the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:3)*

In the closing days of the present age two images will come to fullness of stature in the earth. The fullness of the image of Christ will come forth in the victorious saints. The fullness of the image of Satan will come forth in those who resist

the lordship of Christ whether or not those people confess faith in Christ. Remember, it was the leaders of Israel, of God's chosen nation, who were moved by satanic envy to murder the Lord Jesus.

These two images, Christ and Antichrist, will come into a final, climactic confrontation. Then the power of the almighty God in Christ shall flame forth from Christ and from His saints and overcome Antichrist. This is the Battle of Armageddon. The victory of Armageddon will usher in the thousand-year Kingdom Age, the Day of Atonement (Day of Reconciliation), the Year of Jubilee for earth's peoples. The Millennium, the thousand-year period, is an important time with major opportunities for the restoration of all things.

The Scriptures teach us that the wheat and the tares will grow side by side and come to maturity side by side. Then will come the time of harvest, the hour of judgment, the separating of the precious from the vile. The tares, the image of Satan, will be taken out of the Kingdom of God, gathered in bundles, and burned. But the wheat will shine forth in the righteousness of their Father's Kingdom.

The "sixth day," the thousand-year Jubilee, has to do with redemption and reconciliation, with our entering total union with Christ. This is the marriage of the Lamb.

We have been saved through the blood. We have been filled with God's Holy Spirit. Now it is time for us to press forward into the last great assembly.

The blowing of Trumpets, the first of the three subfeasts of the annual observance of Tabernacles, brings us into spiritual resurrection, and into warfare against the devil—driving Satan out of our personality and finally out of the entire creation of God.

The Day of Atonement, the second subfeast, works in our whole personality perfect reconciliation to God—the image of the Lord Jesus Christ and undisturbed union and rest in Christ in God.

The feast of Tabernacles proper, from which the third annual gathering derives its name, is the climax of salvation, the fruition and harvesting to God of all the aspects of the redemption that are in Christ. The spiritual fulfillment of the feast of Tabernacles is the "rest" of God of which the Book of Hebrews speaks.

The God of Heaven is seeking a house, an eternal resting place. That house, that resting place, is the personality of the member of the Body of Christ. In the Father's house there are many dwelling places. Christ went to the cross, and then into Heaven with His own blood, in order to prepare a place for each of us in the eternal house of God—which is Christ Himself.

There can be no rest for the Father in a "house" filled with lust, the love of the world, the spirit of Satan, and self-seeking. Therefore there must be a work of reconciliation before there can be the rest that flows from perfect marriage, perfect union with Christ.

In the beginning God gave to mankind a glorious inheritance. God made man in God's image. God made man male and female, that is to say, with the need and capacity for love and union. God assigned to man the ability to multiply the image of God, and rulership over all the works of God's hands.

The inheritance was lost because of rebellion against God's will. But the conquering saints, through the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, are regaining their lost inheritance now. The overcomers are pressing into the moral image of Christ, into undisturbed union with Christ, into fruitfulness, and into authority and power in the spirit realm.

The victorious saints, the overcomers, are discovering there cannot be perfect union until there is perfect image. Every part of our personality that is not in Christ's image, not transformed by His glory, cannot find complete rest in the Father. The image of Christ must be attained before perfect union can take place, although Christ brings us into limited union with Himself in order to bring about image. The more that the image is perfected the more that union is possible, and increased union brings increased image.

When we are in the perfect image of God, perfect union with God is possible. When union takes place, fruitfulness follows. Fruitfulness results in rulership. When our fruit remains we can ask what we will and it shall be done.

So it is in Christ. As the saints are created in His image they can enter union with Him. As we abide in untroubled union in Spirit with the Lord Jesus, the image of Christ is created in those whom we are influencing. The end result of the union of the saints with Christ is the filling of the heavens and the earth with the Presence and will of Christ, to the Glory of God the Father.

Eve was married to Adam as she came into existence. Eve had no life apart from Adam because she was formed from Adam. We are married to Christ as we come into existence, for we are being fashioned from His body and blood. The reason Jesus loves us as He does is that we are being formed from Him. We are being fashioned from His Substance and Life.

Christ is the Head, the Strength, the Lord. The Church is the Glory of Christ, His Body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. We are His complement, His completion.

Christ is from God. We have been born of God and are being fashioned from Christ.

In order for all that God has commanded to come into being, the Lamb and His Wife must be brought into complete and perfect union. Then there will be the Divine image, fruitfulness, and dominion. Then joy will fill Christ, the Father, the Church, and the remainder of the creation. The image, union, fruitfulness, and dominion have come forth from the Father's love. In Abraham's Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

We have stated that the overcomers are pressing now into the Kingdom of God, into eternal rewards, into the restoration of the lost inheritance. The careless Christians will be thrown into outer darkness (Matthew 25:30).

We now are in a time of redemption, of personal restoration. There are opportunities for growth, for character formation (particularly in the areas of resisting sin and denying self-will), for rewards, for rulership, for possessing the Kingdom of God, that may never again be available to any creature of God. This is apparent in the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation, which speak directly to the Bride, to the victorious saints.

The reason why such conquering strength and Kingdom rewards can be attained now and not at a later time is that the crucial battles and struggles are upon us now. Now is the time when the saints are being taught by the Holy Spirit and are being empowered by the Spirit to take the Kingdom. Many are called to the Kingdom but few are chosen to the first ranks. Many who are last in time will be first in the Kingdom of God.

Those who "help the Lord" in His struggle against the enemy will be rewarded amply when He comes back to earth and takes His place on the Throne of David, as was true of David's "mighty men."

Such "throne" opportunities never again will be available, according to our understanding. Let every reader take full advantage now of the promises of Christ to "him who overcomes."

The coming of the Lord will be a time of redemption for those who have faithfully followed Him during their pilgrimage on the earth.

*But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. (Malachi 4:2)*

The Lord's "mighty men" will rule with Him just as David's mighty men ruled with David. The remainder of true Israel will be nourished by the Lord.

*He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. (Isaiah 40:11)*

Never again will there be an unprotected glory. On all the glory there will be an eternal, impregnable defense. There will be no more rebellions against the Father's will—not for the eternity of eternities. Christ in and with the conquerors will protect Paradise against evil.

We can see that at the coming of the Lord, *before* the thousand-year Kingdom Age, the Wife of the Lamb will be clothed in the righteous deeds of the overcoming saints:

*And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness [righteous conduct, righteous behavior] of saints. (Revelation 19:8)*

But by the *end* of the thousand-year period the Wife of the Lamb will have been transformed into the holy city, the new Jerusalem.

*And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, (Revelation 21:10)*

The Wife of the Lamb first is seen dressed in white linen and then is beheld as a marvelous city. When did this transformation take place? Apparently during the thousand-year Kingdom Age.

The Divine decree that controls the work of restoration can be found in Isaiah 51:16:

*And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people. (Isaiah 51:16)*

This is Christ's great commission. The Lord Jesus is Christ. We are the Body of Christ, the fullness of Him whom God has chosen to fill the whole universe.

The word of restoration is in the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ and He puts it into the mouths of His servants. Christ is covered by the hand of the Father and Christ extends that protection to us.

The *heavens* must be planted. Our inheritance, our land of promise, is the gaining of the spiritual thrones that govern the material creation. Satan and his angels will be deposed and the conquering saints will be given control of the nations of the earth and of the earth itself.

The foundations of the *earth* will be laid. In the present hour the earth is established on the "floods," on what is shifting and unstable. But we look for a city that has foundations. That city is the new Jerusalem for it is founded on the Rock, Christ. In the twelve ornamented foundations of the wall of the holy city are inscribed the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.

The world continues in anguish, chaos, and death of mind, of body, of soul, of spirit. But Christ in His Body and with His Body will bring order out of the chaos of the world. The kingdoms of the world will become His Kingdom, and Christ will rule with His associates in justice and peace. The world will believe in Christ as soon as the Church becomes one in Christ in God.

Christ and His overcomers will proclaim to *Zion*, to all God's elect whether Jewish or Gentile by physical birth, "You are My people."

This is the Word of comfort, of reconciliation, that will bring healing to the weary and afflicted of the Israel of God. The Lord's saints will be strengthened until they are trees of righteousness. The little ones will become strong cities. All will know the Lord, from the least to the greatest.

Christ in His saints will not extinguish the smoking flax or break the bruised reed. All Israel will be repaired and restored to beauty and usefulness.

We understand, therefore, that there is incredible glory awaiting each believer who chooses to press on to the hundredfold fruit-bearing.

The Wife of the Lamb exclaims, "I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour" (Song of Solomon 8:10). When we are able to resist sin and grow in maturity the Lord is pleased with us.

The Bride is a *wall* of separation between sin and righteousness, between rebellion and obedience. She is extraordinarily fruitful and possesses dominion over the works of God's hands. She holds the keys of the Kingdom of God.

Truly, she has found favor in the eyes of her Lord.

Some of us may be concerned about our loved ones who believe in Christ but who have pitched their tent too close to Sodom, so to speak. If we pray, as did faithful Abraham, God in His love and mercy may drag our loved ones from the city destined for destruction.

We would caution against relaxing under the impression no matter how we live we will be saved anyway; that we will receive the fullness of the inheritance whether or not we apply ourselves to the rigors of the Christian discipleship. Many are under this impression today and are at ease in Zion. But they will be cruelly disappointed in the Day of Christ. The teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ in the four Gospel accounts reveal that much Christian doctrine is entirely out of line with the words of the Lord. Consider the believer who wasted his talents, which is a common practice today: "Depart from me, you wicked and lazy slave." The unprofitable servant shall be cast into outer darkness.

Much current Christian teaching contradicts the preceding passage from Matthew's Gospel. The ministers who are leaving God's people with the impression Christ is a loving fellow who will overlook the laziness and foolishness of the professing Christians will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ with their students and hear the dreadful sentence: "Depart from me into outer darkness!"

Some are teaching today that no Christian will be reproved at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We would remind those teachers and the Christians who believe them that the words of our Lord Jesus will stand, and that if anyone adds to them or subtracts from them he shall be visited with Divine Judgment.

The Scripture teaches that some of the Lord's servants will be dragged weeping, gnashing their teeth, and hurled into outer darkness. Their sin is that of laziness and carelessness concerning the treasures of the Kingdom of God.

The door to the marriage supper of the Lamb will be closed against those believers who allow themselves to become "dry" of the oil of the Holy Spirit.

And so we come to the "third day" of the work of restoration. Christ has remained in Heaven at the right hand of the Father, waiting for the Day that is coming into view even now.

It is possible that the greatest spiritual opportunities of all history are available to us today. We can be among those who press in and reap a full reward. The choice is ours to make.

On the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. Joshua was to "pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land," within three days. Hosea proclaims, "In the third day he will raise us up." On the third day Christ (His Body) will be perfected (Luke 13:32).

The glory of the latter house shall be greater than of the former. Much glory was given in the first century. Much glory was lost during the following centuries. But the restored glory will be many times greater than the first glory given. The days of the double portion, the greater works, are upon us.

Christ has kept the good wine until now. Bit by bit, command upon command, rule upon rule, the Holy Spirit has enabled the saints to begin to recover the lost inheritance. The work of restoration is long and difficult. But the glory is at hand and the future is radiant with the joyous wonders that were glimpsed dimly by the patriarchs and prophets.

Restoration, another name for redemption, is a love story. Christ's motive in paying for our sins and gathering us to Himself in our immaturity is His love for us. This is why we must not flirt with other gods and lords. Christ desires us for Himself *alone*. He has given all of Himself to us. He insists we give all of ourselves to Him. If we do not we surely will come short of the fullness of the inheritance.

Let us dance along with Jesus, for the Christian discipleship is the greatest adventure of all. What Christ has begun Christ shall finish, in the world, in the Church, in your life as an individual. Never, never give up. All His promises *shall* come to pass if you keep on keeping on.

### **Introductory Scriptures**

*And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. (Joel 2:25)*

*The glory of the latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts. (Haggai 2:9)*

*The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. (Zechariah 4:9)*

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution [restoration] of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. Acts 3:19-21*

## **THE WORK OF RESTORATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Perhaps most of us are familiar with the great Temple of God built by Solomon and with the splendor and glory of the Kingdom of Israel under the rulership of King Solomon. We understand also many of the kings that followed Solomon were ungodly, although a few served the Lord.

But the wickedness of Israel continued until God no longer could accept His people. The Lord raised up Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon to invade Jerusalem, destroy the Temple of Solomon, and carry away the people of Israel as prisoners to Babylon. This was the culmination of the downfall of the Kingdom of Israel, a downfall that had commenced at the hand of the Assyrians (850-722 B.C.). The existence of Israel as an independent kingdom was removed during the years 722-586 B.C.

The city of Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonians in 587-586 B.C. The Temple of Solomon was destroyed and Jerusalem was left in ruins. Jeremiah was the Lord's main spokesman in those days and had warned the Israelites previously of the judgment that finally fell on them.

After a period of seventy years the Lord enabled Joshua, Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah to rebuild the Temple and the wall surrounding the city of Jerusalem. Many of the Jews left Babylon and came to help rebuild the Temple, the wall, and the city of Jerusalem. The prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi counseled the builders by the Word of the Lord.

Why should we Christians concern ourselves with events of history that took place more than five hundred years before Jesus of Nazareth was born?

The reason for our concern is that those events of history, while they took place among real people and form a significant part of the ancient history of the world, were designed by the Lord God of Heaven as object lessons for the Christian Church.

It is difficult for humans to realize God could allow people to make choices and still control history to such an extent that the events that took place are object lessons for us living two thousand five hundred years later. The knowledge that God indeed did design history in this manner ought to give us strong faith in the present hour. God still is in control of history. Human affairs always remain under God's authority and power.

The episodes concerning Joshua, Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah are of importance in the history of the Jewish race. But the true and eternal significance of the work of restoration has to do with the Church of Christ.

The Kingdom of God, which is the reign of Christ in us and through us, is a spiritual kingdom. It is not easy for us to understand abstract spiritual truth. Therefore, God has provided for us the many object lessons of the Old Testament.

Would God deal patiently with millions of people over hundreds of years in order to provide another people who would be born at a later date with a series of object lessons in how to serve God; how to build the Kingdom of God?

The Lord God of Heaven did just that!

*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. (1 Corinthians 10:11)*

### **Glory, Destruction, and Restored Glory**

If the work of restoration is an illustration for our benefit, what, then, is the pattern?

Solomon's Temple.

Sin and rebellion against the Lord.

Carrying away God's people to Babylon.

Going back to rebuild the Temple of Solomon.

Building the wall of Jerusalem.

Settling the city of Jerusalem.

We can say these same things in another way:

The Glory of God

Apostasy.

Worldly bondages.

Rebuilding God's House.

Constructing defenses against the enemy.

God's people entering their inheritance.

Let us apply this pattern to the history of the Christian Church.

The Glory of God. The Book of Acts reveals to us that the Church of Christ began in an outpouring of the Glory of God. For a brief period the Church revealed in itself the resurrection Glory of the Lord Jesus. The Apostles were filled with the Spirit of wisdom and revelation of the knowledge of God.

Apostasy. The Christian pastors and teachers who followed the first-century apostles were sincere men. But they were not filled with the original glory. Little by little theology began to take the place of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation of the knowledge of God (Ephesians 1:17).

As the Church became a large and important institution, leaders entered who found personal prestige and wealth through the Church. The Spirit of God withdrew into the background as prominent priests and scholars took control of the Lord's people.

Worldly bondages. The precious truths from the Scriptures of redemption by faith, the gifts and fruit of the Spirit, the priesthood of each believer, the coming of Christ in the clouds of glory, a personal walk with Christ, were lost to the

Lord's people. Their spiritual eyes were put out, like those of Samson, and they found themselves grinding at the mills of the world, building treasure cities for the god of this age.

The rebuilding of God's house. The Protestant Reformers, as was true of Zerubbabel, were moved by the Lord to rebuild the house of God. It is our point of view that the work of the Protestant Reformers marks the beginning of the latter (harvest) rain, the beginning of the end-time restoration promised by Joel and the other prophets of Israel.

A thoughtful study of church history from the time of the Reformers until the present will reveal that the Christian Church is coming back to the glory of its first state. The precious truths that were lost when men assumed control of the Church are slowly being restored. The waves of revival flow and ebb but the tide is rising steadily.

The constructing of defenses against the enemy. This is the present move of the Spirit of God. The overcomers, the victorious saints, are being summoned from the Christian churches. While ours is a day of mass evangelism and multitudes of souls are being born into the Kingdom, there is at the same time a call going out to the Lord's "mighty men"—to those who will respond to the demands of discipleship and learn to wage war in the Spirit.

It is one thing to have millions of converts to Christ. It is another matter to create a spiritual wall of defense around these souls so they will not become the prey of demons and unscrupulous men who strive continually to turn the things of Christ to their own advantage.

God no longer will permit the existence of unwall-ed Edens. One rebellion in Heaven with its counterpart on the earth is enough. From this point forward there is to be a protection over the glory. This is why the *wall* of the new Jerusalem was emphasized to John. The wall is being constructed today. The wall of the new Jerusalem is the resistance to deception, rebellion, and idolatry being created in every person who is obeying Christ.

God's people entering their inheritance. As soon as God's Temple, the Body of Christ, has been built up to maturity and unity, and the wall of defense against the enemy has been established, the Lord's people (and in fact the whole saved creation of God) can enter their wonderful inheritance in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We understand, therefore, that the restoration of the Temple of Solomon and the rebuilding of the wall of the city of Jerusalem constitute a prophecy of what is to take place in the Body of Christ, which is the new Jerusalem, the Wife of the Lamb.

The Book of Ezra portrays the restoration of the Temple of God. The Book of Nehemiah describes the rebuilding of the wall of defense of the city of Jerusalem. The Book of Esther typifies the purification of the Bride of the Lamb as she is prepared by the King's servants for her marriage to the greatest of all kings, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A study of church history shows that the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God declined from the days of the Apostles of Christ until by the time of the Protestant Reformers there existed, for the most part, an empty form of what at one time had been the light and Glory of God in the earth—the Christian Church.

But (as happened also in the days of Cyrus—Ezra 1:1,2) the Lord God of Heaven began to move Christian leaders in the direction of restoring what had been destroyed by Satan.

The object lesson was created as the Jewish leaders were helped by the kings of Persia to rebuild the Temple of God and the wall of the city of Jerusalem. The Kingdom of God has experienced the fulfillment of this prophetic object lesson as God has stirred up men of God and has empowered and guided the long process of the restoration of His Glory in the earth.

The program of the restoration of the Glory of God in the earth has continued to this day. We are living in an hour when the spiritual pace is accelerating. No longer is there time for people to plan their own life in such a manner that some small portion of it is assigned to Christ. Such lukewarmness will be brought to judgment very soon. Christ will have our whole life or we will not be able to enter our inheritance in the Lord.

From now on it is necessary to move forward in faith one day at a time. May God grant us the wisdom to number our days and redeem the fleeting hours. Wonderful rewards are held out to those who will lay aside every other consideration and begin to seek Christ in earnest. God proposes to do a conclusive work of righteousness. Let us rise to the occasion and make every day profitable for Christ.

The harvest is worldwide. The Kingdom has been prepared for those who care enough to press vigorously into it. A multitude of souls hang in the balance, their spiritual welfare depending on our faithfulness in doing what Christ is setting before us.

Will *you* rise up and build as the Holy Spirit directs?

Let us turn now to the Book of Ezra and examine some of the concepts that have a direct bearing on the days in which we are living.

### **God Governs the Earth**

*Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, (Ezra 1:1)*

"The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus." Here is one of the major understandings we need to grasp today. The Christian Church is of God, of His Son, Christ. The Church is not an effort of men to build a kingdom counter to the governments of the world.

The Lord moves not only on the members of the Body of Christ but on the nations as well.

Cyrus the Great of Persia was not a Jew. He was not circumcised. He was not a descendant of Abraham. Yet, God spoke clearly to him.

So it is today. As the Lord Jesus Christ builds His Kingdom He speaks not only to His disciples but also to the people of the world. Christ, the Lord of the whole earth, speaks to whomever He will.

Until we grasp the fact that it is Christ who is building the Kingdom of God and not we who are doing it, we will continue to blame the sinners and the secular governments of the earth for our frustration.

The truth is, the creation is not waiting for the secular governments to learn righteousness in order for its release to take place. The creation is waiting for the Church of Christ to turn to Christ and to cease attempting to build the Kingdom of God by its own wisdom and strength and for its own glory.

The world is not the problem, the churches are the problem.

When God spoke to the Israelites through Jeremiah they disobeyed Him. When God spoke to Cyrus, Cyrus obeyed God. Who, then, was the servant of God, Israel or Cyrus?

One of the most significant misunderstandings of God's people is exposed right here. The devil does not own this earth. The devil does not own the peoples of the earth. God is not going to remove His Church, His witness, to Heaven so Satan may inherit the earth and its peoples.

As long as we hold the concept that Satan owns the earth and we are supposed to fight the peoples and rulers of the earth in an attempt to establish a kingdom of our own, we cannot see or enter God's workings. If we visualize the world as being owned by Satan we will proceed to build a religious Babylon (man-directed, institutional Christianity).

With such an attitude we cannot accept the fact that it is God who raises up the governments of the earth.

We are to obey secular authority unless the secular authority commands us to disobey God. In that case we will resist the government—even to death.

God is in control of this world. The world belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. The peoples of the earth belong to Christ and to none other.

All authority in Heaven and on the earth has been given to Christ by the Father. There is no power but of Christ. The farthest reaches of the earth are His.

The kingdom of the world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ by the touch of His transforming glory, just as you and I, as sinful as we were, have been made new creations by the touch of His transforming glory.

Christ will not destroy the world, Christ will transform the world. He will not make all new things, He will make all things new.

The kingdom of the world will become the Kingdom of God and of His Christ when Jesus returns. Meanwhile, Christ does as He will with Satan, with the rulers of the earth, with Antichrist, with the saints, with the unsaved, with the saved, with every angel, and with all else in the creation of God.

*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (Matthew 28:18)*

Cyrus, the king of Persia, was one of the most powerful monarchs in the history of mankind. The God of Heaven spoke to Cyrus as well as to Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra and Nehemiah.

*Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. (Ezra 1:2)*

"He hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem." Think of it! God spoke to the powerful Cyrus. God speaks to the rulers of the world as well as to the members of His Church.

We of the Church of Christ need to receive this important concept into our mind and heart. We are not to struggle against human beings. Our fight is against the devil and his forces, and that fight can be fought only by the Holy Spirit. Our task is to obey the Lord. The Lord's task is to build His own Kingdom.

The work of restoring the Temple of God and the defenses of the Church is not of man. It is not of any group, or institution, or movement of believers. It is the work of God Almighty. God will provide every resource, open every door. The stars in their courses will fight against Sisera, so to speak (Judges 5:20).

The Church will profit from the program of restoration and so will the rest of the creation. When God builds up Zion He appears in His Glory. When God appears in His Glory the Lord's people and the remainder of the peoples of the earth are brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:21).

Let each of us enter the program of God, not into some petty scheme of our own invention. The Lord Jesus is moving in restoration glory. Let us find our own place in God's universal plan.

We are not to worry about any opposition the nations of the earth might present. God will speak to them just as He did to King Cyrus. Both the Lord's anointed remnant and the secular powers of the earth will bring God's work to completion. The secular powers will not always understand they are hastening God's work and goal, but they shall bring God's will to pass nevertheless.

Religious people who are attempting to build their own kingdom, and hardened sinners who refuse to receive Christ as Lord and Savior, will be denied the benefits of the program of restoration.

Notice that God charged Cyrus to "build *Him* an house." The work of restoration is for the purpose of building a house for God. This is another important concept we must receive into our heart and mind.

God in His goodness is providing every kind of blessing today in order to strengthen and encourage the believers and to bring the unsaved to a place of forgiveness and fellowship with God.

But as a result of such blessings and gifts of grace God's people are becoming self-centered. Christianity has been changed from God's eternal purposes into a means of making people successful and happy in the world. This is not the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. The Gospel of the Kingdom is not a plan for material success in our present life. God gives us every good thing to enjoy and is faithful to answer our prayers. But we must be careful not to forget that God has a plan He is carrying forward to completion, and that our part in the Divine plan may at times cause us personal distress—even to the point of martyrdom.

Let us not be self-centered, spoiled children who will not love or serve God unless He is tending to our every concern.

God is not waiting to be used by us. God is working on a tremendous program of restoration. He always is looking for people who will work with Him in bringing forth His Kingdom in the earth.

The Divine program of restoration is a marvelous enterprise, a wondrous scheme, worldwide in its scope. It will result in justice, deliverance, righteousness, peace, and joy for the nations of the earth (Isaiah 42:1). But its chief purpose is to bring about obedience to God and the worship of God on the part of all peoples.

The Christian Church is the eternal Temple of God. The Temple of God is to be established forever on the earth. It is through the Temple of God that the Lord ministers to the world, even during the days in which we are living. It is Christ in us, the hope of glory.

We see, then, that as the program of restoration continues, every necessary door will be opened. God will speak to His Cyruses, and to the prophets among His people. No man or devil can possibly prevent the will of God, the eternal purposes of God, from coming to pass in Heaven and on the earth.

But it is a battle all along the way; and even the battle itself is furthering the work of restoration. For it is through the skirmishes of the battle that God's sons are developing the spiritual wisdom and strength that will enable them to be an eternal wall around the new Jerusalem (Judges 3:1).

The all-powerful Christ is on the throne of His glory. The restoration of the Glory of God in the earth is proceeding on schedule as the Body of Christ is being built up into unity and maturity, and as the defenses against the enemy are created in the personalities of God's victorious saints.

God moved through Cyrus and opened the door:

*Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:3)*

#### **Called to the Work of Restoration**

There must be a personal call of God on each person who is to help accomplish the restoration. The work is of God. The ambitions of people have no part to play in the building of the Body of Christ or in the creating of righteous strength in Christ's victorious saints.

*Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:5)*

Notice that the elders and the leaders were called as well as the common people. The Divine restoration is not some new imaginative program or revelation thought up by youthful enthusiasts in Christ. The true restoration is the move of the anointing of the Spirit of God. God's elders, those who know the joyful sound, will hear the call of the Spirit. So will some of the less experienced believers.

Whoever will choose to do so may join the happy worshipers who are going up to the Lord's House with thanksgiving and adoration in their hearts. The Holy Spirit is inviting us all to the good things of the Lord as the work of restoration presses forward toward the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus from Heaven.

Another characteristic of the true move of God is that people offer willingly. Everyone wants to help. It is not necessary for us to rage and fume over the slowness of people to respond. When God is on the move the "animals will come to Noah's Ark by themselves." There is no need to force any individual against his will. God places joy in our hearts so we want to serve the Lord.

*And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. (Ezra 1:6)*

Chapter Two of Ezra mentions by name the Israelite families that left Babylon to return to Jerusalem. The Lord wants us to understand people and their families are important to Him. The Divine restoration is not some abstract working of the Spirit of God. It is a personal move of the Lord as He speaks to His beloved people and their families one at a time. God cares about each of us and about those whose welfare is of concern to us.

The first act of the returning Jews was to offer sacrifices to the Lord on the Altar of Burnt Offering.

*And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings morning and evening. (Ezra 3:3)*

The Altar of Burnt Offering, the first furnishing of the Tabernacle of the Congregation, portrays Christ on the cross of Calvary. Every true move of God without exception returns first to the blood of the cross in order to obtain authority and perspective. The central message of the Kingdom of God is Christ crucified. When the cross is not seen and felt in the ministry, the ministry has gotten off the track.

The Altar of Burnt Offering portrays also the believer's total consecration to Christ.

*I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service [of Divine worship]. (Romans 12:1)*

It is impossible for the work of restoration to proceed until at least some of the Christian people offer themselves to God as living sacrifices. In the Kingdom of God, life proceeds from death. Eternal, incorruptible, indestructible resurrection life flows only from the cross.

The Apostles of the Lamb ministered from the cross. They gloried in the cross. When we glory in anything other than the cross we miss God. *Every believer who attempts to shun the work of the cross in his life opens himself to satanic deception.*

The Altar must be established on its bases. Its bases are the atoning death and bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we in our day set ourselves to return to the way of the cross we will be attacked by the world and by worldly "Christians." The cross is a reproach, a scandal to the worldly. They understand neither the wisdom nor the power of the cross.

But to us who love Christ in sincerity the cross is at the center of everything of value. We do not want to hear about another great financial scheme, another famous personage, another brilliant human plan. We want to know more of the cross of Christ. We know the love of God, the wisdom of God, and the power of God are in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified to us and we to the world.

### **Separation From the World**

As the work of restoration moved forward, the first strategy of the enemy was to join with the Israelites and help them build the Temple of God.

*Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel; Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. (Ezra 4:1,2)*

Any attempt of the Church to have fellowship with those who are not of the Lord's own people, to compromise with them in any manner whatever, will result in loss of the Presence of the Lord.

This does not mean Christians cannot be friendly with non-Christians. We are speaking rather of the building of the Kingdom of God.

The world has no business in the Church of the Lord Jesus. There is to be no fellowship with the world in the work of restoration. We do not need the world and we do not want the world. The mixture of the Church and the world is Babylon (man-directed Christianity). Spiritual Babylon is a prostitute and the mother of prostitutes. Babylon always stands ready to sell her favors to the highest bidder.

When the Church attempts to get help from the world the Holy Spirit leaves immediately. Money, power, prestige, become the gods of the ministry and the congregation. It is this combination of the world and religion that murdered Christ. It is this combination of the world and religion that will produce the False Prophet. The False Prophet, the spirit of religious delusion, will work hand in hand with Antichrist.

Many of the Lord's people of today would grasp the opportunity if the civic leaders of the community came and offered to help them build their church.

We are not to accept so much as a shoelace from the world.

"Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do."

The world knows nothing whatever about our Lord Jesus Christ. The world, like Herod of old, will murder Christ wherever He appears.

The Christian who seeks the help of the world will find that he is playing with fire. He will be burned. The result will be desolation and corruption. If he is not going to be completely faithful to God he is wise if he makes friends with worldly people, because the lovers of money will be his only company for eternity.

"Let us build with you." Satan has discovered that the more he persecutes the Christian Church the stronger and more widespread the Church becomes.

Therefore, Antichrist has devised a master strategy for the end-time. He will join with the saints. He will "love" them out of cross-carrying obedience to Christ just as Peter attempted to "love" the Lord Jesus and move Him away from His journey to Golgotha.

Satan will help the Christians build their buildings. He will encourage them in their charitable and social undertakings. He wisely will make them part of his empire.

Antichrist will persecute the Jews and the godly remnant of Christians savagely. The godly remnant of Christians are those who live in the Spirit of God and who therefore are an eternal rebuke to all that Satan and the world is and does.

The strategy of assisting the saints instead of persecuting them is very effective. Multitudes of God's people today are ineffective as witnesses because they are living the "abundant life" of material ease and prosperity. They will not become disciples because that would mean giving up the luxuries to which they and their children have become accustomed.

Daniel warned us twenty-five hundred years ago:

*And through his [Antichrist's] policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace [careless security; prosperity] shall destroy [corrupt] many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. (Daniel 8:25)*

The greatest possible blessing that God can bring to any nation in which the saints have been accepted and are trusting in material abundance, who have become complacent and at ease in Zion, is an abundance of trouble.

The abundance of trouble and calamity will accomplish two great goods: (1) the members of the Body of Christ will turn to the Lord and begin to serve Him as they should; and (2) the unsaved will become unsettled. Some of them will turn with fury against the saints, blaming them for the pain that the unsaved are experiencing. Others of the unsaved will call on the name of the Lord and be saved.

The worst possible curse which God can place on a prosperous, complacent nation is to permit conditions of continuing prosperity so the believers and the unsaved fall ever deeper into the deceptions of the enemy.

Then, when the Spirit of God casts Satan into the Lake of Fire, the "believers" and the unsaved are cast in with him because their nature and their works have become identical with Satan's.

There is only one acceptable answer when the world seeks to cooperate with us, attempting to persuade us to conform to its way of thinking in the building of the dwelling place of God: *No!*

*But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. (Ezra 4:3)*

When the Lord's people refuse to compromise with the world, the world will turn against them and the spirit of Satan will be revealed.

*Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, (Ezra 4:4)*

The remainder of Chapter Four of Ezra speaks of the efforts of the heathen to prevent the restoration of the Temple of God.

Saints, be aware of one fact: "All that will live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution" (II Timothy 3:12). It is not all who profess Christ who will suffer persecution, it is "all that will live godly in Christ" who shall suffer persecution.

Satan is not too upset over professions of belief but he is mortally terrified of godly living.

### **God Builds the Kingdom**

Another principle of restoration is seen in the beginning of Chapter Five of Ezra:

*Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel even unto them. (Ezra 5:1)*

God moved on the kings of Persia to help restore the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. God moved on the prophets to announce His will for that period of history. God moved on men who were able to build, such as Zerubbabel and Nehemiah.

There is a time for kings to move. There is a time for prophets to prophesy. There is a time for administrators to build and govern. But God is in control of all.

The kings are not called on to prophesy nor are they always able to do so. The prophets are not called on to build and rule nor are they always able to do so. The administrators are not called on to fight the kings of this world nor are they able to do so.

There are occasions when kings are required to prophesy and prophets are required to build. We recognize this. Our point is that each of us is to perform his own responsibilities with all his heart and not be overly concerned with the areas in which he is not called on to function at the present time.

When man is in control of building the Kingdom there is confusion and grief, excessive strain and labor, and no rest. People are attempting to perform tasks in their own wisdom and strength. When God is in control there is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. There is harmony as each member functions in his proper office. The Lord's servants love to do His will and often are moving about joyfully, singing the praises of the Lord—the happy songs of Zion.

The Word of the Lord came to Ezekiel:

*. . . Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. (Ezekiel 37:4)*

There is a time to prophesy. There is a time to declare what God's will is, what He intends to do. Then the doing of it shall be accomplished by men and women whom God raises up by His Spirit—people in whom God places the necessary talents and strengths. The prophets do not have to fulfill their own visions.

It is our point of view that the past forty-or-so years have been a time for prophesying. The prophesying continues to the present hour but the time of fulfillment now is at hand. When the saints prophesy a vision for many years there arises a feeling there always will be prophesying but the vision never will come to pass. Such is not the case. If the burden is of the Lord it will come to pass in perfect detail and completeness.

*Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God. (Ezekiel 12:27,28)*

For hundreds of years the Hebrew prophets proclaimed the coming of Christ and the Kingdom of God. Hundreds of years are a long period of time. But one day Jesus was born to Mary. One day the promise was gloriously, wondrously fulfilled.

*For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (Habakkuk 2:3)*

Every promise of God to us, whether in His written Word or in a personal word to us, surely shall come to pass. We never are to relinquish our dreams, our hopes, our visions. God is the God of the miraculous, the impossible. All things are possible to us if we never lose our faith in the promises.

It is our understanding that God has a fabulous purpose and plan so far superior to anything men could envision that we continually are coming short of the Glory of God in our faith. We need to pray for the faith of Christ. We need to have Christ's own faith given to us if we are to be able to grasp what God has in mind to do on this earth before Jesus returns. God intends to awaken the whole world to the coming of Jesus as King of all kings, giving every human being the opportunity to prepare himself or herself for the Lord's appearing. Also, the Body of Christ must be made ready to shine as an integral part of the Lord's Presence.

Marvelous revelations are being bestowed even now on the saints. Faith to believe for the bearing of the Gospel of the Kingdom as a witness to the whole world is raining down on us from the Lord Jesus Himself. Unimaginable blessings are available now to every person on earth who will open his heart to Christ. Such is the current burden of prophecy as we understand burden.

Now is the time to look to Jesus. Now is the time to believe God for the salvation of our loved ones. Now is the time to receive deliverance from the bondages of sin and sickness. Now is the hour to receive the gifts of the Spirit and to enter the fullness of ministry.

Now is the moment to lay aside all else, because God has a message of Good News for the world—the message that mankind was set free legally from all the bondages of Satan when Jesus died on the cross. Now is the time to obtain release from the devil by standing in the victory that already has been won.

God is on the move today and the Word to us is that the glory of the latter house will be greater than the former. God has kept the good wine until now. Now is the time for the same works, and greater works, as Jesus promised us (John 14:12). Now is the hour for the downpour of the harvest rain to an extent without equal in history. Now is the moment for the saints to press ahead to the fullness of the resurrection glory of Christ.

Let the prophets proclaim with a loud voice the Glory of God in Christ. We are not required to bring the glory into being. We are invited to proclaim in faith the burden of the Spirit of God.

Jesus promised that just before He returned, the Gospel of the Kingdom would be presented to every nation as a witness. We know the true, scriptural preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom includes the casting out of demons, the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, signs, and powerful wonders and miracles of every kind. The Kingdom of God does not come in word only but in power.

Let us rejoice and announce to every person that God is ready to receive and bless each soul who will accept His Good News in Christ. There never has been a time like the present hour. This is the beginning of the "third day," when the Lord Jesus is to come to us as the rain. He has promised to raise us after two days, and then on the third day we shall live in His sight (Hosea 6:2,3).

How wonderful it is to be able to proclaim the glorious works of God, realizing that the Lord will bring to pass everything He has promised!

Again (as recorded in Chapters Five and Six of Ezra) the heathen became concerned because of the rebuilding of the Temple of God. But God made sure that Darius, the king of Persia, continued the royal support that Cyrus began.

### **Completing the Work**

Finally the Temple was finished.

*And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. (Ezra 6:14)*

The concept of *completion* is important to the teaching concerning the work of restoration. "And they builded, and finished it." Jesus is the Finisher as well as the Author of God's eternal purpose.

Sometimes it appears as though the Gospel of Christ is being presented as a good idea that God wishes people would consider and try to obey. But because of the weaknesses of humans (it is maintained), the "beautiful" laws that Jesus set forth can only be held up as ideals toward which we all should strive. Meanwhile, God, understanding our shortcomings, keeps on lowering His standards. The work of Christ on earth has been defeated because of the slowness of humans to believe and respond. But God will bring us all to Heaven so it really doesn't matter.

Is this your concept of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ? If it is, get rid of such an idea immediately. The Gospel of Christ has nothing whatever to do with such foolishness and weakness. The Gospel of the Kingdom was proclaimed by the Lord Jesus Christ—by the same Man who spoke the universe into being.

The Kingdom of God is an all-powerful, sovereign directive of God Almighty. Men, demons, the elect angels, the fallen angels, Heaven, the world, and every other personality, situation, event, and thing are all working together with more precision than the finest watch in order to bring the eternal plan and purpose of God into being on the earth. The Lord God knows exactly what He is doing at every moment with every creature.

God is creating the Body of Christ, the Wife of the Lamb, the holy city, the new Jerusalem. The edifice already is perfect in detail in the mind of God. Every bit of wisdom and energy in the universe is being employed to insure that not one atom of God's plan will lack fulfillment.

When God speaks the universe is created. No other power is as great as the power of the Word of the Lord God of Heaven. The demons understand this fact. It is time that we of the Church come to understand it.

Consider what the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus Christ has done:

*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying [building up] of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: (Ephesians 4:11-13)*

"For the perfecting of the saints."

"For the building of the body of Christ."

"Unto a perfect man."

"Unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

If a human had made these statements we would admire the breadth and loftiness of his faith and intentions. But these fiat's reflect the royal decrees of the possessor of all authority and power in Heaven and on the earth.

When we hear the edicts of God we are not to adjust them to the abilities or inabilities of frail humans to accomplish them. We consider only the majesty of the Lord. What He has spoken He shall perform. We need only to learn what He has decreed. Then we are to mix faith with His Word and work out our part in the Divine purpose.

For it *shall* come to pass—every word.

Behold the royal goals—the perfecting of the saints; the building of the Body of Christ to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Compare the Divine declarations and goals with the belief that the Gospel is a good idea that God wishes people would consider and try to obey. Do you see the difference? Man's belief is defeated before it begins. God's decree is destined for glorious success, far beyond the imaginations of humans, well beyond our ability to envision.

Let us prophesy the burden of the Spirit of God, for God shall bring to pass the Word abundantly. Our task is not to build the Temple of God. Our task is to declare what God has spoken and to "speak to the Rock" as the Spirit directs.

The work is of the Lord God of Heaven. Let us believe the Lord's Word to the fullest. Then we shall see the glorious power and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Body of Christ shall be brought to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

The Temple of God shall be completed according to the Lord's standards.

*And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. (Ezra 6:15)*

Note in Ezra 6:20 that the returning Jews kept the Passover. So it is true today. As we "return" in the Spirit to the things of Christ, then the blood of God's Lamb, Christ becomes exceedingly precious to us. We make haste to insure that we and our families are "under the blood," under the protection God has provided from the beginning—the blood of Jesus.

The work of restoration can proceed only as we pay strict attention to the Word of God.

*For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. (Ezra 7:10)*

It is our point of view that the period of history just before Jesus returns will be momentous indeed. Spiritual activity will increase greatly. The fallen angels will be hurled down to the earth. Earth's peoples, having set aside every moral restraint, will participate in abominable orgies of which the saints will not be allowed even to speak.

The elect angels will be extremely active and will appear from time to time. Supernatural signs and wonders will multiply in occurrence. The spiritual forces and pressures will increase to the point that human nerves and emotions will crumble under the buffeting.

There is coming an hour of temptation that will test every person on the earth, including the saints. We shall not be spared the testing. We shall be kept by the Lord from the evil one—guarded from the corrupting, destroying works of Antichrist. We shall come through the hour of temptation successfully, standing in victory before the Son of Man, provided we diligently watch and pray that we may escape all the spiritual harm associated with the coming testing.

Throughout the coming temptation and tribulation Christ will furnish each individual who serves Him faithfully and patiently with greatly increased spiritual strength—strength that will make him more than a conqueror no matter what comes to pass on the earth. We shall survive gloriously, serving the Lord Jesus Christ until He returns.

It is so important that we learn what the Scriptures state! If an angel appears and preaches a gospel slightly different from Paul's teaching, do we have enough knowledge of the New Testament and enough spiritual confidence in what is written that we can stand and defy even a supernatural being? Slight differences in what the Holy Spirit has written can produce catastrophic effects in our Christian experience. We shall be confronted by supernatural deceivers in the near future.

If we know what the Scriptures declare we are to stand fast on that written Word. The written Word, the Scriptures, never shall fail. The Scriptures shall remain unchanged in the smallest detail when the heavens and earth pass away.

Incredible changes soon are to come to pass on the earth. But the written Word of God never shall change. No angel can change the written Word. We have Christ with us and the Word states that all the angels of God must worship Him. Let us remember that fact throughout the coming changes and stepped-up spiritual activity.

Ezra had "prepared his heart." We—every one of us—are to prepare our heart. No longer can we coast along in the hope we will be able to cope with the coming events. The Spirit of God is directing each of us to prepare his heart for the work of restoration. Let us move into the program and see what marvelous experiences the Lord has for us. Ezra "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." Let us begin to read the Scriptures and become doers of the Word, encouraging the people around us to follow our example. When we do that the Lord Jesus can use us in the work of restoration.

Because Ezra had prepared himself to seek the Lord, God moved on King Artaxerxes of Persia to open the political doors that made it possible for Ezra, the priest, to continue to develop the ministry of the Temple of God.

We stated previously that we are not to allow the world to join with us in the building of the Body of Christ, to participate in the holy things of Christ. We do not allow the world to join with us in the ministries of the assembly of saints because God requires holiness of those who draw near to Him. He will not accept those who are "uncircumcised," that is, who have never truly received the Lord Jesus in their heart. The world needs God, but God does not need the help of the world. Neither does God's Church.

But there do come instances when God determines that His work of restoration requires the opening of certain political doors and the good will and assistance of persons to whom God has entrusted the guardianship of earthly power and wealth. Then God will speak to those guardians and their hearts will be moved to make it possible for the work of restoration to proceed to completion.

Such political assistance is not the same as the entrance of the world into the church in order to make the church popular and acceptable to the surrounding community. It is not the same type of support that will be offered by the Antichrist in order to remove the churches from the control of the Holy Spirit of God.

Rather, the assistance given by Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes was ordered by God Himself. These kings knew they were obeying God. They realized that if they refused to obey the Lord God of Heaven their wealth and power would be removed from them and given to another who would obey the Lord (compare Daniel 4:37). These are not instances of the Church compromising with the world in order to gain status and wealth or to avoid persecution.

Thus God remains sovereign and the Church remains holy.

We give thanks when God opens political doors for us. We pray always for kings and all others who are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

*Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem: (Ezra 7:27)*

### **Purifying the Church**

One of the burdens of the Holy Spirit today can be seen in the ninth and tenth chapters of Ezra. It has to do with the separation of the Lord's people from the bondages of sin and the world.

It seems as soon as the kings of Persia had allowed a remnant of the Jews to return to Canaan they intermarried with the Canaanites, which the Lord had strictly forbidden them to do. They had not kept themselves separated as a holy nation unto the Lord.

*Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. (Ezra 9:1,2)*

So it is today. As we seek to return to the purity and power of the Word of the Lord we find the world has become so much a part of the churches that it is difficult to grasp how far we actually have fallen away from the Lord.

What do we do? Do we decide that the task of challenging the Lord's people to cleanse themselves from the filthiness of the world is too great an effort and will cause too many hardships? Or do we thoroughly repent no matter how great the cost and by the Lord's help cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit?

*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (II Corinthians 7:1)*

What did Ezra do?

*And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. (Ezra 9:3)*

Ezra, the priest, had been obeying the Lord's commandments and he had supposed that all the other Jews were just as consecrated as he.

But, as has been true throughout church history, when there is no vigorous leadership and example, when there is no word of righteousness blazing from the lips of God's apostles and prophets, the Lord's people will drift quickly into sin. God has appointed holy ministers in His Church because He understands that the sheep will stray unless there are diligent shepherds to keep them in line.

The next thing Ezra did was to cast himself down before the Lord and confess the sin of Israel in marrying the Canaanites. Ezra placed himself among the people, accepting part of the blame as though he himself had sinned while he was confessing and repenting of this grievous transgression.

When one member of the Body of Christ sins, every other member suffers. When one member serves God we all are strengthened. The saints are the seamless robe of Christ. We are part of one another.

*For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments, (Ezra 9:9,10)*

When we set our hearts to seek the Lord we discover God's people are practicing the ways of the world. They have become discouraged and have given up trying to become disciples and saints.

What do we do when we discover the Body of Christ has become a "valley of dry bones"? Can these bones live? Can the members of the Body of Christ come into unity and grow to maturity? Only God knows. But God's Word states that the Body of Christ shall be built up by the ministries until it attains the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The Bride of the Lamb shall be without spot or wrinkle.

As God directs we are to prophesy to the scattered bones of the Lord's army. And, as God directs, we are to arise and build the Temple of God and the wall of the city of Jerusalem, to speak figuratively.

The bondages of this world must be driven out of the Body of Christ because without holiness no person ever shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:11-14).

When the Israelites saw the sincerity of Ezra's repentance and the great sorrow and dismay that had gripped his heart, they realized they had sinned against the Lord by intermarrying with the people of Canaan. They resolved to put away their Canaanite wives and to cease practicing the demon worship of Canaan.

One man—Ezra—caused national repentance. So it is today. Every believer who turns away from sin and becomes a sincere disciple of Christ affects the people near to him.

This is what Shechaniah said, speaking for the transgressors:

*Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord [Ezra], and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. (Ezra 10:3)*

When the Israelites understood the seriousness of their actions they repented. They determined to do what God had commanded in His Word. The reason people do not repent today is that they do not "tremble at the commandment" of God. They have been taught that they are not to fear God. They are not working out their salvation with fear and trembling, although that is what Christians are commanded to do.

It was not convenient or joyous for the Jews to separate themselves from their Canaanite wives and children. They were required to take a strong, painful stand for God.

*But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing. Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us. (Ezra 10:13,14)*

One can imagine the intense grief of the families involved as the Israelite men were compelled to send away their wives and the children born of them. There was much pain here, much tragedy, much heartbreak. On top of everything else, it was raining. When we decide to take a stand for Jesus circumstances may work against us.

Today we are hearing a weak version of the new covenant. Contemporary preaching and teaching by no means reflect the severity and sternness of Christ and his apostles. The realities of the Day of the Lord will be upon us before long and they will be as terrible as the prophets and the Lord Jesus have foretold. The faithful prophets and witnesses have warned us but we are not prepared.

Every person who decides to separate himself to the work of restoration must be ready to suffer any inconvenience, any pain—even to martyrdom. We are not playing church games. We are in a struggle to save our own souls and the souls of those around us (I Timothy 4:16).

It may not be convenient for us to separate ourselves from the lust, the violence, the pursuit of money, the greed, the sorcery, and the carousing and partying—these "strange wives" that the Lord's people have "married" during the period of time that there has been no strong word of righteousness and holiness, no vision of consecration and separation from the world coming from the Lord's preachers and teachers.

Now it is time for the Lord's people to put away all of these demon gods. The ministers of the Gospel of Christ are to set the example and to lead the flock into the righteous and holy ways of the Spirit of God.

To this point we have discussed the concept of restoration. We have suggested that the restoration of the Temple of Solomon and the rebuilding of the wall of the city of Jerusalem are prophetic pictures in the Old Testament of a corresponding work in the Kingdom of God.

We have mentioned that the Book of Ezra speaks of the rebuilding of the Temple of Solomon and also of the beginning of the restoration of the ministries associated with the Temple. The Book of Ezra concludes with the separation of the remnant of Israelites from the uncleannesses of the heathen tribes who lived in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

The Book of Nehemiah portrays the rebuilding of the wall of the city of Jerusalem, and the vicious opposition presented by the surrounding peoples, the neighbors of the Jews. Included in the Book of Nehemiah is the bringing of the Lord's people into their individual dwellings, and the keeping of the feast of Tabernacles.

If there is a clearer picture in the Old Testament of the building of the Church and the Kingdom of God we do not know of it.

We mentioned also the Book of Esther depicts the purification of the Wife of the Lamb as she prepares herself for her wedding to the great King, Christ.

We have set forth the overall pattern of history of the Kingdom of God as follows: the Glory of God, disobedience to God, worldly bondages, the rebuilding of God's Temple and the accompanying worship of God and obedience to God, the building of the defenses against the enemy, and finally the entering of God's people into their inheritance.

Another way of expressing the same design would be as follows: (1) glory, (2) lawlessness, (3) bondage, (4) restoration, (5) the double portion of glory.

Usually it is necessary for God to give us good things twice. When He gives them to us the first time we do not appreciate them and are not able to hold them. But when we lose those good things and God brings us through the laborious work of restoration, then He is able to restore to us and develop in us the good things multiplied many times. Now we appreciate them; now we are able to hold them.

Such is the story of mankind; of the Church; of each believer. It is the story of the prodigal son.

Is it the story of your life?

Then in our discussion we went into the Book of Ezra and examined several concepts of the work of restoration as follows:

God is in control of this world. The work of restoration is not an effort of human beings to build a kingdom that is against the governments of the earth. All the governments of the earth were established by the Lord God of Heaven (Romans 13:1).

When Christ moved in restoration power He spoke to Cyrus, the mightiest emperor of his day. Since Christ is the Ruler of Heaven and earth, when He speaks every person (including the kings of the earth) and every situation is brought into line with the will of God.

As soon as we grasp the concept that it is God Almighty who is creating obedience and worship in the earth for the sake of His own glory and majesty, we shall cease building our little kingdoms. We shall lose ourselves in the eternally worthwhile work of bringing the whole world into the worship of God and obedience to God. We shall work with God in the building of the Kingdom of God.

There must be a personal call of God on each person who is to help with the work of restoration. The elect want to help as soon as God begins to move. Whoever of God's elect desires to do so may come and join the joyous and fervent worshipers as they find their appointed tasks in the Kingdom of God. The desire to forsake all, the hunger for righteousness and for the Word of God, reveals that the call of God is present in an individual.

We might point out that not all the Jews returned from Babylon. It was those "whose spirit God had raised" who left the comfortable homes they had established during the seventy years in captivity, who set forth to endure the rigors and dangers of rebuilding the ruined Temple and wall.

The Jews of the remnant were not enjoying the many comforts of the civilized city of Babylon, its material advantages. They were pioneers, rebuilding their house of worship and their city under difficult, discouraging circumstances.

A similar call is going forth today to the true saints of the Lord.

### **Two Messages**

It appears in the present hour there are two messages proceeding from the Throne of God. The first message is the simple Gospel message. We are living in an hour when God desires that all the peoples of the earth hear His Word and be saved. We are looking for multiplied millions to come to Christ in the day in which we are living, as God reaches down and exercises His power in preparing the world for the return of His beloved Son, Christ.

Why will God send such a revival in the end-time, just before the Lord returns? The reason is that God wants to save the world, not destroy the world. In the general sense, God is the Father of every person on the earth. God loves the world and gave His Son for it. We of the Church need to understand the enormous love of God for the world. God's plan for the Church is not to take it out of the world and bring it to the spirit Paradise. God's plan is to prepare the Church to receive the nations of the earth as they turn to God during the dark days that are ahead (Isaiah 60:1-5).

We can expect signs and wonders—the greatest miracles of history—as the Good News of God's love in Christ goes forth to all the peoples of the earth. The resources of Heaven and earth will be drawn upon as God invites every person to receive the free gift of righteousness through faith in Christ.

It is fortunate for the world, and for us of the Church, that God does have in mind to provide a glorious herald of the coming of the Lord Jesus. If the Lord were to come now, who would be ready? The world? The world is staggering about in blindness and drunkenness, groping for wisdom and understanding.

The Church? The Church is splintered into a thousand warring factions. The Church is full of hatred, competition, self-seeking, lust, envy, lying, stealing, sorcery, and every other evil work. Will God receive such a church to Himself? Not according to the Scriptures (Galatians 5:21).

The Good News is that God, in advance of the coming of His Son to the earth for the second time, is preparing a feast of salvation for the world, and a feast of righteousness, holiness, obedience, wisdom, power, and glory for His people. The world, and we of the Church, will be made ready for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first message, then, is the familiar Gospel message.

There is a second message proceeding today from the Throne of God. The second message is the call to a militant remnant of Christians who are to leave Babylon (the mixture of the world and religion) and to rebuild the Temple of God and the wall around the city of Jerusalem, to speak figuratively. For there must be a spiritual defense protecting the glory that is to be poured out upon us. More about this later.

We who are receiving the second message from Heaven are not to compare ourselves with those of our fellow Christians whom God is allowing to rest for a bit in Babylon. They will play their part shortly. But right now God is seeking a "remnant" of saints who are willing to endure the rigors and dangers of pioneering, of returning to a spiritually devastated area and restoring the Body of Christ, of rebuilding around the city of God the wall of defense against sin.

The second message from the Throne of God is the message of overcoming, of the victorious Christian life. It requires that we, under the specific guidance of the Holy Spirit, forsake our comfortable security in the world and set ourselves to endure the rigors and dangers of building the Kingdom of God.

To those whose spirit God "raises" for the accomplishing of the building of the Body of Christ there is no spiritual rest, no satisfaction in the Christian life, until they turn away from the world and begin to seek the Lord.

God is creating an intense hunger for righteousness in the hearts of His saints. No longer can they be satisfied with a routine church life that up to this point may have been adequate and enjoyable. There is a fervent, undeniable hunger and thirst within them for a deeper experience with the Lord.

God is calling out His saints from the lukewarm churches. He has assigned them the work of building the Body of Christ into maturity in righteousness, holiness, and obedience to God.

The believers who are seeking the Lord, who are pressing forward in the Spirit of God, are not content to live in the flesh and the world. They pray and cry and seek until they find themselves in the center of God's will. They are hungry for more of Christ and that hunger cannot be satisfied until the strong meat of the Word is being fed to them.

The Jews who worked in the restoration are mentioned by families, in the Book of Ezra. People and their families are important to God. The Divine restoration is a personal move of the Lord.

The first action of the returning Jews was the offering of sacrifices on the Altar of Burnt Offering. The central message of the Kingdom of God is Christ on the cross of Calvary. When the cross is not seen and felt in our lives we are not moving in the center of the work of the Kingdom.

Also, each of us must be taking up his own cross and following the Master each day. The only true Christian ministry is that which flows from the cross. When the minister is not crucified, is not dead to self-centeredness, it is personal ambition and not the Spirit of God that is working in his ministry.

The first strategy of the enemy was to attempt to join Israel and help with the building of the Temple of God. The Jewish elders promptly rejected such assistance. The world has no place in the things of Christ. The Church is not a social institution, it is the prophet of God among men. As such, the suggestions and influence of people who are not of God can only destroy all that the Spirit is building.

This does not mean God will not use unsaved people to help His saints on occasion. God does use unsaved people to help us just as He used the raven (an unclean bird) to feed Elijah. But such assistance is totally different from the instance where a church is compromising with the world in order to gain status and wealth and acceptance by the surrounding community.

There will be opposition from the devil. There will be persecution. Each saint who is participating in the work of restoration learns to build with one hand and fight with the other. We are more than conquerors through Christ when we remain watchful in prayer at all times and keep ourselves under the discipline of the Holy Spirit.

There is a time for prophets to prophesy. There is a time for kings to issue decrees. There is a time for builders to build. There is a time for governors to govern. Our task is to find our unique role, not copying anyone else's role. Our own job is important and we are to give total diligence to the accomplishing of it. God's task is to restore obedience to Himself and the worship of Himself on the part of all the inhabitants of the earth.

The Temple of God *shall be finished*. The Body of Christ will be brought all the way to perfect unity and perfect maturity. The Wife of the Lamb will be without blemish. The work of restoration is not a humanly conceived or executed program. The work of restoration is the sovereign decree of Almighty God and will be accomplished by Himself.

The returning Jews kept the Passover. As we press onward toward the fullness of the Glory of God the blood of Jesus becomes increasingly important to us.

Those who are engaged in the work of restoration must learn to trust and stand on the written Word of God. Ezra, the priest, had "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it" (Ezra 7:10).

It appears the period of time just before the return of the Lord will be filled with angelic visitations from the realms of darkness: lust, greed, violence, deception, occult activity, perversity, and every other wicked, destructive situation one could imagine. It is the maturing of the tares, of lawlessness. The only word of which we can be certain is the written Word of God. That Word shall stand long after the present heavens and earth have disappeared. The Scriptures shall stand forever.

The Word of God will remain trustworthy and dependable throughout the changes that soon are to transpire on the earth. No matter what situations may occur, the promises of Scripture *shall hold true*. Famine and every other disaster

will plague the peoples of the earth. But God shall supply all the needs of each of His saints from His abundance in glory through Christ. Therefore, we fear no tribulation.

As Ezra and Nehemiah we are to prepare our hearts to seek the Lord and His Word. Then we shall be more than conquerors through Christ in the days to come.

When we of the Church seek the Lord and His Word in utter faithfulness and sincerity, God will move on His Cyruses and the doors will be opened for the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Christ in every inhabited area throughout the whole earth.

At the conclusion of the Book of Ezra the Jews are occupied with separating themselves from the tribes of Canaan with which they had intermarried. So it is true today that judgment has begun in the household of God. The Spirit of God will not work when there is a mixture of believers and worldly people, except when it is for the purpose of bringing lost souls to Christ.

The building of the Temple of God and the wall of Jerusalem is only for the "circumcised" (those who truly are in Christ) to accomplish.

The Book of Nehemiah begins with the notification that the remnant of Jews in the Jerusalem area were suffering and that the wall and gates of the city of Jerusalem had been broken down.

*And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. (Nehemiah 1:3)*

This is the condition of the Christian Church today. Some progress has been made from the days of the Protestant Reformers to the present in rebuilding the Church, the Body of Christ.

But the walls and gates, so to speak, have not been rebuilt as yet.

### **The Wall**

The concept of the *wall* is important in the Word of God.

One of the main differences between the garden of Eden, the first Paradise, and the new Jerusalem, the second Paradise, is the Presence of the wall around the new Jerusalem.

The garden of Eden was an unwalled paradise. The new Jerusalem is a walled Paradise. Never again, from the present hour forward, will God allow to exist an unwalled paradise, an undefended, unprotected glory. Those days are gone forever.

*And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain. (Isaiah 4:5,6)*

"Upon all the glory shall be a defense."

The reason the Jews who lived in the Jerusalem area in the days of Nehemiah were suffering "great affliction and reproach" was that the wall and gates of the city had been broken and burned with fire. Therefore the enemy from the surrounding Canaanite villages was able to harass them. If the wall and gates had been standing the Jews of the remnant could have closed the gates and lived in peace.

So it is today. The majority of God's people are without a strong spiritual protection. They have become the prey of every demon and unscrupulous "teacher of the Gospel" who is using the things of Christ to feed his own stomach, just as Paul warned. The Church of Christ needs a wall of defense against all that is not of God. The wall is needed now. The wall is to be rebuilt now.

But, one may say, the Lord Himself is the protection around His people. This is the truth. Our God is our shield, our fortress, our rock of salvation, the horn of our overcoming strength. But is it or is it not true that the churches of today are divided? Are self-seeking men making merchandise of the believers? Are the Christian people in many instances walking in the ways of the world rather than in the ways of God?

If such is the case, then a wall of protection is needed in order to help the Lord's sheep to stand in Christ during the days of trouble that are on the horizon. The strong are to help the weak (Romans 15:1).

The rebuilding of the wall and gates of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah was one of the most important achievements of the restoration. The rebuilding of the wall and gates, the defense against deception and lawlessness, will be one of the most important achievements of the spiritual restoration. By spiritual restoration we mean the present-day fulfillment of what was portrayed thousands of years ago by the restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah.

The spiritual restoration of the Body of Christ, especially the rebuilding of the authority and power to drive all sin and rebellion out of the Church, which is the authority and power of Divine judgment, is one of the chief burdens of the Holy Spirit of God in the hour in which we are living. The wall of the new Jerusalem, the glorious, beautifully adorned wall revealed to the Apostle John, is being created now in the personalities of the saints, Christ's conquerors.

Why must the Glory of God Almighty be defended? Why did the Holy Spirit place such an extraordinary emphasis on the wall, and on the heavily ornamented twelve foundations of the wall, when He revealed the new Jerusalem to John? Weren't there aspects of the holy city that would be of more interest to God's people? The one grand view given to us of our eternal destination is dominated by a spectacular *wall*.

The reason for the extraordinary emphasis placed on the wall of the new Jerusalem is that the wall and gates are of supreme importance in the Kingdom of God. The reason the wall and gates are of supreme importance in the Kingdom of God is that there was a rebellion in Heaven against the will of the Father.

At some point in eons past there was a great rebellion in Heaven against the rule of the Father. Included among the rebels were some of the angels of high rank. It is these ranking dignitaries toward whom the wisdom of God is directed, as it is displayed and demonstrated in the Church, as well as being for the benefit of the obedient, elect angels. It is against the wicked angelic majesties that the saints wrestle continually.

*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by [through] the church the manifold wisdom of God, (Ephesians 3:10)*

*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [heavenly] places. (Ephesians 6:12)*

These wicked, rebellious rulers are eternal. They always will be present in the creation although contained in the Lake of Fire.

We must keep in mind that as long as God allows angels and men to have the power of choice, the possibility of sin, of an uprising against God, is present. This fact is revealed at the end of the thousand-year Kingdom Age after Christ and the saints have governed the nations of the saved in righteousness (Revelation 20:8).

The Christian churches have held the mistaken assumption that once we "die and go to Heaven" the sin problem is over; we cannot sin in Heaven. The truth is, sin began in Heaven. Sin did not begin on the earth in the garden of Eden. Sin entered Eden from the spirit realm. We still are wrestling against the sin in the spirit realm.

"Sin can never enter there," the old song goes, referring to Heaven. But sin began in Heaven. It is the new Jerusalem that sin cannot enter because the new Jerusalem is guarded by saints in whom resistance to sin has been created.

Why would the Lord teach us throughout our lifetime how to overcome sin if He then were going to bring us to a place or state where it is not possible for us to sin? Does this make sense to you? Aren't we being trained now so we shall be able to serve God throughout eternity?

Today any person or angel can choose to rebel against God. The same will be true one billion years from today.

The solution to the sin problem is not to die and enter the spirit realm, for it was in the spirit realm that sin originated. The only solution to the sin problem is the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ will not sin. When He is formed in us we shall choose not to sin.

*Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (1 John 3:9)*

It is not that sin cannot occur in the new Jerusalem. Rather it is true that sin shall not be allowed to enter or occur in the new Jerusalem, but only because the inhabitants of the new Jerusalem are filled with the Nature of Christ; not because there will be something in the environment or in their personality that is *unable* to make certain choices. We always shall be able to reject God's will, but we shall choose not to reject His will because our personality will have been transformed by the Life of Christ that has been wrought in us.

One must be born again in order to enter the Kingdom of God because it is what is born in us that *is* the Kingdom, the rule of God.

The Seed that is in us is Christ, if we have been born again of God. The Seed cannot sin, in the sense that it will not sin, because the Seed is Christ. As Christ is formed in us the love of righteousness and the hatred of lawlessness are formed in us. It is the inner creation of the love of righteousness and the hatred of lawlessness that is the wall of the new Jerusalem. The Nature of Christ wrought in the saints is the wall John saw surrounding the new Jerusalem, the Church, the Wife of the Lamb.

We do not say there is not an actual wall. It is not always easy in the Book of Revelation to distinguish between what is factual and what is symbolic. There is no doubt, however, that the wall (whether it is an actual wall or not) has the symbolic meaning we are describing.

When a person is walking in known, willful sin, then we can say with the confidence of Scripture that Christ is not walking in that person. Christ is not a doer of sin. The person in whom Christ has been formed will not walk in sin because Christ will not walk in sin. This is why the saint "cannot" sin. To the extent we are walking in sin we have neither seen nor known the Lord Jesus Christ.

The wall against sin is not Heaven. The wall against sin is Christ formed in the personalities of the saints, the members of the Body of Christ.

The garden of Eden was an unwalled, undefended place of the Glory of God among human beings. Immediately a rebellious cherub of the highest rank entered this paradise, as the Lord God of Heaven knew he would. The inevitable result of a wicked spirit entering an undefended glory is sin, rebellion, death.

How many of us have known of an individual, or a church, or a religious movement, that was filled with the Glory of God, and then Satan managed to deceive that person, or church, or movement? Soon sin and rebellion became manifest and spiritual death resulted.

Sin enters wherever there is an unwalled glory.

What if Adam and Eve had been filled with the Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ? If Adam and Eve had been dwelling in Christ, and Christ in them, would Satan have come up against a wall when he invited them to disobey God?

Let us think again about the individual, or church, or religious movement that Satan was able to deceive. Are we saying many of the churches of Christ are unwall-ed Edens in that Christ is not dwelling in them? Is this why we are so helpless before the enemy?

It is time now to rebuild the wall and gates of Jerusalem.

The Jews of Nehemiah's day were in trouble. They were suffering because the wall and gates of Jerusalem had been torn down and burned by the enemy.

Today the Body of Christ is "unwalled." It is true that from the time of the Reformers much progress has been made in the restoration of the Church. Such experiences and doctrines as being born again, the personal knowledge of Christ and fellowship with the Father, the concept of the priesthood of the believer and the ministry of each member of the Body of Christ, and holiness of behavior, are emphasized in many fellowships. The doctrine of the second coming of the Lord to the earth is a basic teaching of fundamentalists. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit through the believers, particularly tongues, prophecy, Divine healing, and singing in the Spirit has been added in some instances.

But to this day there has been no wall around the glory. If the Lord does not construct a defense around the glory of the restored Body of Christ, the inevitable will take place. The enemy, Satan, will manage to find many ways of harassing, afflicting, and deceiving the Lord's people until they either become lawless or else cry out to God for help.

Now is the hour to begin the construction of the spiritual wall of defense against all sin, all unrighteousness, all lawlessness, all uncleanness, all rebellion against the Lord's will.

What is the wall that we must build today? The wall is the knowledge of good and evil. The wall is the ability to discern between good and evil and the accompanying desire and power to resist the evil and choose the good (Isaiah 7:15).

*But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:14)*

Those who insist on living on the milk of the Word are of little use in the defense of Jerusalem because they are unable to judge between good and evil.

*For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. (Hebrews 5:13)*

The wall is Christ formed in us. Christ loves righteousness and hates lawlessness. That is why He bears the double portion of the anointing of the Spirit of God (Hebrews 1:9).

The wall is the separation between the clean and the unclean, the precious and the vile, the holy and the unholy.

The wall is the person who continually will exercise the Word of God in judgment, in separating what is acceptable to God from what is not acceptable to God.

*Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord. (Jeremiah 15:19,20)*

The passage quoted above is significant in these days. God's people are ignorant of the difference between the precious and the vile. The Lord's believers in many instances will fight against any preacher who teaches them the righteous ways of the Lord.

It is necessary the Lord's ministers warn against the fornication and perversions taking place among the unconverted. But, as in the days of Jeremiah, it is God's people who have become the enemies of righteousness, who are fighting against the Lord. Where is the man of God in our time who will carefully sort out in the eyes of the saints of God the deeds that are being practiced by the believers and name them as either righteousness or lawlessness?

To the person who will preach righteousness and holiness in the churches God declares: "I shall restore you if you will return to me. You shall stand in My Presence. If you prayerfully, patiently, and boldly separate out the precious from the worthless you shall be as My mouth.

"If My people choose to do so they may follow your lead. But you must never go their way—not one inch!

"If you will proclaim the judgments of the Lord to the sheep of My pasture, then I will make you a fortified wall of bronze. The people who are called by My name will war against you and your words because they are perverse and stubborn, proud, and slow of heart to believe.

"If you continue to bear a true witness of My righteousness and holiness I will not allow them to conquer you. I will stand with you. I will deliver you by My wisdom and power.

"I surely will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked.

"I surely will redeem you from the grasp of the violent who are among My people."

It is worthy of notice that Jeremiah was God's spokesman during the days just before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. First comes the word of judgment; and then, destruction. So it is today.

A wall of separation must be created now in order to divide between what is of the Lord Jesus and what is not of the Lord Jesus. The Lord has dropped a plumb line in our time. Who of the Lord's spokesmen will place that plumb line alongside the household of God (Amos 7:8)?

In the spirit realm, the plumb line has been dropped in the churches. As soon as the churches have been judged for their conduct the plumb line will be dropped in the world (I Peter 4:17; Revelation 11:1).

Until a wall of judgment, of separation, has been erected between the Church of Christ and the world, it is impossible for Christ to return. To what would He return? To sin and rebellion practiced in the churches? Would He then not be required to destroy the churches He has purchased with His own blood?

Will God condone sin in His own people? Is this what the Scriptures teach us? Or will "Jerusalem" receive double punishment for her sins (Isaiah 40:2)?

Christ has come today as the harvest rain, as judgment in the household of God. He is "like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." His intention is to "sit as a refiner and purifier of silver" (Malachi 3:1-4).

*Silver* in the Scriptures typifies redemption. We have been redeemed. Now the Lord Jesus has come to us in order to purify that silver so we will not be destroyed in the Day of the Lord (I Corinthians 11:32).

When we have been purified by the Lord's fire we then will be able to "offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

As soon as God's people have been judged, a separation between good and evil having taken place in their midst, God will construct a wall between the Church and the world. When the wall has been established the Lord Jesus can return, crush all resistance to His will, and set up His Kingdom on the earth.

But His return cannot take place until His Church has been purified, or else His Church would be destroyed by the glorious brightness of His appearing. What if He returned right now? Are you ready? Have you confessed your sins or are you harboring malice and uncleanness in your heart? Is there someone you have not forgiven?

Would He find you prepared or unprepared today? Would He be moved to say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant"? Or would He find you to be a follower of the God of this world?

Now is the time for all of us of His Church to repent and perform again our first works of wholehearted love and dedication to the Lord Jesus.

When the wall of separation has been created between the world and the Church it will be clear who is a Christian and who is not a Christian. In this manner the way of the Lord will be made straight and He can return in glory.

God's overcomers are being created as an honor guard that will protect all the work that God has done, is doing, and yet will do in the earth. Sin will be judged and destroyed out of the earth by the sons of God. Righteousness will be established and maintained in the earth by the sons of God.

We are taught in the Book of Revelation that righteousness will be established and maintained on the earth throughout the thousand-year Kingdom Age because the saints have been placed on the thrones of glory (Revelation 20:4).

After the thousand-year Kingdom Age has been concluded, God and the Lamb will establish Their throne forever on the new earth. As in the case of the Kingdom Age, the saints will rule the creation insuring that sin and rebellion never again will bring death to the people whom God has created for His pleasure (Revelation 22:5).

The conquering saints are the wall of the new Jerusalem. Will the new Jerusalem be an actual city or is it a symbolic portrayal of the virtues of the saints? No doubt the new Jerusalem is an actual city. But in any case, the new Jerusalem will be an open revelation to the world of what God has created in His chosen, the Church of Christ.

The wall of the new Jerusalem is a manifestation of the resistance to lawlessness and rebellion that has been created in the overcomers by the intense heat and pressure of their experiences on the earth. The gates of the holy city are the "pearl" created from the reaction of the saints to the cross that they bear with patience throughout their lifetime on the earth.

Are not the adornments of the wall and the city the "gold, silver, precious stones" that the saints have built on the foundation, Christ (I Corinthians 3:12)?

### **Accepting Responsibility**

How did Nehemiah respond to the notification that the remnant of Jews in the area of Jerusalem were suffering, and that the wall and gates of the city of Jerusalem were broken?

*And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, (Nehemiah 1:4)*

Nehemiah was the cupbearer of King Artaxerxes of Persia. Nehemiah held a position of great importance and responsibility. He was prospering in Babylon, as had Daniel and many other Jews.

But when the Word of God came to Nehemiah he repented. He turned to God. He sat down and wept and mourned. He fasted and prayed before God. He confessed the sins of Israel. He reminded the Lord of His promises to those who repent. Then with fear and trembling, at the risk of his life, he decided on a course of action.

Today the Word of God is coming to us concerning the need to rebuild the wall of defense against all lawlessness and rebellion. The Lord's people are easily deceived by unscrupulous men and by Satan because they have not been taught righteousness and holiness of behavior and because they are not carrying the cross of consecration. They are not under the discipline of the Lord. The wall of protection is missing.

What are we to do when the Word of God comes to us? We *personally* (if we wait for someone else the Lord will not be pleased with us) are to repent, to turn to God, to weep and mourn over the backslidden condition of the churches.

We are to pray to God that the Holy Spirit will return and fill us with the wisdom and power of God. We are to confess our sins to God. There are many sins listed in the New Testament writings, and every one of them is abounding among God's people today.

Then we are to remind the Lord of His marvelous promises to those who repent.

If we ignore the needs of the church and continue on in our positions of importance and responsibility in the world, we will experience the judgment of God on our lives. When the Lord calls us out of the world (the word *church* means "called out"), then we are to come out of the world. If we do not come out voluntarily, as did Nehemiah and Ezra, the Lord will chasten us until we have a willing and obedient heart.

We will find that when we cease our self-seeking and commence *doing* the Lord's will, doors will open to us that always before have been closed.

This is what Nehemiah discovered when he repented and prayed before the Lord, and then approached Artaxerxes.

*And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. (Nehemiah 2:6)*

Nehemiah proceeded carefully and in prayer. He moved ahead through the open door set before him. He was diligent, reasonable, and prayerful.

Many times God's people miss the calling on their life because they do not pray and seek the mind of the Lord. Either they step out rashly and presumptuously in the "work of the Lord," or else they spend their energies in the world in the belief that if God wants them to do anything in His Kingdom He will yank them by the hair of their head.

When we pray for an "open door" of service let us remember that a door does not have to be wide open. It only has to be open enough for us to squeeze through (although without forcing). We must learn to be faithful in the small, practical realms of service that are at hand. We actively must "prove" the will of God.

King Artaxerxes was the stepson of Queen Esther, and Esther may have been alive when Nehemiah presented his request. This may account for the kindly attitude of Artaxerxes toward the Jews and their desire to restore the Temple and Jerusalem.

All kinds of opportunities for Christian service exist in the world. But we do not realize the hidden opportunities when we are not stepping along in faith, moving through the small openings we do have. We may be waiting for the grand opening. But the grand openings usually do not come to us until we have taken advantage of the smaller opportunities.

Nehemiah, having left for a season his position of comfort and security in Babylon, came to the city of Jerusalem in order to promote the welfare of the Israelites who were living there.

Immediately there was opposition from the neighboring Canaanites:

*When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. (Nehemiah 2:10)*

When you decide to do the Lord's will, and come out of the bondages of the world and commence the work of restoration, you will be opposed by an enemy who is perverse and vicious beyond belief. Prepare your heart and mind for fierce opposition, for spiritual warfare.

Nehemiah reminds us of Moses—another man who left the palace of a worldly ruler, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of the Lord.

### **The "third day."**

*So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. (Nehemiah 2:11)*

Let us think about the expression, *three days*.

Throughout the Scriptures there is a multitude of references to *three* days, to the *third day*. God will bring great glory into the earth on the "third day."

*After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we will live in his sight. (Hosea 6:2)*

In the work of restoration it is important for us to have the concept of the double portion. Christ has kept the good wine until now. Many who are last will be first. The glory of the latter house will be greater than the former (Haggai 2:9). God always is increasing the glory available to those who place their faith in Him.

We are moving from the lesser to the greater. We are pressing toward the mark, toward what is perfect, toward the perfect day, toward the city that has foundations.

There have been stupendous works of the power of God in the earth. But before God is finished, the Glory of God will cover the whole earth to a degree never imagined by us (Numbers 14:21).

Christ (His Body) will be made perfect on the "third day" (Luke 13:32).

The Kingdom of God begins in a small manner but grows until it completely fills the heavens and the earth.

The work of restoration will accomplish more than the return of the glory manifested in the apostles of the first century. The power of righteousness is as a swelling stream, a majestic river building in power until it floods the earth. Christ will appear in glory. His conquering saints will be issued immortal bodies. The world will be ruled in righteousness. The glory of the Spirit of God will cover the whole world.

*For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14)*

The fact that Nehemiah reviewed the condition of Jerusalem for *three* days is symbolic of the truth that the work of the restoration of the Kingdom of God will proceed until it brings the fullness of the Glory of God into the earth, in fulfillment of the utterances of the holy prophets of the Lord.

### **Arising "in the night."**

Nehemiah "arose in the night" (Nehemiah 2:12).

The work of restoration begins "in the night," in the time is least opportune for the one who would work with Christ. If you wait for the "sun to come up" you never will perform the work of Christ. Put your hand to the task the moment God tells you to do so. Never mind the obstacles.

It is the people who are willing to "arise in the night" who learn to walk with the Lord.

The Scriptures teach us symbolically and directly that the Glory of God is given during times of spiritual darkness. There always is enough light for the saint who sets out to obey the Lord. The darker the night the brighter becomes the light of the Glory of the Lord.

The flesh can accomplish what is simple and obvious. God performs the difficult and the impossible as well as what is simple and obvious. God is a present help in the hour of *trouble*.

The cry of the bridegroom will come at midnight. The Lord Jesus walks on the waters of tribulation during the "fourth watch of the night." By faith we can walk with Him.

The greatest revival of all time will come during earth's darkest hour.

*For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. (Isaiah 60:2)*

If we wait until we understand how everything is going to work out before we are willing to serve the Lord we will miss the fullness of God's plan for our life. We must step out "in the night" as God directs us.

#### **A remnant.**

*. . . I and some few men with me; . . . (Nehemiah 2:12)*

The work of restoration will begin with a "few men," a remnant. It is not likely that a multitude of people will come with us when we are starting. It does not require many saints to be obedient to the Lord in order to begin the work of restoration. But it does require some.

Will you be one of those who will work when there are only a few with you? Or will you wait until the work of restoration becomes popular? God is looking for heroes of faith today. Will you become one of them?

#### **Governing the tongue.**

*. . . neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: . . . (Nehemiah 2:12)*

One of the important lessons we learn in spiritual warfare is to keep our mouth closed, to speak little and pray much. Children babble everything that pops into their minds. The saints learn to speak only when necessary. Much trouble proceeds from the tongue, as the Book of James informs us. The spiritual man or woman governs the tongue, speaking only when there is something worthwhile to communicate.

Spiritual battles are lost when the saints talk too much. Whoever is able to control his tongue is able also to control his whole body (James 3:2).

Nehemiah was an administrator, a builder, and a warrior. He had learned to keep his own counsel and to speak more to God than to people. This is wisdom.

#### **Useless baggage.**

*. . . neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. (Nehemiah 2:12)*

Nehemiah did not attempt the work of restoration while he was loaded down with useless baggage.

We need to learn this lesson today. God does not require vast enterprises of men in order to accomplish His work. God ordinarily does not use masses of people, organizations, committees, complex financial designs, human planning.

What God looks for is a Nehemiah, an Ezra, an Esther—for some person who will commit himself or herself to the work of the Lord without reservation. God is looking for individuals who know Him and will obey Him.

If God burdens you to perform some task of the work of restoration, do not load yourself down with baggage. One donkey is all anyone can ride. God is the Worker who performs the restoration. We are the visible representation of Him. Therefore, we do not need all the human trappings to support our efforts, as though we were going to do the job by means of our wisdom, wealth, and strength. Our baggage, devices, ideas, and other paraphernalia may only clutter the work at hand.

Let us walk hand in hand with God, trusting in the anointing of His Holy Spirit to build the Kingdom of God.

#### **The "valley of decision."**

*And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, . . . (Nehemiah 2:13)*

The valley of the Scripture is the "valley of decision."

*Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 3:14)*

One of the most important concepts of the work of restoration is that of the valley of decision. Notice that the valley of decision is associated with the nearness of the Day of the Lord.

The work of restoration will proceed, as we have said, until it will be climaxed triumphantly by the return of the Lord Jesus to the earth. But the coming of the Lord brings every man, every woman, every boy, every girl, to the point of decision.

It appears the churches tend to view the return of the Lord Jesus, and the resurrection from the dead, as being massive movements of peoples in which all believers will have a part. We Christians desire to experience the joy and delights of escape from the pain of this world, to obtain entrance into the beauty and wonder of the spirit Paradise.

But our hope is only partly valid. In actual fact, the return of the Lord Jesus and the resurrection from the dead will be intensely personal experiences. The Presence of the Lord will confront us as an individual. The Voice of the Lord will

call us from the dead by name, just as Jesus called Lazarus. The resurrection to immortality is a supreme expression of the love of the Lord Jesus for the saint.

The Day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. Christ is drawing near to the earth. His nearness is being experienced first by those who are seeking Him with single-minded intensity and fervor. He is nearest those who are drawing near to Him.

But His nearness always brings us into the valley of decision. Christ always is asking if we love Him. The Lord primarily is interested in our love for Him. Do we truly love Him? We think we do. But as He draws ever nearer to us we discover we love many other things, including our own self.

Each saint is in the place of decision today. Will we leave all and follow Christ? Will we forsake *all*? Is it true of us as an individual that for us to live is Christ? Do we regard it as gain for us to die?

Christ loves each saint with an intensity far beyond our human ability to comprehend. He is not satisfied with our money, time, efforts. Christ demands our heart. His demand continually brings us to the point of decision: will we give all of ourselves to the Lord Jesus? Or will we attempt to serve Him while we hold back some part of our personality for other purposes?

A truly horrible spirit has overtaken Christianity in our time. It is a spirit of *using* Christ in order to promote our own pursuits in the world. God's ministers, perhaps without realizing it, are advising the Lord's people to turn the Lord into their servant to do their bidding. But the Apostle Paul was the bondsman of the Lord Jesus.

Christian discipleship has been changed into a system of spiritual principles by which the believer can gain money, status, success, a stronger marriage, popularity, personal fulfillment, and wisdom and power in all other areas of life in this world.

Christ taught us that we have not because we ask not. If we have a material need we should go to the Lord and let our need be made known to Him, Meanwhile praising the Father for His goodness to us. But the faith of Christ is not to be used as a means of gaining riches and comfort.

Whatever we ask in faith we shall receive. Are we therefore to use our God-given faith to acquire the riches of the world system?

Is this the Gospel of Christ? of Peter? of Paul? of James?

Christ did not come down from Heaven in order to make us comfortable in this life. He came to demand from us our absolute obedience, our time, our energy, and our total love. He gives us a cross to bear.

The Lord Jesus Christ is not our servant to do our bidding. However, it is a fact that the only truly free, joyous human being is the one who gives himself or herself to Jesus to be His servant.

Whom the Son sets free is free indeed.

But Christ did not come down from Heaven to set men free to pursue their own plans and ambitions. He came to make them His own possession.

Those who persist in attempting to use the Lord's great love in order to carry out their own interests, in order to flirt with other lords and gods in their own desires and lusts, will discover the Lord Jesus will know them afar off—if He recognizes them at all.

Christ is not seeking to be used by us. He is seeking those who will abandon their own interests and pursuits, who will cease attempting to use Him in order to follow their own ways.

Christ demands our wholehearted love, our single-minded attention, our totally obedient service—to physical death if necessary. The apostles of the first century, nearly all of whom were martyred, are our examples of what it means to be a follower of Christ.

Those today who are teaching the Lord's flock that they are to use Christ to accomplish their own ends will bear their judgment. They will be beaten with many lashes.

Every one of us is faced with the decision: will we give ourselves wholly to Christ, or will we hold back "part of the land"? Which will it be?

The nearness of Christ brings every person on earth to the only truly important question of his or her life: what shall I do with Christ?

Every believer who joins in the work of restoration will, sooner or later, be brought down into the valley of decision.

### **The "dragon well."**

*. . . even before the dragon well, . . . (Nehemiah 2:13)*

*And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. (Revelation 12:3)*

Many people today, including the people of the Lord, are drinking from the dragon's well. They are becoming drunken on the sin, rebellion, and death that gush from that well. The floods of lawlessness are filling the inhabitants of the earth with the wicked, vicious perversity for which the Lake of Fire has been reserved.

The saint who obeys the Lord and puts his or her hand to the work of restoration will be confronted by the "great red dragon" in the heavenlies.

The work of restoration will bring about the worship of God, and obedience to God, in the earth. The great red dragon is showing himself today to be a friendly dragon. In some of the countries of the world there is friendliness toward

Christianity. The saints are prospering, working alongside non-Christian people. Christians are dwelling in fine homes, partaking of the comforts and luxuries of this life.

Such a friendly dragon. A pretty, cardboard, cartoon dragon. A suitable subject for children's stories.

But the ancient dragon considers this world and its inhabitants to be his kingdom. He requires the worship of the people as they practice the lust, the love of money, the violence, the sorcery, and the carousing and partying that all are part of the dragon's Christ-murdering, God-hating, people-despising, wretched, perverse, destructive, self-seeking nature.

As long as the saints occupy themselves with their flight to Heaven and do not concern themselves too much with their conduct in this world, the dragon may choose to show himself friendly.

But the moment the Christian people begin to establish the worship of God and obedience to God in this earth they will face an enraged and vengeful dragon. He will flay the skin from their bodies. He will tear them bone from bone, as church history reveals. The once-kindly world will reveal its demon face. The spirit that works in the children of disobedience will turn against the believers with viciousness and perversity that go far beyond human wickedness.

Do we think the dragon has changed from the dragon of past centuries who tortured and murdered the saints?

There are two wonders, two signs in the heaven. The Church is a wonder in the heaven (Revelation 12:1). Also, the dragon is a wonder in the heaven.

The dragon always will attempt to destroy Christ the moment He comes forth within the Church.

As soon as the Church passes from its head-knowledge, its theological understanding of Christ, and begins to experience the formation of Christ in itself, the resurrection Life of Christ coming forth in daily wisdom and power in godly living, then the dragon will confront the Church.

Every saint who obeys God and puts his or her hand to the work of restoration will be confronted by a cunning, malicious, deceitful, merciless, treacherous adversary. But Jesus promised us that through Himself we shall be able to tread on all the power of the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt us (Luke 10:19).

### **The "dung port."**

*. . . and to the dung port, . . . (Nehemiah 2:13)*

The dung port is an important part of the work of restoration. God's people are filled with various sins and rebellions. Strife abounds in the churches. Division, hatred, greed, lust, self-will, pride—all are found among the believers. Bitterness among the Christian people has reached epidemic proportions. This is why there must be a gate for the dung, the refuse, the garbage, in the work of restoration.

*In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. (Zechariah 13:1)*

How does the spiritual counterpart of the "dung port" work in our Christian life?

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (I John 1:9)*

When Christ made an atonement for our sins He did not limit His work to forgiveness. He *removed* our sins from us. Our sins were laid on Him and He removed them from the camp of the saints.

Christ will not receive a bride who merely has been forgiven. Christ will have a bride who is without spot, wrinkle, blemish, or any imperfection of any kind whatever.

There is authority and power in the blood of Christ to remove the presence of our sins and lawlessness. This is the dung port.

"To cleanse us from all unrighteousness"; to remove all sin from us; to destroy all sin out of us; to separate us from all unrighteousness; to place a wall between us and all of the working of the enemy—this is the result of the authority and power of the redemption in Christ the Lord.

The holy city is just that—the *holy* city. There will be nothing whatever that defiles inside the wall of the new Jerusalem.

But such purity is not the case today. The churches are filled with lust, gossiping, backbiting, spiritual ignorance, self-seeking, anger, willfulness, suspicion, betrayal, greed, cheating, the love of pleasure more than the love of God.

What is the Christian to do who would cleanse himself from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, who wishes to purge himself from wickedness, who would wash his robes in the blood of the Lamb, who would perfect holiness in the fear of God, who would come out from among the sins of the world and the churches so God will receive him (II Corinthians 6:17)?

The saint who would purify himself must confess his sins. The bitterness, the unforgiveness, the hatred, the laziness, and the remainder of the sin and death that have accumulated in the heart must be confessed to the Lord as sin. Sometimes it helps to confess our sins to another Christian (James 5:16).

There is a great need for confession and repentance today on the part of God's people. Much uncleanness is piled up in the personalities of the believers. This boil must be brought to a head and then lanced. When it is lanced the corruption gushes forth and the believer is prepared for the coming of the Lord.

Now is the time for us to confess our sins and turn away from them. Great peace will be given to those who confess and turn away from their sins. But those who ignore the move of the Holy Spirit, keeping their sins "hidden" from God and from their fellow believers, will surely be judged by the Lord.

Sinning Christians will be chastened until they are willing to confess and repent. If we will not judge ourselves the Lord shall judge and chasten us so we will not be destroyed along with the world (I Corinthians 11:32).

But if we harden our heart we will be condemned along with all other rebels against the Lord, whether or not we are making a profession of Christ.

### **Rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem.**

*. . . and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken, . . . . (Nehemiah 2:13)*

We have spoken before of the wall that must be constructed around the Glory of God. There will be a wall of fiery judgment protecting all of God's works. Never again will there be an unwalled paradise.

Under Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the high priest, and Ezra the priest, helped along by the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, the Temple had been restored and some of its priestly services begun. But the neighboring Canaanites were harassing the Jews living in the area of Jerusalem.

Such harassment was made possible by the fact that the city of Jerusalem was not protected by walls and gates. The walls and gates had been broken many years previously when the Babylonians had entered Jerusalem in triumph and carried off most of the people to Babylon.

So it is today. Harassment of God's people by the enemy is possible. The Lord's sheep and lambs are deceived and plagued by the enemy at his will. A wall of protection must be constructed around all of God's Glory and grace in the earth. The wall is being created today as the saints are accepting the work of the Holy Spirit. God is creating in the believers an iron resistance to all sin, all lawlessness, all uncleanness, all rebellion against the will of God.

*. . . and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. (Nehemiah 2:13)*

The Body of Christ holds the keys of the Kingdom of God. Whatever the Church binds on earth is bound in the heavens. Whatever the Church looses on the earth is loosed in the heavens. The reason for this great authority and responsibility is that the Church is an inseparable part of the Lord Jesus Christ and is coheir with Him of the nations and the farthest reaches of the earth.

The Church is the "gate of heaven."

*And he [Jacob] was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. (Genesis 28:17)*

Christ and His Body are the House of God. Christ and His Body are the gate of Heaven.

Only Christ, is the Door, the Way that opens to God the Father. No human being can approach the Father except through Christ.

Christ dwells in the Church. As the Church abides in Christ, and Christ abides in the Church, then the Church, His Body, becomes the Door, the Way, the Gate to the Father through the Lord Jesus. The Church is the eternal House of God. The church buildings never are the House of God. It is the saints in Christ who are the House of God.

A human being can approach God *only* through Christ. But Christ is not in the world any longer except in His Church. Therefore, the Church is the gate opening into Heaven, opening into the Presence of the holy Father through Christ.

In Revelation, Chapter 21 we learn that the twelve gates of Jerusalem are twelve pearls. A pearl is formed as a living animal, an oyster, builds a protection within itself against a grain of sand that has become lodged inside its shell.

So it is that the saints go through life with a "grain of sand inside their shell." If we respond correctly to the irritations that the Lord sends our way, a "pearl" is formed in us. Notice that it is not the saint that is the gate, it is the *pearl* that is the gate. It is the spiritual treasure that Christ creates in us, the "pearl" of the inner man, that serves eternally as the way to God for all the peoples of the earth.

The gates of the new Jerusalem are never shut (Revelation 21:25).

How many times have people come to us hoping to receive God, only to find that the gate of our life was shut? We were not ready to reveal Christ to them.

One part of the work of restoration is to build the gates—gates that will be open *at all times* to every soul who is crying out for God.

A gate is useless apart from a wall. The gates are to be part of a wall that is a powerful, impregnable defense against all sin, all lawlessness, all rebellion against the Father's will. Rebellion never shall be allowed to pass through those gates into the Presence of Almighty God—never again!

*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)*

The concept of the *gate*, of access to the Presence of the Lord, is important in the Scriptures. The saints are being created as gatekeepers in the household of God so uncleanness does not enter among the holy things of God.

*And thou shalt say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations. (Ezekiel 44:6,7)*

And again:

*Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. (Ezekiel 44:11)*

Why would the Jews bring unclean strangers into the sanctuary of the Lord? For the same reason that we do today. We are so anxious to please the world that we bring into the Lord's worship services the people of the world and rebellious, lukewarm "believers" under the misguided idea that we are "ministering" to them. We are not ministering to them. We are compromising with them, hoping to gain their support.

The meeting of the believers is to be holy to the Lord. We are to offer up the holy worship, praise, and adoration that please God. The Word of God is to be preached in holiness. The Lord's Table is to be observed in holiness. The music is to be holy, filled with the Spirit of God.

The supreme goal of our worship services and ministry is not to please people or to meet their needs. The supreme goal of our worship services and ministry is to please God and to meet His needs. The difference here is the difference between the False Prophet and Christ. We can be certain if God's needs are met the needs of the people also will be met. The household of God is no place to bring disinterested, worldly, carefree people unless we intend to present to them Christ crucified. We saints are gatekeepers in the house of God. We are to admit nothing into our own personality that is not entirely pleasing to Christ. As elders of the church we are to insure that the service of the Lord is holy—acceptable to the Father.

The saints will be gatekeepers in the Temple of God forever. These are the twelve pearls that are in the wall that surrounds the new Jerusalem, the holy city, the Bride of the Lamb.

It is the author's point of view that there is an actual city, a spiritual Jerusalem. It is in Heaven now and is destined to descend to the new earth (Hebrews 12:22). However, we believe the wall, the street of gold, and the precious stones and pearls are meant to convey spiritual truths concerning the virtues of the Wife of the Lamb, the glorified Church.

The gates of Jerusalem were "consumed with fire." *Fire*, in the Scriptures, portrays the Presence of God in judgment. God Is a consuming Fire. The gates of the Kingdom of God have been consumed with fire because we have admitted every kind of sin and lawlessness into the churches. As a result, we have lost the Glory of God, the power-filled witness of the Kingdom of God. Our ability to admit people to the Presence of the Holy One of Israel has been consumed by the fire of God's judgment. The lampstand of our testimony has been removed.

We cannot admit other people into the Glory of God because we do not possess the Glory of God ourselves. This loss is the result of sin.

#### **The living waters.**

*Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: . . . (Nehemiah 2:14)*

When we commence the work of restoration, meeting the Lord's standards of holiness and consecration, we soon find that the living waters of the Holy Spirit begin to flow from us in ever-increasing supply.

Our Father in Heaven is desirous that His people learn to live righteously in the earth. It is His great delight and pleasure to give of His Holy Spirit to every soul who will turn away from the uncleanness of the world and begin to restore the worship of God and obedience to God in the earth. God will pour out the latter rain on us and also will cause rivers of living water to flow from within us.

We desire the refreshing waters of the Holy Spirit. God desires worship and obedience from His children. If we will do what God desires, God will give to us that which we desire. First comes the rebuilding of the wall and the gates of righteousness. Then the inexhaustible riches of God's Glory will begin to flow from our lives. God gives His Holy Spirit to all who obey Him. The "King's Pool" becomes a reality in our life.

#### **Small is the gate and narrow is the way.**

*. . . but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. (Nehemiah 2:14)*

We mentioned before that Nehemiah did not carry excess baggage, having with him only the animal on which he was riding. So it is that those who would enter the work of restoration must not attempt to bring with them their own works and devices. We do not need "Saul's armor." We are to learn to walk with the Lord in simplicity and to rely on His Holy Spirit to meet all our needs.

Soon there was not room even for the one animal which Nehemiah was riding.

When we turn to God in sincerity God takes us at our word. When we tell the Lord that we want to do His will, that we want to restore all that has been destroyed by the lawlessness and rebellion of the Lord's people, God is delighted and sets the machinery in motion to accomplish what we say. It is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom to those who ask; to those who seek; to those who knock.

Sooner or later we come to the place where *all* that we have brought with us is excluded. God wants us to meet Him on an individual basis. No other person can be present at that moment. None of our accustomed helps can be relied on. We stand alone in the Presence of our God, our Creator.

This is the moment of truth for us. This is the hour in which our motives are revealed. This is the point at which we learn our true identity and God's true identity. The confrontation with God takes place and we are changed for eternity.

After that point of truth we no longer are servants of the house of God. Now we have become servants of the God of the house of God. What a difference! But until we have been brought alone into the Presence of God we cannot experience the fullness of fruitfulness and rulership.

The way becomes so cluttered, so blocked, so impossible of travel, that there is only room for Jesus and His follower. How upsetting! How blessed!

### **Returning to the old foundations.**

Notice that the first reaction of the world to the work of restoration was one of scorn:

*But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? (Nehemiah 2:19)*

We who would put our hand to the work of restoration must be prepared for scorn, for being despised. We must be prepared to begin with what is—in the sight of the world—worthless and useless.

We must return to the old foundations of prayer and holiness, even though the popular crowd thinks that what we are doing is ignorant and despicable. To be counted among those who work with small, weak, despised things is a strong test of sainthood. Will we go outside the camp of respectability and bear the reproach of Christ?

Zerubbabel and Joshua were facing the same problem of shame as they began the reconstruction of the ruined Temple.

But this is what the Spirit of God said to these pioneers through Zechariah:

*The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet [plumb line] in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth. (Zechariah 4:9,10)*

The believer who would take up the work of restoration must be prepared to bear the ridicule of worldly people, including the "mixed multitude" who today are "worshiping" in the same buildings as the true saints of God.

But all the truly godly will respect the work of restoration. Every person who possesses the Spirit of God will be alerted by the Spirit to the fact that the work is of Him.

So we are to press ahead with all joy and confidence, knowing that God has called us to the work of restoration. We are persuaded what God has begun, God will bring to glorious completion. One day it will be clear that the work has been of God all along. Then we will be rejoicing and praising the Lord and it will be our adversaries who are ashamed when they behold the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in the saints.

### **Gaining the Kingdom of God**

We mentioned before the design of restoration: (1) glory; (2) rebellion against the Lord; (3) bondage; (4) restoration; and (5) the receiving of the double portion of glory. This is the story of the prodigal son, of mankind on the earth, of Samson, of most of us. It is also the pattern of the history of the Church of Christ beginning with the first century of the Christian Era.

The Church finally will attain the double portion of the Glory of the Lord God, and the world will receive its portion of the glory at the hand of the Church. There is no doubt whatever about that. The Scriptures are clear enough.

But in that day the saints will *possess* the glory, instead of the glory being as a gift that has been given to us but which we are unable to understand, profit from, or hold. When the glory is received the second time it will be our possession forever.

One hot summer day some years ago my two sons and myself started up the side of a steep hill. Because of the high weeds the younger boy was not able to keep up with us. So I picked him up and carried him on my shoulders.

When we reached the top of the hill the smaller boy was rejoicing that he had reached the top ahead of his older brother, who was struggling through the tall weeds fifty yards down the side of the hill.

I said to the little boy sitting on my shoulders, "You came up on Dad's shoulders but your brother is climbing the hill by himself. One day you will be able to climb the hill by yourself."

This is the story of the Christian Church. In the first century the Church was given the power of the Holy Spirit, the revelation of the Word, the miracles and wonders that caused people to receive Christ. The Church was in one accord and met in private homes. Each saint had a personal experience with Christ. The apostles and prophets were ministers among them as they worshiped and served the Lord Jesus.

But this was as the younger, smaller boy being carried by his father. The Lord was performing all the work by intervening in sovereign power—particularly through His apostles. God bore His elect on eagles' wings.

During the following centuries the Lord diminished the extent of His direct interventions. As a result many of the gifts and graces of the Spirit were lost. They could not be held by the churches. God understood that glory given so freely could not be possessed and developed by those to whom it had been assigned. The early saints had not attained that glory by asking, seeking, knocking, and making it their own through faith, obedience, patience, courage, and persistence.

God had taken this lack of experience into consideration before He formed the earth. He knows all that He will accomplish in the Church and in each saint.

Beginning with the Protestant Reformers, God began to restore the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord, of personal redemption through Christ. Little by little, command upon command, rule upon rule, the precious truths and experiences have been restored to the Church.

The truths and experiences repossessed by the Church are as the older boy. They have been gained through the diligent pursuit of the Kingdom of God, whereas in the first century they had been given to people who had not grasped them by faithful perseverance against overwhelming opposition.

The truths and experiences of personal redemption now held by the saints will never be lost again. They will never be lost again because they have been gained through faith and patience, courage and perseverance. Now the younger boy can follow Dad up the hill because he has grown into that strength and maturity.

The truths of the born-again experience, of personal holiness, of the priesthood of the believer, and the possession by every believer of a gift of ministry, of tongues, prophecy, healing, miracles, will never be lost again. These aspects of the Christian redemption belong to the Church for as long as they are needed.

There is more knowledge and power to come.

It is because of the slow, patient, regaining and developing of the truth and power of the Kingdom of God that we find several times in the third chapter of Nehemiah: "who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof" (Nehemiah 3:3).

Do you see the patient, diligent restoration of spiritual strength in the beams, doors, locks, and bars?

So it is that down through history, from the time of the Reformers, the aspects of the Kingdom that had been lost for centuries have been restored. But now they have been established and secured to the Church forever by beams, by doors, by locks, by bars, as the pioneers of each generation have endured the reproach, the persecution, that must be borne by those who press forward into the areas of the Kingdom of God not possessed as yet by the majority of the believers.

The pioneers have been called by the Lord to establish these truths and experiences in their own lives, and in the lives of others, under conditions of personal sacrifice. Now the knowledge, wisdom and power that have been restored are in the possession of the Body of Christ forever.

We have spoken before of the great importance of the wall and the gates of Jerusalem. The wall represents the separation between the Church and the world and the resistance against all sin and rebellion. The impenetrable jasper wall of separation is being created now in the personalities of God's victorious saints.

The gates are the saints in whose hearts are the glorious highways to Zion (Psalms 84:5). There are as many gates to God as there are members of the Body of Christ. The members of the Body possess the keys of the Kingdom of God.

When the saint is abiding in the Spirit of God, whatever he looses on the earth is loosed in the heavens and whatever the saint binds is bound in the heavens. All Divine judgment has been given to Christ who, in turn, administers the judgment through the members of His Body (John 20:22,23; I Corinthians 6:2,3).

When a city has no walls, gates are of no importance whatever. But when a city is surrounded by an impregnable wall, gates become of supreme importance to every person who has a reason to enter the city.

The Glory of God in the earth has been unvalued. The churches do not appear to know the difference between the spirit of the world and the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore it does not matter what is bound or what is loosed for all is bound by sin and rebellion against the Lord.

But when the wall of separation is constructed such that all those on the outside are in darkness and death, and can see and understand they indeed are abiding in darkness and death, then those who control the gates are holding the power of life and light. Those who are dwelling within the wall can recognize and appreciate the value of their position in Christ.

The third chapter of the Book of Nehemiah lists the gates of Jerusalem that were being rebuilt. Each of these gates is symbolic of an aspect of the Kingdom of God that has been restored since the time of the Reformers, or else is being or yet will be restored.

(Some of the following material concerning the rebuilding of the gates of Jerusalem is taken from our book, *The Temple of God*.)

## **THE GATES OF JERUSALEM**

### **The Sheep Gate**

The Sheep Gate is the first gate to be restored.

It is of supreme importance, in view of God's plan, that the "sheep gate," the saints, be built up in wisdom and strength during this crucial hour of history.

*Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel. (Nehemiah 3:1)*

The first aspect of the work of restoration is the nourishing and protecting of God's sheep and lambs. Until the members of God's household are built up in the holy faith, nothing else can be accomplished.

One of the chief reasons for the sin and rebellion in the churches is the neglect of the Lord's sheep.

When the Christian ministry becomes occupied with its own wealth, its own prestige, the serving of its own interests, the Lord's sheep will suffer and be scattered. This is not pleasing to the Lord.

*Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. (Ezekiel 34:10,11)*

The true ministers of Christ give their lives for the Lord's sheep, as did Paul and the other apostles. One of the major parts of the present-day restoration will be that of the ascended Lord Jesus giving apostles, prophets, evangelists, and all other ministries and gifts to His Body for the building up of His Church, His sheep.

But no longer will these apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and other ministries and gifts be able to profit from their ministries and gifts so they become wealthy and prominent. Instead, they will minister in the spirit of sacrifice to the Lord—sometimes in jeopardy of their lives. They will *give* of that which God has given to them. They will minister to rather than profit from God's sheep.

When it costs men tribulation, persecution, and martyrdom to minister to the Lord's people, then those whom the Lord did not call to minister will go into other lines of work. But the Lord's true shepherds will redouble their diligence and give their lives to the Lord for the welfare of the sheep.

Today God's sheep are scattered, confused, torn, not knowing what is of God and what is not of God. They behold complacency and sin in the shepherds and teachers and therefore cannot gain the strength needed to carry their own burdens.

The believers often are looking for a "minister" who will carry their burdens while they themselves live undisciplined, carefree lives. But none of us can hire another to bear our burdens, to carry our cross. Every Christian must carry his or her own load while God's shepherds set the example, lead the way, and provide wisdom and encouragement.

Sin and confusion abound in the churches.

The need is to feed the sheep, not to profit from the sheep but to feed the sheep.

When we feed Jesus' sheep we are revealing our love for Him. Jesus cares deeply for each of His sheep and each of His little lambs.

*So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. (John 21:15)*

But what takes place instead?

*Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. (Ezekiel 34:2-4)*

There are instances today in which pastors are engaging in immorality and are not confessing their sin and repenting. When the members of the congregation go to the elders concerning the sin, the elders advise the believers that God has forgiven the pastor and that the members who raise the question of morality have a wrong attitude. They are told they must not judge and that God is condemning them because they are not forgiving the pastors and evangelists who are committing adultery. In this manner the organizations protect themselves, but the sheep are in confusion.

This kind of incident is happening in the churches. It is what the Scriptures mean when they state "with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them." Such elders and pastors will be beaten with many lashes.

Sometimes the leadership places great emphasis on our going forth and converting the unsaved. But what good does it do to add more people to the churches when those within the churches are not growing in Christ, are going through divorce, are drunken, are starving for the Word of God, are confused, depressed, lonely, living in sin and worldliness?

What sense does it make to bring additional people into the churches when the Lord's sheep are wandering aimlessly in a spiritual wilderness? Will an increase in numbers of people result in an increase in the worship and obedience that God requires of the Church?

If not, what has been gained in the Kingdom of God by adding people to the churches?

But when the Lord's sheep are being led by true shepherds, are growing, are being nourished, cherished, and protected, are worshiping God and serving Him, then the Lord Himself will add to the Church each day such as should be saved.

*And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2:44-47)*

It often has been the practice to order the preaching and the "service" in such a manner that the unsaved or worldly "Christians" will not be bewildered or offended by intense spiritual worship and teaching. When this is the policy of the assembly there may never be occasions when the church comes together to worship God and hear the voice of the Spirit of God. In this instance the members never will grow in Christ. The lack of services designed for the saints is a principle reason for the eternal babyhood of the believers.

One of the great needs, therefore, is the restoration of the sheep gate. In fact, the purpose of the ministries and gifts given to men by the ascended Christ is that the Lord's sheep may grow into the Head—Christ.

*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (Ephesians 4:13)*

The primary goal of the work of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, and shepherds is the unifying and maturing of the saints. The ministries and gifts have been placed in the Body for the strengthening and building of the Body of Christ.

The feeding of the Lord's sheep and lambs is of such importance in the Kingdom of God that it has been placed first in order in the prophetic listing of the reconstruction of the gates in the wall surrounding the city of Jerusalem.

The world is waiting for the unifying and maturing of the Church, for it is only through the Church that the world can be released from the "bondage of corruption" (Romans 8:21).

All of the purposes of God, such as the creating of His eternal dwelling place among mankind, the creating and perfecting of the Bride of the Lamb, the judging of evil and the removing of evil from the universe, the ruling of the world in righteousness, the bringing into being of the sons of God and brothers of Christ, can be realized only in the Church, in God's people who have been chosen out of the world. Therefore, it is of the greatest importance that the Lord's sheep and lambs are fed regularly and well.

The Church is not of the world just as Christ is not of the world. The world hates the Church because it is not of the world. The world resents all that God is performing in the Church. Yet, it is only through the Church that the world can receive life and light. It is all-important, not only from the standpoint of God but also from the standpoint of the world, that the Lord's sheep and lambs are strengthened and nourished.

The world is the world and the Church is the Church. Between the world and the church is being created the highest, thickest, sturdiest wall in the creation of God. Satan understands that his end will come at the hand of the Church. The world senses that the Church is the eternal enemy of the spirit of the world. This is why there has been and will continue to be vicious persecution of the saints, even when the saints go about in the Spirit of the Lord doing good and healing all who are oppressed by the devil.

The Spirit of God is in the process of restoring all of the gifts and ministries to the Body of Christ. God has determined to bring the Church, and *shall* bring the Church, to perfect and unblemished completeness, unity, and maturity. The work is of God and He shall accomplish it.

As soon as we begin to look to Jesus for revival He causes us to understand one of His first concerns is the feeding and care of His sheep and lambs.

We may be concerned about unsaved people becoming Christians. This is a righteous concern. But the Lord Jesus may be even more concerned that those persons who have received Him begin to walk in His ways. Of what use to the Lord Jesus is an unclean church? Of what use to the world is an unclean church? It is as salt that has lost its flavor. It is good for nothing but the garbage heap.

The doors of the sheep gate must be set up. Then we will be able to find our way into the green pastures. There are green pastures and quiet waters for each of the Lord's sheep—for you, dear reader. But the "doors" in some instances have not been set up.

The hour in which we are living is filled with voices and confusion of all kinds. Men's hearts are failing them for fear. There is great distress and perplexity. But God has a place of peace and safety for every person on earth who will seek Him.

It is the responsibility of the ministries of the Body of Christ to build up each saint as a door so the weary of the earth may find rest for their souls; so there indeed will be deliverance in Mount Zion, in the remnant whom God has called.

Christ is the only Door to righteousness, peace, and joy. As Christ is being formed in us the entrance to God's Presence is being formed in us. We are living stones, eternal rooms, in the Temple of God. Our "gates" are to be open continually so every person on the earth may find the Lord.

### **The Fish Gate**

*But the fish gate did the sons of Haseanaah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. (Nehemiah 3:3)*

When the Church is in one accord, glad and single of heart, worshipping God, the conduct of the saints being above reproach in the sight of the world, then the waters of eternal life will flow to the unsaved.

When the Church is one in the Father and in the Son, being filled with the Spirit of God, then the world will believe God has sent Christ.

The result of building the sheep gate always is that a great multitude of "fish" are caught for the Lord.

Whenever the "rivers of living water" (John 7:38) begin to flow from the saints, the multitudes of the earth are revived and begin to seek the Lord. The critical need throughout the earth today is not for the nations to attempt to reform themselves, for they always will fail because of the power of Satan. The need is for the Church of Christ to abandon its sin and rebellion and begin to call on the Lord.

Notice in the following passage the earth-wide effect of the flowing of the "rivers of living water" from the unified and mature Church:

*And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. (Ezekiel 47:9)*

The righteous in that day will be as trees of life growing on the banks of the River of Life. The nations of the earth will eat forever of the eternal fruit of those trees and be healed by the leaves.

The trees along the River of Life are the saints in whom is dwelling Christ. Christ is the only food and the only "leaves" whereby the peoples of the earth can receive life and be healed. When the Lord Jesus is dwelling in a believer, the believer is a tree of life for the nations.

*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise. (Proverbs 11:30)*

*And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. (Psalms 1:3)*

The catching of the "fish" of the earth depends on the building of the Christian believers into victorious saints who are leading godly lives.

There is another passage that portrays the earth-wide revival that will take place when Christ is revealed in the saints:

*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. (Isaiah 60:1)*

*Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. (Isaiah 60:5)*

The Light of the world never will descend on us until the Lord Jesus has prepared us as holy people, set apart for His service.

The Lord Jesus desires to make us fishers of men. According to the Scriptures, the Good News of the Kingdom of God must be preached as a witness to every nation just before the Lord returns to the earth (Matthew 24:14). It is our understanding of the burden of the Holy Spirit that the end-time preaching of the Kingdom of God has commenced already and we are in the early stages of the most powerful revival of the spread of the Gospel ever to take place on the earth.

We envision the saints going forth under a double anointing of power and revelation, performing signs and wonders, working miracles of healing and deliverance, and also bringing the Spirit of revelation that will unlock the Scriptures so the full redemptive purposes of the Lord God of Heaven may be revealed. We believe this revival of power and anointed preaching and teaching will touch every man, woman, boy, and girl on the face of the earth.

It is the love of God that decrees that the peoples of the earth must have one last opportunity to see and hear the goodness of God in Christ. When the nations witness through His saints the tremendous acts of the resurrected Christ, and hear the Good News of the glorious Kingdom of God that even now is casting its light on the spiritual horizon, then a multitude of "fish" will be caught by the Lord. After that, our Lord Jesus will return.

It is our point of view that if the Lord Jesus were to return today, the majority of the people on the earth, including many if not most of those who profess faith in Christ, would be destroyed by His appearing. They would be destroyed because they are living in sin and rebellion against God.

But God is seeking to save people, not to destroy them. This is the reason for the tumultuous days just ahead of us. During the period to come, many will be saved who are not saved today. Even more significantly, the Church, the Bride of the Lamb, will be purified through the sufferings of the tribulation, thus being made ready for His appearing (I Peter 4:1).

### **The Nobles**

*And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord. (Nehemiah 3:5)*

The nobles of the Tekoites would not help with the work of restoring the wall and the gates of the city of Jerusalem.

God's people are accustomed to having their leaders think for them and seek God for them, while they themselves occupy their time and strength with the things of the flesh. As far as God's remnant, His saints, are concerned, those days are over. We cannot depend on the "nobles" to do God's work.

It is time now for each of the Lord's people to seek God's will for his own life. Each member of the Body of Christ, without exception, is given gifts and a ministry at the time the Lord Jesus baptizes him or her by the Holy Spirit into the Church. Those gifts and ministries are the "talents" spoken of in Matthew, Chapter 25. There is no member of the Body of Christ who does not possess a gift of ministry from the ascended Christ, a gift given for the purpose of building the Body of Christ into the fullness of maturity and unity.

There is no part of a physical body that has no purpose, that is extra, useless, that makes no contribution to the body—unless the part is diseased or dead.

There is no member of the Body of Christ who has no purpose, who is extra, who is useless, who makes no contribution to the Body—unless the member is diseased or dead.

The churches of Christ are filled with "dead" members. They assemble with the believers but they are not living members of the Body of Christ. They are not living members of the Body of Christ because they are purposeless, useless, making no contribution to the Body.

The Lord Jesus Christ is walking among the lampstands, the churches, in the hour in which we are living. It is His intention to trim the lamps so they will give a shining light to the sin-darkened world, a clear and powerful testimony that will overcome the devil.

Every lamp not shining brightly He will trim and fill with oil so the testimony will be clear—blazing with conquering power and authority. But every lamp that refuses to be trimmed and filled with oil He will remove from the lampstand as being useless to Him and useless to the world.

The Body of Christ can be built only by the functioning of each member of the Body. The church will be brought to fullness of stature by that which every part contributes.

It is impossible for any pastor or any other form of church leadership to bring the Church to the fullness of the stature of Christ. Only as each member finds his or her own place and begins to function as a living part of Christ is it possible for the Church to be built into the awesome manifestation of Christ that will, in fulfillment of the Word of the Hebrew Prophets, cause the multitudes of the nations to be converted.

There is a time for outstanding human leadership. There is an hour for the "nobles." There is an occasion to "strike the rock."

But in the latter (harvest) rain sweeping downpour of the Glory of God Almighty scheduled for the days just prior to the return of the Lord Jesus from Heaven, no flesh will be exalted. The *whole* Body of Christ will be anointed with a double portion of power from Heaven. The saints will go to every nation under the heavens, healing the sick, casting out devils, and proclaiming the soon coming from Heaven of the Kingdom of God.

In that day the world will begin to understand there is an impregnable wall between the Church and the world. All eternal life, all Divine light, is in the Church of Christ. In order to live and to understand the truth the world will be required to come to the saints.

It will do us no good to wait for the gifted and prominent leaders in the churches to take the lead. Each of us who has the call of God in his or her heart must arise and build, must come to the help of the Lord against His enemies as the Lord directs us. This is harvest time and we do not want to make our heavenly Father ashamed of us.

Hopefully many of the leaders of the churches will "put their necks" into moving God's people toward holiness, toward the restoring of the purity and power of the Body of Christ. We must have the contribution of the ministries and gifts of every member of the Body in order for the program of restoration to move ahead.

When the Lord builds up Zion He appears in His glory. We wish to hasten His appearing!

### **The Old Gate**

*Moreover the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. (Nehemiah 3:6)*

There is no "new doctrine," "new revelation," coming from the Spirit today. It is true that the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is being given, but it is for the uncovering of original scriptural truth, not for the presenting of revelation that goes beyond the Scriptures. The concept of restoration is that of rebuilding an original structure. It is the unscriptural traditions by which the Church has been destroyed, such as lawless grace and the pre-tribulation rapture, that are the new doctrines, the new "revelations."

We are returning to apostolic teachings and practices. We are returning to reliance on the Holy Spirit of God rather than on the efforts of talented flesh. We are returning to prayer and are withdrawing from the ambitions and schemes of religious men.

*Christ crucified* is being restored as the core of our message. We are teaching disciples rather than an assembly of people who will not receive Christ as their personal Lord.

*Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. (Jeremiah 6:16)*

There are many today who are choosing to seek and to walk in the old paths of righteousness, holiness, and stern obedience to the Father. Also, there are many who are attempting to find a new, cross-less Christianity in which they can use Christ in order to accomplish their own ends. Because they have rejected the way of cross-carrying obedience to Christ, God will permit Satan to deceive them. In fact, God Himself will place a strong delusion on those who do not love the truth so they will believe a lie. They will labor on and on but their goal of peace and joy always will elude them.

But the oil of joy will be poured on the righteous.

### **The Throne of the Governor; On This Side the River**

*And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the governor on this side the river. (Nehemiah 3:7)*

In order for us to come to the unity and maturity of the Body of Christ we must learn to submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit of God in the Church, and to the ministries and gifts that are given and directed by the Spirit of God.

The reason for the babylonish confusion in the churches of Christ is that man is in control. We will not allow the Spirit of God to take charge. We always resist the Holy Spirit. The head of man is on the Body of Christ. The result is chaos.

Before much else can be done there must be a restoration of spiritual oversight and authority.

There are two concepts we should consider. The first is that every member of the Body of Christ possesses a gift of grace by means of which he or she must serve the Body. Without that particular individual's contribution the entire Body suffers.

It is not enough that we wander about doing what is right in our own eyes. God does not have two wills, two purposes for our life. He has one will, one purpose. Our task is to seek God until we discover what it is He wants done with our life. Then we are to work with God in building our part of the Body of Christ. Such individual prayer and effort is an important part of the work of restoration.

Some believers have the ministry of the oversight of the churches and we must submit to their guidance as to the Lord. Such elders are not to be lords over Christ's inheritance but examples to the flock.

The second concept is that of the total authority of the Holy Spirit in the construction and operation of the Church of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the "Governor." The Holy Spirit is God. It is the Holy Spirit who calls out apostles and prophets and directs them in the work of the ministry. The churches of Christ are to be under the direct control of the Spirit of God. The elders of the churches are to be filled with the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit.

The reason the Church of Christ is a valley of dry bones today is that men have attempted to construct and operate the Body of Christ.

Now it is time to cease using the churches for our own ends. God's answer to self-seeking men is the cross. Today is the day to bear our personal cross. In the hour in which we are living, great tribulation, intense persecution, is ready to fall on the Christian people. The result will be that our sins and self-seeking are purged from us. In that hour only the Holy Spirit will be able to build and guide the Church. Suffering will cause us to cease from our sin and self-will.

The flesh and fleshly mind are worse than useless when it comes to spiritual work and warfare. The Holy Spirit must be allowed to clothe Himself with the members of the Body of Christ. Only then can the Church bear the testimony of Christ and possess the gates of the enemy.

Notice that the throne of the governor is "on this side the river." One of the most misleading concepts held by the Body of Christ is that the Lord Jesus suddenly will establish the unity and maturity of the Body; that instantly we shall come under the governing influence of the Holy Spirit; that suddenly we shall be changed into the image of Christ without the need for patient, cross-carrying obedience on our part. It is being assumed that the moment we go to Heaven we will be transformed in the inner man (the spirit and soul), and when the Lord appears we will be transformed in the outward man (the body).

One erroneous tradition which contributes to this misunderstanding is the belief that the saints are saved in order to dwell in Heaven forever rather than on the earth. The Scripture declares plainly that it is the earth that is the inheritance of the Lord and His saints (Psalms 2:8; 37:9; Isaiah 11:9; Matthew 5:5; 6:10; Revelation 5:10). The whole concept of the resurrection from the dead is the taking up of our life once again on the earth, although in much more glorious circumstances.

Shifting to Heaven the work to be done here, and understanding our goal to be that of making our eternal home in the spirit realm, truly are weakening beliefs. But we find many Christians assigning the restoration of the righteousness and power of the Church to the time when the Lord comes and (as is taught commonly) carries us off to dwell in Heaven.

The thinking of many believers is that after we die physically (a defeat in itself—I Corinthians 15:26) we suddenly shall be transformed into overcomers who rule nations (although how we are to do this from our "mansions" in Heaven is not explained). This doctrine serves only to put off into the future the all-important personal victories that must be won today if we are to rule with Christ in the Day of the Lord.

The wall and gates of Jerusalem will be constructed "on this side the river," not in Heaven.

It is time now for the holiness and power of the Church of Christ to be restored. It is time now to strengthen our prayer life, to spend time each day in the Scriptures, to seek the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit, to consecrate ourselves to the service of Christ. We cannot expect to receive the power of God until we are a holy people.

Behold, the Judge is at the door! Will we wait for His coming without having taken the steps that will bring us into His perfect will and power? If we bury our talents we may find it difficult to explain to Christ why we decided to remain in the malice and wickedness of the present world instead of using our life to do His will. Jesus has warned us that the believer who buries his talent instead of seeking first the Kingdom of God will suffer much anguish in the Day of the Lord.

It is time to seek Christ now! Today!

The darkest of all nights, the prophesied period of unparalleled tribulation and persecution, is at hand. Every saint who prepares himself or herself now to serve Christ with a perfect heart, being ready to endure hardness as a good soldier, arming himself with the expectation of suffering and dying for the testimony of Jesus, will come under the total protection of the Thirty-fourth, Thirty-seventh, and Ninety-first Psalms.

The battle of the ages is at the door. We can be more than conquerors in this hour if we will seek Christ. But if we waste our preparation time on the tinsel of the world we will be crushed under the oppression that is appearing on the horizon.

The battle always is *today*. The flesh and Satan understand this well and work without ceasing to keep us delaying until tomorrow what we should be doing now. Let us arise and build. The Lord will strengthen and bless us if we do. We must take the first step toward Him. Then He will encourage and assist us.

Bringing the Body of Christ to the fullness of unity and glory will take place "on this side the river." The work has commenced already. Will you labor in Christ with your tools in one hand and your sword in the other? Or will you be among those who remain in the bondage of the flesh and the world, trusting that the work of restoration will be accomplished on the other side of the river (in Heaven)?

If you do not arise and seek Christ today you will regret, when the Lord returns, that you passed up your chance to strengthen the Body of Christ in its hour of preparation.

*Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. (Judges 5:23)*

**The Goldsmiths**

*Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. . . . (Nehemiah 3:8)*

Jesus counseled the believers in Laodicea to buy of Him "gold tried in the fire" (Revelation 3:18). Laodicea is the church of the "rights of the people." The rights of people are of growing concern today and will mount in importance until they culminate in the worldwide rebellion against all rule, including the rule of God.

*Gold*, in the Scripture, symbolizes Deity. The true Church of Christ is Divine in Substance, having been born from above, being indwelt by the Father and the Son, being filled eternally with the Holy Spirit and anointed by the Holy Spirit, being the manifestation in the earth of the Person and will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The true Church is that which is wrought in the "gold" of God's Being and Nature. The churches of the False Prophet are those that are wrought in the will and industry of human beings, being indwelt by Satan.

It is not enough that the gold of God's Divine Nature be in the members of the Body of Christ. That gold must be "tried in the fire." Therefore, before the Lord Jesus returns, the Church of Christ will be perfected through suffering.

The "gold" of Christ in the Church will be refined in the fires of tribulation and persecution. Then the Lord will appear and receive to Himself a perfected Church, full of His Nature and Substance—the "gold" in the inner man of the saints having been made transparent through fiery testings.

A church filled with human nature and ambition is of little use to the Lord Jesus.

We must be made worthy of the Kingdom of God through suffering.

*So we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: (II Thessalonians 1:4,5)*

*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. (I Peter 4:12,13)*

The "gold" must be "tried in the fire."

*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, . . . . (Revelation 3:18)*

*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (I Peter 1:7)*

As soon as we become sincere and diligent in the building of the Church's defenses against sin the Lord begins to give us some of the "gold" of His Divine Nature. In order to be able to escape the "corruption that is in the world through lust" we must become "partakers of the Divine nature" (II Peter 1:4).

The Lord's "goldsmiths," who sometimes come in the form of various pains, troubles, afflictions, tribulations, persecutions, have been assigned the task of covering us within and without with His holy Substance.

### **The Apothecaries**

*Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of one of the apothecaries, . . . . (Nehemiah 3:8)*

The naming of the "apothecaries" reminds us that if we hope to make progress in the building up of the defenses of the Church of Christ we must be anointed with the holy anointing oil, the Holy Spirit, in all that we think, all that we do, and all that we are.

*And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil. (Exodus 30:25)*

Also, the holy perfume of our fervent and Christ-filled supplications and worship is necessary in the work of the Body of Christ.

*And he made the holy anointing oil, and the pure incense of sweet spices, according to the work of the apothecary. (Exodus 37:29)*

As soon as the gold in us has been refined, we are ready for the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and our worship becomes as incense to the Father.

One of the principal works of the Body of Christ is Spirit-filled worship and praise given to the Father in Heaven. The adoring of Christ and the Father is the "first work" of the Church. When the Church is praising God and having favor with all the people the Lord will add to the Church daily such as are being saved (Acts 2:47).

All of the blessings that the churches desire and seek will be added as we place the fervent worship and praise of God first in our meetings and in all else that we do. As faith without works is dead, so religious works without consistent and fervent worship and praise of God are dead.

### **The Broad Wall**

*. . . and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall. (Nehemiah 3:8)*

The fortification of Jerusalem to the "broad wall" reminds us that it is time now for the Christian Church to construct the "way of holiness."

*And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. (Isaiah 35:8)*

Every valley must be raised, and every high place must be brought down so the way of the Lord is made straight, easy to find, and uncluttered.

*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: (Isaiah 40:3,4)*

In our day the broad road is the highway leading to destruction. The way to eternal life is narrow and the gate is small. It is the task of the saints of the Church to construct a highway of holiness that is wide, straight, and easy to find so all of God's people can get to Him without falling into destruction.

*Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. (Isaiah 62:10)*

Let us, through the Holy Spirit, build a highway of holiness, a pathway of righteous living, so those who follow us do not stumble or fall but go straight forward to the loving embrace of their heavenly Father. There always is someone ahead of us in the Lord, and also people who have less knowledge of God than we do. Our task is to follow those ahead of us as they follow Christ, stepping along in the same rank (Philippians 3:16,17).

Then we are to make a straight path for those who are behind us so they can follow us as we follow Christ. By giving ourselves wholly to the things of Christ we save ourselves and those who hear us (I Timothy 4:16).

We are to live so people, without stumbling, can follow us as we follow Christ. We endure all things for the elect's sake so they may obtain salvation. Our personality and behavior are to be the reflection of the Lord in order that the souls hastening by may read the Gospel message easily and quickly.

*And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. (Hebrews 12:13)*

*And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. (Habakkuk 2:2)*

*Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. (Romans 14:13)*

### **The Tower of the Furnaces**

*Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahathmoab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces. (Nehemiah 3:11)*

"For our God is a consuming fire."

The "tower of the furnaces" must be repaired so we may have the fire of God's Presence, God's judgment, in our midst. In many instances there is little or no consciousness of sin on the part of the members of the Body of Christ. Yet, sin and rebellion against God are prevailing in the churches. The behaviors that are sin are described by the writers of the New Testament.

The works of the flesh are practiced by the church people of today. Of all the needs that the Church of Christ has in our time, one of the greatest by far is for the Christian people and all their works to be baptized with fire. Otherwise, adultery, fornication, spiritism, hatred, violence, gossiping, backbiting, envy, greed, jealousy, will remain unjudged among us.

There is more than a baptism with the Holy Spirit. There is a baptism with fire. It is time now for the Church to be baptized with fire.

*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. (Matthew 3:11,12)*

When we draw near to God we are drawing near to the fires of judgment. If we would see the Lord we must become holy. Let us run to the fires of judgment, praying for the Lord's judgment on ourselves and our works.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalms 139:23,24)*

*But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. (I Corinthians 11:32)*

God will help us judge ourselves so He will not have to chasten us. The judgment of God on us and our conduct is greatly to be desired at this time. The wise saint seeks out the attitude of the Lord in order to insure that he actually is pleasing to the Lord. He runs to the light that his deeds may be shown to be of God.

The foolish believer is hiding from the Face of God, as did Adam, because he is afraid of facing the consequences of his actions. Such a person is only delaying the day of reckoning and is increasing the possibility that he will be dealt with severely in the Day of Christ. For it is certain Christ shall judge each of us according to our works (Revelation 2:23).

Let us therefore run to the Lord so He may reveal to us how well we are pleasing Him. If we are not pleasing Him we need to know it so we can repent and begin to please Him. This was King David's attitude!

To be judged by the Lord does not mean we necessarily will be punished by the Lord. To be judged means the Lord will show us what is good and what is evil in our personality and conduct. Then, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we are to embrace what is good and refuse and resist the evil.

The wise saint confesses his sins to the Lord, repenting of them and asking God for strength to overcome them. The foolish saint is not confessing and repenting of his sins but is putting off his judgment until the Day of Christ.

The "furnaces" speak to us also of the energy, the power, of God. The Kingdom of God is not in word but in power. Prayer and obedience are the means God has given us for obtaining His energy. There is no lasting strength in the flesh. If we would demonstrate the power of the Kingdom of God we must pray in the Spirit and be strictly obedient to the Spirit of God at all times.

The greatest energy in the universe is the Word of Almighty God. God Himself *Is* a Fire, and the Word of God is a fire. *Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? (Jeremiah 23:29)*

### **The Daughters**

*And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Halohesh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters. (Nehemiah 3:12)*

Women have a role to play in the work of restoration. In the Body of Christ, the Temple of God, there is neither male nor female. It remains true that in the conduct of the family and the churches, where we live at a human level, the husband is the head of the wife. God has placed men in charge of the world and women as their helpers.

But when we are considering the anointing of the Holy Spirit—and the work of restoration is the work of the Holy Spirit—the women have a part to play, a role to fulfill. They are not to be despised and hindered in the fulfilling of their ministries.

*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. (Joel 2:28,29)*

"Your daughters shall prophesy"!

*And the same man [Philip the evangelist] had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. (Acts 21:9)*

If God had determined women should not be active in the Body of Christ, there would have been no women in the upper room where the Church of Christ was born.

*These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. (Acts 1:14)*

If we are familiar with the Book of Acts and the writings of Paul we have some idea of the part that women played in the early churches. The Holy Spirit has shown us plainly in the Word that women are used of the Spirit to build the Kingdom of God.

There have been many women during the past hundred years who have taught the Gospel with power, who have served successfully as missionaries, who have manifested the Spirit of God in healings and miracles. Such ministry would be impossible apart from the Holy Spirit of God.

If, therefore, the Holy Spirit obviously is using women in the work of the Gospel, are we greater than God that we should not recognize His anointing and blessing on women?

Women are to be submissive to their husbands. They are to show in themselves the sober, godly behavior expected in women of God. The Holy Spirit will employ them in the work of restoration according to His own wisdom. The "daughters" are to work alongside the men in the rebuilding of the wall and gates of Jerusalem.

Women are to be especially careful in the area of deception. Women (as well as men) often become spiritually ambitious, seeking to dominate and to obtain glory for themselves. Then they are deceived easily by Satan and launch into areas of religious activity that have little or no value in the Kingdom of God.

Also, wives who are spiritually ambitious create havoc when they attempt to model their husbands according to their own standards of "spirituality." The Lord regards highly those women who possess a meek and quiet spirit, who walk in holiness and the fear of the Lord.

### **The Valley Gate**

*The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah; . . . (Nehemiah 3:13)*

We spoke previously of the valley gate. The valley is the "valley of decision."

*Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 3:14)*

"The valley of decision." "The day of the Lord is near."

The coming of Christ, whether to an individual or to the whole world, always brings us to a point of decision. The decision is whether we will obey and serve Christ or whether we will not obey and serve Christ.

The more Christ enters our life the closer we come to making that final, ultimate decision to cast ourselves wholly on the Lord.

Of all the treasures available throughout the creation, there is no doubt whatever that the most valuable treasure of all is the determination, the power, to cast one's self on the Lord. It is not as easy as it sounds. It requires the grace of God in order for a person to finally and completely abandon himself or herself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Decisions! Each day we must *choose* to go God's way. Each moment we must *decide* to live in Christ and to allow His Person, His Glory, His will, to be expressed fully in our personality.

Adam and Eve had a choice to make. They made the wrong decision. The horror of the consequences of that wrong decision is incomprehensible. Ever since that wretched moment their descendants have been required to choose of their own will to renounce the sinful and rebellious decision of Adam and Eve, meanwhile suffering the consequences of the rebellion, lusts, and death Adam and Eve passed on to us.

Each day of our Christian discipleship we are to renounce, to repudiate thoroughly, to destroy wherever and whenever possible, all sin, all rebellion against Christ, all self-will and self-seeking. We are to be powerfully decisive, our wills of the toughest steel and sharper than any razor. The saint must learn to choose to serve the Lord on every occasion. The wisdom and power to be able to walk single-mindedly with Christ are valuable beyond all other values. Such wisdom and power are not purchased cheaply. If a man were to sell all he possessed and buy the power to decide to serve Christ wholly he would be getting the greatest bargain in the universe.

How many people would give themselves wholly to Christ if they could? And we *can* if we will call on God sincerely, asking Him to give us the desire to serve the Lord. All wisdom, all power are His. If we ask God He will create in us both the desire and the ability to perform His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

Double-mindedness is a curse. When we are double-minded, not being able to decide to follow Christ, not being able to choose to go one way or the other, we are of all people most miserable. God will not answer our prayers while we are in indecision.

The drawing near of the Kingdom of God forces every individual on the earth to make a decision. There are untold multitudes in the valley of decision today. There will be increasing multitudes in that valley as time passes and the hands of the clock approach the midnight hour—the moment of Christ's return to earth.

The way of the King *must be made straight*. Every valley must be filled in and every high place must be leveled. The crooked must be straightened. The rough places must be made smooth. It is the King who is coming. His royal pathway must be constructed in accordance with His majesty.

How is *your* heart and mind today? Can you make up your mind to serve the Lord, turning away from the lust of your flesh? Can you trust God enough to give your loved ones, your job, your ambitions, your joys, your security, to Him? If you are unable to do this, ask the Lord Jesus for the strength to commit all your life, relationships, and possessions to Him. He will give you strength if you will cry out in sincerity.

But if you continue in the things and affairs of the present world you are facing the terrible dangers that are appearing on the horizon. You may decide to wait until the Lord presses you into submission to His will. If Christ is required to send many problems and sufferings your way in order to press you into Himself, be assured that it is His love that has done this for your sake, your welfare. There is a danger that He will regard you as a lazy slave and remove your inheritance from you (Matthew 25:28).

The Lord's people are to be holy—separate from all sin and uncleanness. We are to "come out from among them." No longer is it possible to walk on the fence of indecision. The eternal roles and destinies are being established now.

If we allow the Lord Jesus Christ to become our *personal Lord* we will inherit the rewards that have been assigned to the overcomers. But if we refuse and rebel we will die with all other sinners and rebels. For Christ is Lord and every knee must bow in submission to Him—either voluntarily now or under the fires of wrath at His coming from Heaven.

The Lord Jesus is so wonderful! Can we do less than give Him all our personality and ambitions? If we do not, we will not be able to stand in the coming age of moral horrors.

### **The Dung Gate**

*. . . and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate. (Nehemiah 3:13)*

The "thousand cubits" are symbolic of the thousand-year Kingdom Age, the rule of the Kingdom of God over this earth. Our decision to serve Christ with a perfect heart makes us eligible to be raised at the coming of the Lord Jesus and to rule with him during the thousand-year Kingdom Age. The purpose of the thousand-year period is to finally remove all "dung" from the creation. It is the thousand-year Day of Atonement.

Our decision to serve Christ totally will bring us to the "dung gate." There is much evil, much that is repulsive and disgusting, in the heart of every saint whom the Lord has called. The Holy Spirit will allow us to see the darkness in our personality, and through the authority of the blood of the Lamb and the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit we shall be able to cast the darkness out of our lives.

*But the dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Bethhaccerem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. (Nehemiah 3:14)*

The "dung gate" is an important aspect of the wall the Holy Spirit is building in the day in which we are living.

The repairing of the "dung gate" portrays the development of the ability of the members of the Body of Christ to purge themselves from the sins of the flesh and our self-will. We must learn how to wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. We wash our robes by confessing and forsaking our sinful and rebellious practices, and then by drawing near to God and resisting the devil.

There must be *no sin whatever* in the Church of Christ. The Lord Jesus is the Consuming Fire, the Incarnation of the wrath of God against all sin and rebellion (Revelation 6:16). If we have been leading a careless life, not putting away our sins, we are heading toward suffering and tribulation. We can avoid much sorrow by being diligent now in putting sin far from us with the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Let us at once repair the "dung gate" in our life, thus making ourselves ready for the great Day of Christ that is at hand. We should seek out a fervent body of believers and work with them, having as our collective goal the putting away of sin, and our mutual growth in Christ. It is highly desirable in the present hour to become part of a group of fervent disciples if it is at all possible.

In numerous instances conscientious disciples cannot find a group of Christians that truly are disciples. The church attenders are just that—attenders at "services." In actuality, they are not Christians at all. A Christian is a *disciple* of the Lord, a believer who has forsaken the world, taken up his personal cross, and is following the Master with total dedication.

*And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. (Acts 11:26)*

"The disciples were called Christians."

Where are the Christian disciples today? They are scattered throughout the world. A believer is very fortunate if he can find a group of disciples of the Lord, if he can find a minister of the Gospel who is preaching the Word of God instead of lawless grace and the pre-tribulation "rapture."

### **The Gate of the Fountain**

*But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Colhozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, . . . (Nehemiah 3:15)*

It is the will of Christ that every one of His saints be a fountain of the waters of eternal, incorruptible resurrection life.

*He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (John 7:38)*

In Revelation 1:15 we find the voice of Christ is "as the sound of *many* waters." The voice of Christ, which is the fountain of all life, all spiritual light, is to flow as water from the mouth of each member of the Body of Christ.

It is the will of God that the saints rule with Christ on earth throughout the thousand-year Kingdom Age. The water of life will flow from God through Christ through the saints until "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).

In the case of many of the Lord's people, the well of their life is stopped up with bitterness, unbelief, hatred, unforgiveness, fear. They are carrying a load of guilt and dread. There is more of Hell in their life than there is of Heaven, although they belong to Jesus.

How can such a thing be? If we will look around us in the churches we will see that such indeed is the truth.

How can we unstop the wells of life that are in the hearts of the believers? We must assure them of God's love and encourage them to confess to the Lord their lusts, their doubts, their fears, their bitterness. All this dung, this darkness, must be cast forth through the "dung gate," the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We who may be spiritually stronger are to work with the weaker, assisting them as they release to the Lord their bondages. We can stand in the name of the Lord Jesus and command Satan to release his hold on the lives of God's people. As the believers are released spiritually they will experience the peace of God that passes understanding. Hell will flee from them and the Life of Christ will flow into them. Then the living water will spring up in them and they will speak in tongues and prophesy.

When the new covenant has worked its perfect work there will be no weak member in the Body of Christ. Every person among us is to be a saint of God, filled to overflowing with the Life of Christ. We are to be "mighty men" who stand before God in Zion. When we pass through the valley of Baca (weeping) we are to make it a "well" (Psalms 84:6). We are to bring the reviving Life of Christ wherever we go.

Christ on the cross of Calvary paid the full price for the salvation and healing of every individual on the earth for all time. Our task is to stand on the earth and proclaim the Jubilee, the liberty Christ has purchased with His own blood. As we proclaim release, whoever will believe and receive will be purged of the darkness of Hell and filled with the waters of eternal life.

It is the privilege of the members of the Church, the Body of Christ, to proclaim the total victory that Christ has accomplished for each person.

*And it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call. (Joel 2:32)*

### **The King's Garden**

*. . . and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, . . . (Nehemiah 3:15)*

The Christian people are "the king's garden." They are the "elect" of the Lord in whom His "soul delights" (Isaiah 42:1). We have little concept of the greatness of the Lord's love toward us.

One of the principal burdens of the Holy Spirit in the present hour is the proclaiming of God's love toward His people. We are God's people. His love is toward us. He has known us from the beginning of the world. He has called us in Christ. He has declared us to be righteous, having justified us according to His own will. He gave His only Son in order to make an atonement for us, and through Him will freely give us all things (Romans 8:30-33).

It is time to speak comfortably to God's people. Dark spiritual clouds are moving overhead. God wants each of His flock to understand perfectly that the love of Christ is toward him and that there is no power in the heavenlies, on the earth, or under the earth that can separate one of the least of Christ's lambs from His love and total, unflinching protection. The Body of Christ, the Wife of the Lamb, is a "garden inclosed," a "spring shut up," a "fountain sealed" (Song of Solomon 4:12). For nearly two thousand years the Lord Jesus has waited, knowing that the Father has promised He will see the results of the travail of His soul.

The history of the Christian Church may appear to be a confusing record of stops and starts, of backslidings and revivals. There has been a division of the one Body of Christ into a multitude of competing denominations. But all these "clouds" are "the dust of his feet." The end result will be the Wife of the Lamb, a creature without blemish, a beautiful garden of spiritual delight nourished by the sparkling, flowing fountain of the waters of eternal life.

Today the church is "inclosed" and "shut up." But the time is at hand when the winds of God will blow on the Church and the long-awaited maturing of the Wife of the Lamb will take place.

*Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits. (Song of Solomon 4:16)*

In the near future there will be "north winds" of fiery trials, persecutions, and tribulations. There also will be "south winds" of revival power, and glory without precedent in the history of the earth. Both suffering and resurrection life are visiting the Christian Church in the present hour. It requires both rain and sun to ripen wheat. The Lord of the harvest is waiting for the precious fruit of the earth.

The Christian Church today is a "valley of dry bones." But the winds of God will breathe on the slain and they will live (Ezekiel 37:9). In the hour in which we live the Church is being empowered to "rise"; to "shine." The Glory of Christ is beginning to be seen on the Body of Christ. When Jesus returns, the Church will have been made ready for Him in holiness and in unity, being in His image in every characteristic.

God knows what He is doing. The time for the perfecting of the Wife of the Lamb, who is the King's "garden," is here. All that God has promised concerning the perfecting of His saints is nearly ready to be unveiled in the sight of the heavens and the earth. This is part of the Divine work of restoration.

### **The City of David**

*. . . and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David. (Nehemiah 3:15)*

The city of David was Zion. Zion was an area within the larger city of Jerusalem. Zion had been the fortress of the Jebusites from which they defended the entire city of Jerusalem. King David captured Zion, and Zion became closely associated with him.

*So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inner. (II Samuel 5:9)*

Zion is mentioned many times in the Psalms, the Spirit of Christ in David indicating that Mount Zion is a major scriptural type of the Body of Christ. The Book of Hebrews tells us that we have come to Mount Zion (Hebrews 12:22). One of the first acts of David when he came into power in Israel was to bring back the Ark of the Covenant. However, David did not restore the Ark to its familiar place in the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle of the Congregation. Instead, David erected a tent for the Ark and established praise and worship in Zion, his city. Zion, the city of David, became the location of the Ark and its covering tent.

Meanwhile the remainder of the Tabernacle of the Congregation was left standing on the high place (of former demon worship) in Gibeon. David assigned priests and Levites in Gibeon as well as in Zion. The worship of the Lord continued both at Zion, the place of the Ark of the Covenant, and at Gibeon where the remainder of the Tabernacle of the Congregation was located.

It is our understanding that the separation of the Ark from the rest of the Tabernacle, and the later incorporation of both the Ark and the remainder of the Tabernacle in the Temple of Solomon, are important symbolic representations of the manner in which the Lord Jesus is bringing about obedience and worship to the Father in the earth.

We see Zion and the Ark of the Covenant as signifying the coming of Christ with an army of conquering saints to rule the earth with the rod of iron of the power of the Spirit of God.

The Lord's army is described in Isaiah, Chapter 13; Joel, Chapter Two; Habakkuk, Chapter Three; Revelation, Chapter 19; and in several other passages of Scripture. The overcomers are the Lord's "mighty men," foreshadowed by the mighty men of King David.

The overcomers are the members of the Body of Christ who are being prepared for war and rulership. The Kingdom of God will be established in the earth through means of violence and then maintained with the rule of the iron discipline of the Spirit of God.

Those who ride with Christ in that Day are called, chosen, and faithful (Revelation 17:14).

### **The Sepulchers of David**

*After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Bethzur, unto the place over against the sepulchres of David, . . . (Nehemiah 3:16)*

We do not make much progress in the restoring of worship and obedience to God apart from our acceptance of the death of the cross.

There is no greater need in the churches of our time than the acceptance of the death of the cross. We are willing to believe Jesus' death on the cross was necessary for our salvation, but we also must accept the fact that our death on the same cross is necessary if the work of restoration is to proceed at our hand.

Nothing is accomplished in the Kingdom of God apart from the cross. Apart from the cross, self-will and self-seeking predominate in the churches. Men have a thousand programs, ten thousand ideas—all with the intention of accomplishing something of value in the Kingdom of God.

But all is in vain!

Each person who would be a conquering saint, who would participate in the work of restoration, must die. He or she must die to the self-life: self-will, self-glory, self-seeking, self-centeredness, self-ambitions, self-scheming, self-profiting. God is not seeking our accomplishments, He is seeking to bring us to the cross so He may fill us with Himself.

As we accept the cross into our daily life, the Spirit of God performs the work of the Kingdom of God. When Samson bowed in death he slew more Philistines than he did throughout his entire life.

Notable saints of history have accepted crucifixion with Christ, and the result has been the establishing of the true testimony of Christ. But much of the history of the Christian churches has been characterized by the self-seeking and self-will of fleshly believers.

The power of the Kingdom of God comes only from the cross. In order to be a disciple of Christ a person is required to forsake all, hate his own life, and take up his cross and follow Jesus.

Since "Christian" is the name applied to the *disciples* in Antioch, we can state that the only true Christians are those persons who have forsaken all, who have taken up their cross and are following Christ. A "Christian" is, by definition, a *disciple*.

The disciples are living but they are dead. A true disciple of Christ is a living dead man.

*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

The disciple has died to sin, died to self, died to his own hopes, fears, plans, ambitions, successes, failures, friends, imaginations. He has died to this world. The world is crucified to him and he is crucified to the world. The seasoned disciple rejects fear, rejects the bondage of attempting to please people, because of years of the discipline of the Spirit of God.

When we suffer long enough we become free from all men. The disciple is free from fear because in his heart he is dead already. But he is indestructibly alive because of the eternal resurrection glory of the Holy Spirit of God in him—the same Power that lifted Christ from the dead and set Him at the right hand of the Father.

The true disciple, the conquering saint, has the "sentence of death" in himself.

*But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: (II Corinthians 1:9)*

It is written of the Lord's soldiers that "when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded" (Joel 2:8).

The reason the army of Christ is unconquerable is that the officers and soldiers are living dead men. The Word of God has slain them, separating soul from spirit, joints from marrow. They have been laid bare before God and the flames from the Divine altar have consumed the sacrifice of their lives.

Now they are alive forever in Christ. Every arrow directed against them turns back on the archer. Every pit concealed from them becomes the grave of the adversary. The dead saints are unconquerable!

The "dead" Apostle Paul is preaching today all over the world. Those who count themselves as dead in Christ testify eternally of the Person and Glory of God Almighty.

The believer who would save his life certainly will lose it. But every person who loses his life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's surely will save his life. The abundance of the fruit that will spring from the sown seed of his personality will fill the world to come.

Every person who would attempt to avoid the cross will be deceived by Satan. The work of restoration proceeds from the cross and only from the cross.

When the Christian is strong in himself, then he is weak. But when God brings the believer into weakness through means of various trials, afflictions, discouragements, despairs, fears, dreads, perplexities, obstacles, then the believer is given the strength of God. Christ's power is perfected as we are brought low—even to the point of death.

The heart of the Kingdom of God is the cross. The multitude of followers desired to make Jesus a king. If Jesus had accepted He could have used His power to enable the Jews to overcome the Roman Empire. Emperor Jesus could have established His throne in the palace at Rome. All the nations of the earth would have knelt in homage at His feet.

But God directed Jesus to the cross. God directed Jesus to defeat, to fear, to shame, to pain, to suffering, to bewilderment, to weakness, to a despised, humiliating, agonizing death. Such is the way of the cross. Suffering is part of the work of restoration along with surpassing joy and fullness of glory.

Today the Lord is giving gifts of ministry to the members of the Body of Christ. Glory is coming into the churches. The temptation will be to attempt to use the power of the ascended Christ in order to help us build the Kingdom of God according to the manner in which we think it should be built.

But as long as we are attempting to use the things of God in our own wisdom and strength we will not be able to flow in the resurrection Life of the Father. We may have many successes as we learn to use the power of the name of Jesus. We may heal the sick. There may be instant, dramatic, spectacular solutions to the problems people are having.

Then people will recognize that there is a spiritual realm that can be manipulated in order to accomplish human goals. The world will accept readily any technique (even the name of Jesus) that appears to enable people to live a "happier" life—happier in the sense that they become free to follow their own pleasures.

The world never will accept the way of the cross nor will it accept Jesus' right to rule the peoples of the earth. Miracles? Yes! Obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ? Never!

Perhaps one of the major temptations of the last days will be brought into being when the gifts and miracles are restored to the believers and the world perceives the possibilities, the advantages, that are present in the wisdom and power of the gifts of God. Here we have the basis for the entrance of the False Prophet who has horns (power) like the Lamb of God but who speaks the words of the dragon (Revelation 13:11).

To cooperate with the desires of the world in using the gifts of God will mean success, fame, security, popularity, acceptance. To refuse to cooperate will mean rejection, reproach, shame, harassment, torture, death. What will you do when these alternatives are placed before you? Will you use the gifts of Christ to better your position in the world? What will you do when you have the opportunity through the things of Christ to become a "king"? Will you choose instead to carry your cross behind the Lord Jesus?

The true saint, the true Christian, the true prophet of God, the true witness, the true member of the remnant, does not waste time in hesitation. He is dead already. He knows that the cross is the only source of resurrection life. The true saint is content only when his Master is being pleased. The saint realizes that the world hates Jesus and always hates all true servants of Jesus.

The peoples of the world always will crucify the Lord Jesus wherever they find Him. Yet, they will be willing to be healed in His name provided they do not have to accept His lordship. The unsaved and the unconverted "Christians" are willing to use Jesus in order to make money or to get whatever else they desire.

Many attenders of Christian churches are willing to use the name of Jesus in any manner that will bring about their own improvement. But they have no intention of coming under the discipline of the Holy Spirit or becoming a bondsman of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Such is the way of cross-less Christianity.*

The issue is being joined every day. Many are teaching and preaching that we are to use the Scriptures in order to better our position in this life so we can prosper in our own cross-less ambitions. Such will bear their judgment unless they repent and turn away from this ungodliness.

It is true that the person who adheres to the admonitions of Scripture, such as the advice given in the Book of Proverbs, will be wise and will avoid many pitfalls and tragedies—the disasters that fall inevitably on the foolish, the lazy, the wicked.

But the true saints of God understand the holy Scriptures are not a handbook for health, wealth, and happiness in this world but are the testimony of God's holy prophets and apostles.

The Scriptures primarily are prophecies and exhortations concerning the bringing of righteousness into the earth through Christ. The account reveals that God's saints and prophets have suffered bloody persecutions as they have obeyed the Lord.

*And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (Hebrews 11:36-38)*

Notice the next verse.

*And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, . . . (Hebrews 11:39)*

*Faith* is being taught today as a means of acquiring material possessions. Can you imagine that? How easily the elect are deceived.

But the cross is being returned to the true Bride of the Lamb. The cross is our glory. We have no other glory. The work of restoration will proceed as we are willing to take up our cross and follow Jesus.

The cross is an offense to the Jews. The cross of Christ is foolishness to the wise of this world. But to us who are saved the cross of Christ is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

Let us cease from the modern cross-less gospel, which is under a curse because it is "*another* gospel." Let us return to "the sepulchers of David." Let us return to the way of reproach, of persecution, of suffering for Jesus' sake. That was the way of the saints of the Old Testament. That is the way of the saints of the New Testament.

In returning and rest we will be saved. We will find rest by the quiet pools of David. Christ, the Son of David, will lead us beside quiet waters. He will make us lie down in green pastures. Our soul will be restored as He leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. In the arms of Jesus we will find enough courage, peace, and power to overcome the world, the devil, the lusts of our flesh, and our soulish self-seeking.

The cross is God's way. We are brought down to weakness and nothingness. Then the Glory of God rises on us and the desires of our heart are realized.

### **The House of the Mighty**

*. . . and unto the house of the mighty. (Nehemiah 3:16)*

As soon as progress has been made in the building of the wall and gates, the defenses of Jerusalem (which are a symbolic portrayal of the power of the members of the Body of Christ to overcome and resist sin), then God's "mighty men" will begin to show signs of life in the "sepulchers" of the churches. The spiritual strength of the Church of Christ is being restored in the days in which we are living.

Some have seen visions, in recent times, of a gigantic warrior in the earth who has awakened as if from sleep and is now preparing to perform the works of God among the peoples of the earth. One couple while on the way to the assembly of

the saints paused to watch the figure of a great armed warrior in the sky. This sign—if we wish to call it that—was observed by both husband and wife for several minutes. The warrior had no head.

As we understand it, the Body of Christ is a "mighty man of valor" who now is being created in the Christian people. This is the beginning of the fulfillment of the resurrection of Ezekiel's "dry bones."

As soon as God's warrior reaches the necessary level of maturity, the Head, Christ will come down on the Body. Then the Lord's mighty Man will fall on the forces of evil in the earth with relentless fury and unconquerable strength and wisdom.

*And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. (Micah 5:8)*

*Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; (Psalms 149:6,7)*

*When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops. (Habakkuk 3:16)*

*Do ye not know the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (I Corinthians 6:2)*

*And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, 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)*

As soon as Zion, God's mighty man of war, His right arm of strength, has been built up by the Lord, then Christ Himself will appear in His glory.

*When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. (Psalms 102:16)*

### **The Armory**

*And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armoury at the turning of the wall. (Nehemiah 3:19)*

Notice the involvement of many people. Some repaired a "half part" (verse 17). Some restored "another piece," as the dedicated Israelites followed Nehemiah's lead. Each person repaired straight before him.

It seems likely that the architectural supervision and perfection of the original wall were lacking. The restoration of the wall took place in a hurry and under pressure, as the defenses were thrown up by each Jew who had a heart to work and fight.

So it is today. If we wait for some grand plan to be set in motion it will become too late for us to participate. The Spirit of the Lord is calling now on every member of the Body of Christ to restore each area of need set in front of him.

We are to get busy *now* and follow the Spirit of God moment by moment. It is time to build the wall. Satan, the flesh, the world, and the self-seeking of humans must be thrown out of the Church and kept out.

An *armory* contains defensive and offensive weapons of war. Even the bravest of warriors, the fiercest of fighters, does not rush into combat unarmed. The Holy Spirit has made provision for our warfare against wicked spirits: "(For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds)" (II Corinthians 10:4).

At this point in history we are busy building the Body of Christ and our fighting is mostly of a defensive nature, holding off "Sanballat and Tobiah" while we construct the Church's defenses against the kingdom of darkness. We are exhorted to take to ourselves the "whole armour of God" in order that we may be able to "stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

We must be protected by the armor of "light" and of "righteousness on the right hand and on the left" (Romans 13:12; II Corinthians 6:7). We need to put on the "breastplate of righteousness" and strengthen the breastplate with faith and love (Ephesians 6:14; I Thessalonians 5:8).

Our helmet is the "hope of salvation" (I Thessalonians 5:8). Our loins are to be "girt about with truth" (Ephesians 6:14). Our feet are equipped with the "preparation of the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15).

Having done all, we are to stand like a mountain of rock in the evil day (Ephesians 6:13).

From God's armory we are to obtain the "sword of the Spirit, the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). The sword of the Spirit is living and powerful, sharp enough to divide the soul and spirit and the joints and marrow of the bones. The Word of God pierces to the discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

The Holy Spirit of God wields His sword through the saints in order to save people—to cut through their bondages so they can be released to righteous living. But in the Day of the Lord the Spirit will thrust and slash with awful effect, destroying the forces of wickedness and slaying all who resist the will of the Lamb of God.

The Word of God, the sword of the Spirit of God, is the most powerful, the most terrible weapon in the universe. One thrust and the enemy is destroyed.

*And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19:21)*

## **The High Priest**

*After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning of the wall unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. (Nehemiah 3:20)*

Notice the expression, "earnestly (zealously) repaired." Each member of the Body of Christ must serve Jesus with all the zeal of his or her personality. It is not an hour in which to sleep. Every talent is to be brought to the market place.

The churches in many instances are complacent, lethargic, unbelieving. They are in this condition for two reasons: first, in many countries the Christians are oppressed with material comforts. They are not girded for the battle. They are not ready to endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ. They are entangled with the affairs of the present world.

Second, there is false doctrine in the churches concerning the coming of Christ. In spite of the teaching of Jesus and Paul, the elect are looking for a secret coming of Christ that will remove them from the glorious opportunities for growth and service that will be provided by the climactic events of the closing days of this age.

Economic and political revolutions are at hand. So great will be the tumult and the shaking that the peoples of the earth will faint with fear. This uproar and unsettledness will be the church's greatest opportunity in all history to present the life and light of Christ to the world (Isaiah 60:1-5).

The worldwide shaking is at our doors. Every member of the Body of Christ is to lay aside the concerns of the present life and enter the varied tasks at hand. Each Christian who will take the time to seek Jesus will be assigned a part to play in the end-time harvest. He then is to perform that part with all the zeal of his soul, not in a halfhearted manner as he attempts to engage in the world's corrupt pleasures.

The Christians who will not lay aside the concerns and business of this life will be caught by surprise by the Lord. All the judgments described in the Gospel accounts surely will come on them because they did not prepare themselves earnestly to serve the Lord. They would not help the Lord in the day of battle, in the time of judgment.

The "house of Eliashib the high priest" is mentioned because our High Priest, Christ will come to us in revival power as soon as we go into the armory of God, obtain our weapons, and begin to fight the battles of the Kingdom of God. The Lord will work with us, confirming the Word with signs following when we are doing His will and finishing the tasks set before us.

The fullness of the "high priest," of the Servant of the Lord (Isaiah, Chapter 42), of the Vine (John, Chapter 15), of the Anointed Deliverer who is to come and bring glory to Israel and justice and deliverance to the peoples of the earth, is Christ—Head and Body.

The Head of the High Priest is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Body of the High Priest is the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is being brought to unity and maturity as the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit travail until Christ is formed in us.

As soon as the Lord builds up Zion, the Body of the High Priest, He will appear in His glory. Today the members of the Body of Christ are moving toward maturity, through the grace of Christ given to us by the Holy Spirit. Each member is being perfected in his place "round about the camp" just as the stones of Solomon's Temple were perfected before they were brought to the building site.

When the trumpet of God begins to sound, the Glory of God Almighty will come down and cover every member of the Body of Christ—the people who live by eating the flesh of Christ and drinking His blood. The true saints of all ages will arise from the dead in the fullness of the power of the Spirit and ascend to meet the Lord in the air.

Then the Body will be joined together with the Head. It is the completing of the great High Priest of God. No power in Heaven or on the earth can prevent the flowing together of the Body of Christ in that Day. Church activity as we have known it will come to an end. There is no "temple" in the new Jerusalem, in the Wife of the Lamb because the Lord reveals Himself to each saint in unveiled splendor (Revelation 21:22).

We do not have to worry about the ability of God to bring the Body to perfect oneness in Himself. The Body will flow together just as the Spirit of God brought the animals from distant places to find their refuge in Noah's Ark.

The trumpet of God will sound and the Church of Christ, already having been made one through the work of the Holy Spirit prior to the appearing of the Lord, will be joined to the Head, Christ. Then "all Israel" will be delivered and the Kingdom of God will be established in the earth.

The perfect unity of God's High Priest was set forth by the Spirit of Christ speaking in David:

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. (Psalms 133:1-3)*

The holy anointing oil of the Aaronic priesthood, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, will flow over the Head and continue on down to every member of the Body of Christ. The glory which God has given to Christ will be extended to the Body. The result of the priestly anointing will be the perfect unity of the Church in Christ in God and the bringing of justice and deliverance to the nations of the earth.

The Spirit of God is portrayed as "dew." When the "dew" descends on the Body of Christ, on Zion, in the "early morning hours of the Day of the Lord," then the Lord God will command the blessing of eternal life for each person who will believe God has sent Christ and who will receive Him as Savior and Lord.

## **The Tower Which Lieth Out**

*Palal the son of Uzai, over against the turning of the wall, and the tower which lieth out from the king's high house, . . . (Nehemiah 3:25)*

This is a watchtower, a lookout station.

The fleshly Christian is unaware of the present burden of the Spirit of God. He reads the Scriptures but he may be unaware the purpose of the Scriptures is to lead him to God.

The Scriptures are our guide to faith and conduct and we are to follow them. They are true and cannot be changed. But the Scriptures are the *general* Word of God. In order to be of immediate, personal use they must be made alive by the Holy Spirit of God.

Christians are to be led by the Spirit of God.

It requires much experience in Christ before we are able to separate the voice of the Holy Spirit from the multitude of other voices that speak to us. A saint, no matter how vast his experience in Christ may be, must never relax his vigilance concerning spiritual vision and revelation. We have a cunning, persistent, adversary.

Next to the Scriptures, one of the strongest methods we have for discerning the mind of the Lord, and the present day burdens of the spirit realm, is that of watching in prayer. The maturing saint learns to watch in prayer.

As the believer practices the art of watching in prayer he gradually becomes strong enough to be watching in prayer constantly throughout most of the day and night. He always is on his watchtower. He asks the Spirit's guidance in every detail of life. He prays without ceasing.

Joshua, the soldier, the type of Christ and also of the saint who is pressing forward to resurrection ground, made one damaging blunder. He allowed the Gibeonites to trick him because he did not seek the mind of the Lord in this one instance (Joshua 9:14).

It is not the will of Christ that His Church be blind to what is taking place in the spirit realm. The reason that the churches of today have little spiritual discernment is that the world is in their midst. Sin and worldliness put out the eyes of the saints just as the Philistines put out the eyes of Samson.

The spirit realm is exceedingly active today. God would have His people understand the present burden of the Spirit. In order to come to know the mind of the Spirit we must give ourselves continually to prayer and waiting on the Lord. We continually must ascend into our watchtower and scan the spiritual horizon, listening and looking for the Lord Jesus.

Not all believers are visionary. Some Christians are called to prolonged waiting on God and are given many visionary experiences. Other believers, *equally as spiritual*, do not have this type of burden and gift and do not "see" or "hear" to the same extent. They do not spend the same amount of time in prayer and waiting on the Lord nor are they called to do so. Everyone has his proper gift of God and must press forward in Christ according to his or her individual gift and calling.

Habakkuk was called to be a prophet.

*I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd. (Habakkuk 2:1)*

God does not speak to every saint in the same manner. But God makes each of us aware of His will in one way or another if we will take the time to seek His face diligently.

Christ has commanded every follower of His to watch and pray.

*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. (Luke 21:36)*

*Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. (Matthew 24:42)*

*And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch. (Mark 13:37)*

### **The Court of the Prison**

*. . . that was by the court of the prison. (Nehemiah 3:25)*

Earth's peoples are kept in a spiritual prison by the forces of darkness. This has been permitted by the Lord God of Heaven while He is completing and perfecting His purposes.

Now it is time for the massive doors of the prison to begin to swing open. The prisoners will run toward the first rays of light when they filter through the crack. Inside the ancient stone walls are the teeming billions of the earth—people whom God loves with His great Father's heart.

The Body of Christ is beginning its growth spurt to maturity. The apostles and prophets of Christ are being moved on by the Spirit of God. The almighty power of the living Christ now is available to the saints. Who among us will rise to the spiritual opportunities available now—opportunities without precedent in the history of the world?

The knowledge of the Glory of the Lord is shining brighter with each passing day. Insight into God's purpose and Person is being given to the saints who are watching and praying. The gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit—wisdom and power beyond the imagination of men to conceive—now are available for the asking.

As soon as the Lord begins to work with us with signs following, as we proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, "the court of the prison" comes into view. One of the most important missions of the Church of Christ is the casting out of devils, the releasing of the prisoners of the earth.

*And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; (Mark 16:17)*

The task of the Church of Christ is to set free those who are being held captive by unclean spirits.

The earth is groaning in bondage in the present hour, waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. The revealing of the sons of God will result in the utter destruction of the works of the devil.

Throughout the Church Era the Church is to build itself up, under the guidance and enabling strength of Christ given to the saints through the Holy Spirit, to the place where the Church will be prepared to go forth in the Spirit to destroy the bondages that Satan has placed on the inhabitants of the earth.

When the Church neither is tearing down the works of unclean spirits, rebuking them and casting them out of people, nor building itself up in preparation for the task of destroying the bondages of unclean spirits, then the Church is not in the will of God. The Spirit of God is not being obeyed and followed.

One of the chief occupations of Christ, Head and Body, is the opening of the prison doors so the peoples of the earth can be brought out into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Both the members of the Church and the peoples of the earth are in the bondages of sin, varying from person to person. Through the cross, Christ has delivered the believer from the authority of the devil and has made it possible for him to serve God even though his conduct reflects those aspects of spiritual bondage from which he has not as yet been delivered.

As the Church prays, sings praises, and ministers to the Lord, the power of God comes down from Heaven and releases both the Church and those who hear the Church. Then everyone's bonds are loosed. This is true now and will be true on a worldwide scale at the unveiling of the sons of God.

*And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. (Acts 16:23-26)*

Numerous lashes have been laid on mankind because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. For many centuries the "jailor" has kept us "safely" in the chains of sin and death. We have been in an "inner prison" as well as being bound by an environment that God has cursed. Our feet have been chained to the paths of uncleanness and disobedience to God.

During the dark hours of the present period, and also throughout the still darker hours which yet are to come, the saints are to pray and sing praises to God. The prisoners of Satan will hear the Church as it ministers to the Lord.

Suddenly the Lord will come to the earth and everything will be shaken. The "foundations of the prison," the seat of Satan's operations, the thrones of the evil princes of the authority of the air, the gates of Hell, *shall be shaken*. Everything that cannot resist the shaking will be removed.

The prison doors will swing open. The tremendous power of the Spirit of God raising the bodies of the saints will spill over to many of the prisoners of the earth and loose them from their spiritual chains, just as the power that raised Christ from the dead spilled over onto the "sleeping" saints so they arose from their graves and appeared to many in Jerusalem (Matthew 27:53).

Today is the day of liberation. Now is the Year of Jubilee. The fulfillment of the Levitical Year of Jubilee (Leviticus, Chapter 25) began on the cross of Calvary.

But Christ has been required to wait until the Father makes His enemies His footstool. We are looking forward now to the Day of Redemption, the Day in which our Lord Jesus Christ will appear and put an end to sin in the earth.

Yet the Scriptures indicate that for the present there are to be "times of refreshing" that will come from the Presence of the Lord. There are to be "times" of restoration of all things (Acts 3:19-21). It is our point of view that these periods of reviving will increase in glory until they are climaxed by the appearing of Christ in thunderous power and glory to assume His rightful lordship over the whole earth.

We believe the Spirit of God is declaring we are in one such season of revival opportunity right now and that we are to receive it and act on it.

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times [opportunities] of refreshing [reviving] shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution [restoration] of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:19-21)*

Hosea suggests there will be outpourings of the Spirit of God that will increase in glory until they are climaxed by the return of Christ in full view of the peoples of the earth.

*Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. (Hosea 6:3)*

"He (the Lord) shall come unto us as the rain."

The "morning" is the morning of the Day of Christ, the arising of the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings.

The Lord Jesus will come to His elect as rains of spiritual refreshing. There will be revival power flowing from His Presence that will prepare the Church and the peoples of the earth for the arrival of the King.

Christ Himself is to come to us as the rain, as "opportunities for refreshing." We are employing the term *opportunities* because it is included in the meaning of the Greek word and because it is vital to our understanding. Revival is an *opportunity* for spiritual progress and is of benefit only to the extent human beings press into it in faith. Revival does not fall upon us and bless us apart from our faith and diligence.

The Spirit speaks in the Book of Acts that Christ will send forth spiritual refreshing from His Presence until all that was destroyed by the disobedience in the garden of Eden has been restored.

We must be diligent if we are to discover how much can be done today toward the liberation of earth's peoples from the slavery of sin and rebellion against God. We can work with the greatest joy and confidence for the freeing of multitudes from Satan's prison, being fully assured that total victory is coming with the appearing of Christ from Heaven with the saints and elect angels.

### **The Water Gate Toward the East**

*Moreover the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel, unto the place over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out. (Nehemiah 3:26)*

Once more we have "the tower that lieth out," suggesting that watching in prayer will become increasingly important as we draw near to the coming of Christ.

The pattern of restoration of the wall and gates of Jerusalem suggests the end-time is being portrayed here. We started with the sheep and fish gates, symbolizing the beginning works of the Church of Christ.

Now we are dealing with the house of the mighty, the armory, and the high priest—types of spiritual activity associated with the coming of the Lord Jesus.

The Hebrew prophets reveal to us that the greatest outpourings of the Spirit of God will take place during the Day of the Lord and just preceding the Day of the Lord.

*But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. (Numbers 14:21)*

*For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14)*

*Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. (Joel 2:23)*

*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: (Joel 2:28)*

The "water gate" is "toward the east," that is, close to the morning of the day of Christ.

*Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. (Ezekiel 47:2)*

The Glory of God will be a majestic river flowing from the personalities of the saints, extending the Life of Christ to the farthest reaches of the earth.

*And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. (Ezekiel 47:9)*

As fruitful as the past revivals have been, they are not to be compared in power and effectiveness with the work of Christ that yet is to come and that even now is beginning. For the whole earth is destined be filled with the knowledge of the Glory of Christ, and the peoples of the earth *shall be turned toward God*

Some individuals will not receive Christ and therefore shall suffer the eternal fire. But multitudes will be saved. Blessed be God the Father forever for His remarkable and glorious love for all the peoples of the earth.

*Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. (Isaiah 60:5)*

Notice once more the emphasis placed on watching in prayer ("the great tower") as we approach the return of our Lord Jesus Christ from Heaven:

*After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel. (Nehemiah 3:27)*

### **The Horse Gate**

*From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house. (Nehemiah 3:28)*

In the Scriptures the *horse* is thought of in terms of speed and strength. There are several references that associate the horse with war, particularly with the return of Christ and His conquering saints at the Battle of Armageddon (Joel 2:4; Habakkuk 3:15; Revelation 19:14).

One of the outstanding passages concerning the role of the horse in war is found in Job:

*Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting. (Job 39:19-25)*

The attributes assigned to the war horse show the nature of each soldier in Christ's army. It is the overcomers, the conquerors, who attain the first resurrection. Every person who returns with Christ, appearing with Him in His glory, will possess the characteristics described in this passage.

The conquering saints are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. They are as the heroes of King David and will appear in glory with the Lord Jesus.

The horse's mane is the glory on his neck. On the "neck" of the Lord's conquerors will be the Glory of God. The Word of God in judgment on evil spirits will roar from their mouths with terrific power (Joel 3:16).

The expression (in Job 39:19) "hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?" refers to the quivering, shaking mane of the horse of war. The horse's mane is the symbol of his majesty and strength. It is his glory. If his mane were shaved he would lose his kingly bearing.

God desires that every one of His sons realize he is a king, a son of the Greatest of all kings. We are to conduct ourselves as the rulers of the age to come.

Our discipleship may be long and grueling. We must be brought low and humiliated, as was Jesus. God's rulers are loving, compassionate and cheerful. They are not haughty potentates. For all His power, God is tender and loving. He is not harsh and dictatorial, except toward His enemies. If we would rule with God we must dwell in love, having a spirit of service and meekness, because God dwells in love.

We must be brought low and subjected to weakness and frustrations of every kind. We suffer at the hands of men and demons. But we are not to allow such pain and humiliation to turn into discouragement. These afflictions and problems are exercises in rulership.

We have been subjected to fiery trials *because* we are the sons of the greatest King. We cannot possibly rule with Christ in this world or in the world to come until we have been taught well the basic lessons of the Kingdom of God.

We hold our heads high. We remember that God Almighty is our Father and the Judge of the whole earth. We straighten our back and look every person in the eye. We have nothing of which to be ashamed.

When Christ stood before Pilate it was Pilate who was on trial. History has borne this out.

When Paul the Apostle stood before Nero it was Nero who was on trial. History has borne this out.

When one of Christ's overcomers stands before a court of this world, being persecuted for the Kingdom of God's sake, it is that court, that judge, that is on trial. History without fail shall reveal this to be true.

We are God's kings and priests, the judges, priests, and rulers of the world to come.

*Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each resembled the children of a king. (Judges 8:18)*

*He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. (Numbers 23:21)*

The expression (in Job 39:20) "Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?" speaks of the fearlessness and strength of each member of Christ's army. Each soldier is a man of valor, a proven warrior.

*I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness. (Isaiah 13:3)*

*And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded. (Zechariah 10:5)*

In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. (Zechariah 12:8)

There will not be one weak one among them. Truly, the sight of them is enough to make even a prophet tremble (Habakkuk 3:16).

The Lord's soldiers are able to leap over the enemy, surmounting all obstacles. They leap over every wall of Hell's defenses and proceed to destroy the enemy.

*Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: . . . (Zechariah 4:7)*

*For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall. (II Samuel 22:30)*

*Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the straw, as a strong people set in battle array. (Joel 2:5)*

The "tops of mountains" refers to the governments and powers of the flesh and of Satan that will be overthrown when the Lord Jesus Christ and His army come to establish His Kingdom on the earth.

Christ's saints soon learn that nothing can stop them when they pray. We Christians make a mistake when we become involved in fighting against people, against their resistance to us and our efforts. Our true warfare is not against flesh and blood or physical circumstances.

The battle is spiritual. No matter how impossible our situation may appear to be, no matter how many blockades have been thrown up against us, when we turn to the Lord in prayer and gain the spiritual victory the seemingly insurmountable obstacles are brought into subjection under our feet. We "leap over" them in the power and wisdom of Christ.

"The glory of his nostrils is terrible" portrays the *neighing* of the horse of war. The conquering saints "neigh" majestically. The words of their mouth are not those of hesitation and fear. They speak boldly in the royal authority and power of the name they bear.

The overcomers speak faith and confidence. They know the Word of God gives them all authority over the power of the enemy, and so they are confident with the boldness of kings that they will crush the enemy.

It is not pleasing to God when we are afraid of Satan. We are to fear Christ, not Satan. When we are attacked by evil spirits we are not to cower in fear. Neither are we to become excited and begin to rebuke devils and attempt to cast them out amid much panic and confusion.

The authority of Satan was stripped from him on Calvary. Christ has made prisoners of our captors. Therefore, we do not waste energy and time "fighting" the devil. The devil has been defeated. Our privilege is to stand in the authority of Christ and announce the victory that is ours through Christ. We proclaim defiantly our declaration that Jesus is Victor and that every prisoner of the earth has been loosed in His name.

The war horse "paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength." All of Christ's conquering saints "paw in the valley" and rejoice in the unconquerable strength of Christ their Lord. The *valley* spoken of here is the "valley of decision," which appears as the Day of the Lord draws near.

*Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 3:14)*

The overcomers "paw" in the "valley of decision" because they cannot find rest if there is any question as to whether the will of Christ is being done. The saints refuse to wander in indecision. They climb quickly out of that valley until they are standing on top of the mountain of prayer and communion with the Lord.

The conquerors always are seeking the open Heaven of fellowship with God and Christ. They love God and the ways of God. It is an abomination to them to hesitate in indecision when it comes to serving the Lord Jesus.

They will "paw restlessly" like an impatient and irritated horse when they are brought into contact with the indecision and timidity of the lukewarm believers.

Soldiers in a valley are at the mercy of an enemy who is on higher ground. The overcomers are not pleased with indecision. They wish to know who is on the Lord's side. They desire that everyone "choose this day" whom he will serve.

The strength of the saint is of Christ and he hastens to the battle. His sword is tougher and sharper than the sword of the enemy and so he is certain of victory.

Complacent believers huddle in the imagined security of the flesh. They do not like teaching about suffering, about warfare, about persecution. But the conquering saints go on to "meet the armed men." They are aware of the fact that they are wrestling against wicked rulers formerly of high rank in Heaven. They understand they are not able of themselves to overcome the sophisticated cunning of thousands of years of experience.

Christ's saints stand on the Word of the Lord that nothing will by any means hurt them; that they will tread on the dragon, the lion, and the adder; that in Christ they possess authority over all the power of the enemy.

*Fear* is one of the main weapons of the enemy. The experienced overcomer resists the fear that the devil belches at him.

We believe in the period of time before the return of Christ (which may prove to be a season of unparalleled opportunity for bringing salvation and comfort to the dismayed peoples of the earth), Satan will be enabled (by the Lord and under His control) to overcome the testimony of the saints.

*And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. (Revelation 13:7)*

If during this period of tribulation the adversary can produce fear in the believers he will have them at his mercy. But if the saints will stand resolutely on the promises of God they will walk in personal victory and be able to help the weak who will look to them in the day of trouble.

The Christian never is to allow fear and dread to abide in his heart. Faith and fear cannot dwell together in the same heart. Fear, if we will allow it to, will drive faith out of our heart. But faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

We sanctify the Lord Jesus in our heart. He is our fear and our dread. But we do not fear Satan or his demons and we do not fear people (Isaiah 8:13).

Have you ever been attacked by Satan in the night? Have the demons surrounded you and terrified you? Did you begin to pray frantically? There is a better way. Just have a good laugh and then turn over and go to sleep in the arms of Jesus. He has led Satan and his hosts captive. *Nothing* can harm you if you are abiding in Christ, the mighty Conqueror.

If you fear the Lord, the angel of the Lord is camped round about you. *No* spiritual power can penetrate the defense of the Lord.

The conquering saints do not turn "back from the sword." Many of God's people live in constant fear that Christ will demand something of them that will cause pain and sorrow. They are afraid to turn over their life to God. They are afraid of Divine judgment. They are afraid they are not pleasing to God and that if they attempt to please God He will make such terrible demands on them they will lose everything of value.

If Christ asks for the little loaf of their life so He may be able to bless it and break it into pieces for the feeding of the multitude, they howl in anguish and unbelief.

Isn't the above attitude ridiculous? But it is not ridiculous to the multitude of believers who are afraid to trust in the goodness of God. Many of God's believers hover in the cave of unbelief and worry. Their unbelief prevents them from understanding that everything they possess was given to them by the Lord, and that He has the power at any instant to remove every one of their possessions without asking. They are helpless to resist.

They huddle in their doubt and fear, clutching their rags and ashes.

The conquering saints want nothing whatever to do with such unbelief, fear, timidity, indecision, and confusion. They bring themselves and all their possessions to the Lord. They *ask* for His judgment on them and their deeds. They *want* the light of God's will to shine on them. They run to the light. They welcome the judgments of Scripture and of the Holy Spirit so they can perfect their way before the Lord.

The conquering saints are accustomed to having fiery arrows shot at them. They realize they are in a battle but they do not flee from the battle. They know Jesus is Victor and that the safest, most joyous place in the entire creation is the will of God in Christ.

The saint who is living in the shelter of the most High is completely safe, perfectly protected. He is much safer than the fearful believer who is cowering in the "protection" of the flesh.

The conquering saints go forth to the Lord's battles with such "fierceness and rage" against the enemy that they cover ground quickly. They appear to "swallow the ground" because they are moving so swiftly in the Lord.

The Spirit seems to be speaking today that there will be delay no longer. God intends to bring the wheat and the tares to maturity in a decisive, complete manner.

In time past there has been much hesitation, much cajoling of people as teachers and pastors have encouraged the Lord's people to consecrate their lives to Him. Some have consecrated their lives. Many more have not. It has been a long, slow process in which people have fallen away from the Lord and then returned to the Lord.

But it seems in the Spirit that this day of hesitation is over. It is the will of God that all middle ground be cut away. Every believer must make a clear choice. What is going to be done will be done quickly.

*For I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God. (Ezekiel 12:25)*

*For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. (Romans 9:28)*

It is an hour of great tribulation for the unsaved and saved alike. But every individual who will allow God to work His work in him will be able to cover spiritual ground rapidly. The spiritual insight that in time past was gained by a few saints over a period of many years will be thrust on the believers of today. In a short time the members of the Body of Christ will grow into the maturity and unity set forth as the standard of the Scriptures.

*Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. (Isaiah 66:8)*

Zion, in the Scriptures, speaks of the strength of Jerusalem to conquer its enemies. Zion was a fortress. The "children of Zion" are the victorious saints. A nation of such conquering Christians will be brought forth as soon as Zion travails in birth in the last days.

Christ is being formed in the saints. Christ is the Mount Zion to whom we have come.

One moment there will be helpless, divided churches, pitifully dependent on the support of the world, competing against themselves as the pastors scramble for large numbers in attendance at "services."

The next moment there will be the Body of Christ, the Wife of the Lamb. The Divinely endowed giant will stand astride the earth—wise, powerful, filled with the fullness of the Spirit of God Almighty, holy, separate from sin and sinners, in total union with Christ.

The Christian churches have struggled along for nearly two thousand years. But the firstfruits of the Wife of the Lamb will come suddenly to glorious, spotless perfection and fullness of power in the matter of a few years.

What means God will employ to bring about this abrupt and conclusive maturing and unifying remains to be seen. But the Spirit seems to be speaking that now is the time for the Bride to put on her beautiful garments, preparing herself for service and the coming of her Lord from Heaven.

It is time now for each disciple to "swallow the ground with fierceness and rage." Fearful believers hold back in the day of battle and sometimes lose their crown because of such timidity and hesitation.

*But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord. (James 1:6,7)*

God takes no pleasure in timidity because this attitude springs from unbelief in His Person and Word. Courage is required on the part of a believer if he is to press forward to the fullness of his inheritance in Christ.

Fear, unbelief, and disobedience go together. Courage, faith, and obedience to God go together.

The conquering saints cannot stand still at the sound of the war trumpet. When the member of Christ's Body hears the war trumpet of the Lord he is ready to do battle. He laughs with Christ, a strong, confident laughter. Trusting in Christ's cross he scoffs at the enemy.

The overcomers understand thoroughly that God has given all authority, all power, to His beloved Son. The conquerors know no power can possibly harm any person who rests his complete trust in the Conqueror, Christ. Each saint goes forth in the Spirit of the Lord to tread on all the powers of darkness.

The conquering saints "smell" the battle at a distance. The "nose" of the Church has not been working as it should. The nose refers to the ability of the saints to know when spiritual battle is taking place. Today, many preachers are speaking "peace and safety" to the Lord's people. They do not understand the conflict of the ages is upon us. They cannot "smell" the battle.

In some instances it may be true that a large part of the activities of an assembly of Christians is of the flesh and Satan. There is no discernment. The services are not conducted in the Holy Spirit. The programs are of little use in the Kingdom of God. Spiritual warfare is not taking place. But the members keep on laboring diligently in their fruitless endeavors.

Every member of the Body of Christ should be calling on God to send to us the ability to discern what is of the flesh, the soul, and Satan, and what truly is of the Spirit of God.

The soldiers of the Lord's army can "smell" the presence of the evil one. They know when a battle is at hand. The Spirit of the Lord begins to move on them and they prepare their minds and hearts for warfare. The true saint of God never will compromise with the spirit of the age, with his own flesh and self-will, or with evil spirits.

To one of Christ's soldiers the most invigorating, inspiring sound in the universe is "the thunder of the captains, and the shouting." The saint rejoices in the battles of the Lord because he knows that Christ already has defeated the enemy and that a tremendous increase in righteousness, peace, and joy is at hand.

Whenever the Spirit of God begins to move toward the liberation of some individual, or of a group of people, the overcomer is filled with Divine glory. He may feel in his spirit the thunder of the power of Almighty God. He may hear the shouting of directions as Christ through His officers moves against the enemy. It brings joy to the saints to behold the spiritual bonds loosed and the peoples of the earth made whole in spirit, in soul, and in body.

### **The East Gate**

*After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate. (Nehemiah 3:29)*

The "east gate" is brought to our attention. Christ's coming will be the rising of the sun of the Day of the Lord.

*But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. (Malachi 4:2)*

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy [the Scriptures]; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: (II Peter 1:19)*

The work of restoration will be greatly enhanced when the Lord Jesus Christ appears in the clouds of glory in and with His glorious perfected Body—the Church. Christ will appear both *in* and *with* His saints.

If Christ were to appear only *with* His saints He would have set up His Kingdom two thousand years ago, and it would not be necessary for God to take such extreme care in perfecting us. But because Jesus will appear *in* us, as well as *with* us, there must be a total transformation of all that we are.

Christ will be glorified *in* His saints (II Thessalonians 1:10; John 17:10).

Each reviving downpour of the Holy Spirit brings the Church closer to the Day of the Lord, to the glorious Day when Christ is exalted in the eyes of the nations of the earth.

Just prior to His return, Jesus will send down from Heaven the fullness of the harvest rain—the greatest issuing of God's Spirit in the history of mankind. The "latter rain" will bring the Lord's "wheat" to maturity in preparation for the harvesting of the earth.

The believer who overcomes, who conquers the world through Christ, is the one who lives every day in expectation of the coming of the Lord Jesus. When the Christian watches and prays, hastening the coming of the Lord by his godly behavior, every part of his life and personality is brought into Divine perspective and harmony.

But the believer who does not watch and pray, who does not live every day in the joyful expectation of the Lord's return, soon will drift from his moorings. His life will move away from the Divine order and plan for him and confusion will result.

Ezekiel was a priest and prophet of Israel during the years that Israel was in Babylon in captivity, before the beginning of the work of restoration. The Spirit of God gave Ezekiel a detailed description of a temple which would be "the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever" (Ezekiel 43:7).

Although many physical details are mentioned that have to do with animal sacrifice, which never will be resumed now that Christ has given His own body as the final offering to the Father, yet glimpses of truth for the Body of Christ can be found throughout the description of Ezekiel's temple.

We understand Ezekiel's temple to be the restored temple—the result of the work of restoration. Several times in the description we find mention of the *east*. This expression indicates that the restored temple has to do with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from Heaven with His saints.

No doubt the temple that Ezekiel saw in vision is a representation of the Body of Christ; for there is no temple of God other than Christ and His Body.

The vision of the Lord in the first chapter of Ezekiel speaks of the image of Christ—the image to which each son of God has been called. The many details of the temple refer no doubt to the creation of Christ in the inner man of the saint.

Notice in particular, with reference to the coming of the Lord Jesus:

*Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. (Ezekiel 43:1,2)*

We know from the second chapter of Ephesians that the saints are being made "an habitation of God through the Spirit."

We understand from the fourth chapter of Ephesians that the ministries and gifts of the Holy Spirit will labor until all the members of the Body of Christ come "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Therefore, the work of restoration, which includes building to maturity and unity the Body of Christ, is being performed with a view toward the revealing of Christ—a view toward the "east."

The moment the Body of Christ has attained God's standard for maturity and unity the Spirit "shall bring forth the headstone thereof [Christ] *with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it*" (Zechariah 4:7). (Zechariah was one of the principal prophets during the work of restoration.)

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

### **The "Goldsmiths"**

In verses 31 and 32 of Nehemiah, Chapter Three, there is mention of the *goldsmiths*, of the *Nethinim* (temple servants), of the *merchants*, of the *Gate Miphkad* (Muster Gate), and of the *Sheep Gate*.

*After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner. And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants. (Nehemiah 3:31,32)*

The "goldsmiths" bring to our mind the pure gold, the tested, transparent faith and character of the saints of the holy city.

*Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw; (I Corinthians 3:12)*

*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (I Peter 1:7)*

We came naked into this world. We shall leave this world laden with eternal gold if we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth.

The faith wrought in us is infinitely more precious than the gold mined from the earth. But the gold of our faith must be purified in the fires of tribulation until it is clear as glass. Our faith in God and Christ must be purified in the fire.

*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; . . . (Revelation 3:18)*

The advice in the preceding passage was given by the Lord Jesus to the church in Laodicea. The church in Laodicea is the church in which the religion of humanism has made inroads. Laodicea always responds to the comforts and desires of people. It is not God-centered.

Unlike the other six churches of Asia, the church in Laodicea received no word of praise from Christ.

To those who would be victorious and come out from among the lukewarm, the nauseous, from those who love the rights of people more than the rights of God, the Lord Jesus counsels: "Buy of me gold tried in the fire."

The believer of the church of the Laodiceans who decides to become one of the Lord's remnant, a true overcoming saint, indeed will be persecuted. His gold will become so pure as to be transparent. His faith will be purified in the fires of affliction. Each saint who thus conquers the lukewarmness of Laodicea will be raised to sit on the throne of Christ (Revelation 3:21).

Those who suffer shall rule. Those who share the sufferings of Christ will share also the incorruptible, indestructible, resurrection life of Christ.

The way of the Wife of the Lamb, the new Jerusalem, is the way of faith tested and purified in the fires of tribulation until it becomes so pure as to be transparent.

*. . . and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. (Revelation 21:21)*

### **The "Temple Servants"**

The "Nethinim" (temple servants) remind us that "his servants shall serve him" in His Temple, the new Jerusalem, forever.

The concept of being Jesus' servant, His bondsman, needs emphasis in the days in which we are living. It appears many of the Lord's people view Christ as their servant, and redemption as a scheme for their convenience in the present world. This is a false viewpoint and certainly will lead to lack of success in our discipleship.

We are Christ's bondsmen, His servants. He died for us; therefore our life belongs to Him. We live each day to do His will, not our will. We do not attempt to convince God through prayer that He ought to bless us and help us in our many endeavors. We present our life a living sacrifice in order that we may do God's will and please Him.

It appears many people who have received Christ as their Savior have never received Him as their Lord. Jesus is our Lord. We serve Him. Our own life is expendable in the work of the Kingdom. Christ is to be magnified by our life. Christ is to be magnified by our death. It matters only that Christ is served and magnified. For us to live is Christ and to die is gain.

The purpose of the work of restoration is to establish obedience to God and the worship of God among the peoples of the earth.

### **The "Merchants"**

The reference to "merchants" indicates that when the wall and gates of Jerusalem (the ability on the part of the members of the Body of Christ to resist sin) have been fully constructed, the Church will be ready to do God's business in the earth. The Lord Jesus Christ working through His saints will establish the Kingdom of God on the earth.

The "merchants" remind us of the parable of the talents, found in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Book of Matthew. The importance that the Lord places on each servant using his talents is emphasized by the severe consequences that will fall on the lazy believer.

*For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. (Matthew 25:14)*

*And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 25:30)*

The only sin committed by the "unprofitable servant" was neglecting to work diligently for his master.

### **Clergy and laity.**

If we view the restoration as beginning approximately at the time of the Protestant Reformers it can be seen that one of the major aspects has been the narrowing of the gap between "clergy" and "laity."

The Catholic Church places so much emphasis on the distinction between the clergy and the laity that the ministers are termed "priest" and "father." Such terminology is contrary to our Lord's teaching (Matthew 23:8-10).

As the work of restoration has proceeded the gap between clergy and laity (an unscriptural concept) has been narrowed, although it still exists in all but the most forward looking of the assemblies of saints.

There is no doubt the concept of clergy and laity, of pastor and congregation, is being redefined and transformed by the Holy Spirit. As the pastor-congregation division often is conceived it is not a suitable concept in terms of the transformation of the believers into fervent disciples of the Lord Jesus and the emerging of the Body of Christ.

The writer is a pastor in the traditional sense. We recognize that drastic changes in human institutions cannot be made overnight. We must teach people and prepare ourselves, as did Ezra, to do the Lord's will. The Holy Spirit of God helps us as we move along in patience and Divine wisdom.

It is not the office of *pastor* that is being changed, for that office is one of the ministries given by the ascended Jesus for the building of the Body of Christ. Rather, it is the concept of *clergy* and *laity*, of priest and people, that is unscriptural, and harmful to the development of strong disciples who will put their talents to use in the Kingdom of God. We ought to avoid the terms "Reverend," "His Holiness," and "Father" when referring to human beings.

### **The meaning of *disciple*.**

Perhaps the transformation taking place hinges on the term *disciple*. A Christian, by definition, is a disciple of Christ. What is a disciple? A disciple is a person who is learning the ways of the Kingdom of God from Christ through the Holy Spirit.

There is a distinction between a member of a congregation and a disciple of Christ. While some members of congregations are true disciples, let us draw these two roles apart so we can examine them. For the members of the Body of Christ are disciples of the Lord Jesus—every one of them without exception. But many of the members of the Christian congregations are not disciples and therefore not members of the Body of Christ.

This may appear to be an overstatement but it is true nevertheless.

The problem has to do with role expectation. In the traditional pattern, the church members congregate to hear the pastor preach a sermon. Hopefully, the sermon will bring comfort and courage to the hearts of the people so they may pursue their daily tasks in a more godly manner and with increased joy and peace.

In current practice, the pastor has his profession and the members of the congregation have their professions and occupations. The pastor officiates at their sprinkling as infants, at their baptism in water when converted, at their marriage, and at their death. He is their spiritual guide through life. This is somewhat of a priestly role.

But such is not the way of the Body of Christ. Each member of the Body of Christ is a dedicated disciple. The apostle is a dedicated disciple. The prophet is a dedicated disciple. The pastor is a dedicated disciple.

The person who has the gifts of healing is a dedicated disciple. The person who gives money is a dedicated disciple. There is not one of these disciples who is a spiritual guide, a priest, a Reverend, to the others. But each at some point may serve as a guide and helper to the other.

Why, then, do such disciples assemble? They assemble to be built up in Christ. What role do pastors, teachers, and other elders play? They give of their gifts and their experience to the less mature believers, but not in the sense of a priest.

The true concept of the Body of Christ, of discipleship, is somewhat like that of the various trades, such as printing, carpentry, and plumbing. The individual starts out as an apprentice. After sufficient instruction and practice he becomes a journeyman. Finally he is elevated to the rank of master craftsman.

Meanwhile he is working, and also teaching those of lesser skill in the trade. This is how the Body of Christ is to be organized.

The reason why the pastor-congregation concept is inefficient and ineffective in building up the Body of Christ is that those who congregate are not coming as learners. They are coming to fulfill what is expected of them as believers. They are not intent on mastering various aspects of the Kingdom of God to the extent they can perform the work of the Kingdom and build up the Body of Christ.

Let us say that Fred Smith is an apprentice printer. He is twenty years old and is engaged to be married.

On Saturday he attends a trade school where he is studying lithography. The topic this Saturday is color registration. Fred watches carefully as marks are made on the plates to insure that the several colors will not overlap or be outside the specific boundaries set for them.

He understands that such knowledge will lead directly to his becoming a master lithographer with the privileges that such an attainment will bring. Although he is tired from working all week he forces himself to stay awake. He makes notes and sketches on a pad he carries with him.

On Sunday he and his fiancée, Shirley Samson, attend the morning church service. Fred and his future wife have been raised in church. They slip into a pew. The time comes for the sermon. The pastor delivers a message of great interest and concern to himself. He has prayed over it. The subject is child abuse. The pastor is able to express his indignation at such an outrage and hopes to make some social impact toward relieving this scandalous condition.

Fred has no children but he is interested in the subject. He becomes indignant at the examples of abuse given in the sermon. He looks at Shirley. They agree silently that they would never be guilty of such an abomination (not having experienced the demonic pressures that come on all married couples—even Christian couples).

Soon Fred's head nods. He has worked hard all week. He was busy in school on Saturday. The pastor's third point, although clearly and simply stated, is not heard by Fred because he is asleep. But when he becomes a father what he has heard may prevent him from venting his anger on his child.

Fred would not bring a notebook and force himself to think about every point made. Why should he? He doesn't intend to become a minister. His ambition is to be a master lithographer. What would be the purpose of writing down the main points of the sermon and going over them at home? How would he use such information? Toward what goal would it lead him?

Fred is a clean-living, wholesome young person. So is Shirley. But they are not disciples of Christ. They are not members of the Body of Christ, of the Body of the Servant of the Lord, except in a nominal sense.

Fred and Shirley will not grow in Christ under these conditions. They have been going to church since early childhood. But they would never invite other young people to meet with them so they could impart the little knowledge of the Scriptures they have gained through years of exposure. They are too busy in the things of the world to set aside the time and energy to minister to others. After fifty years of church attendance they will know little more of the Scriptures than they do now.

Fred's first interest is printing. His second interest is his fiancée. Church attendance is his religious duty that he performs faithfully. It could not be said truly that Fred is seeking first the Kingdom of God. He is not a disciple.

The current pastor-congregation set of role expectations (the role of the pastor is to preach and the role of the congregation is to attend on Sunday morning and listen) is a wasteful, inefficient system for going into the world and making disciples of all nations. This pattern never will fulfill the great commission given by the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

The gathering of disciples, on the other hand, is quite different than the church service Fred and Shirley are accustomed to. The assembly of fervent members of the Body of Christ is similar to the gathering of apprentice printers at the Saturday trade school.

Raul Sanchez is a disciple of the Lord Jesus. So is his fiancée, Eliana Martinez. They are both in their early twenties and both have grown up in neighborhoods where violence and gang warfare are common. They had been using drugs since their high school days.

One day they found their way into the Center. The Center is operated by young men and women of their own age having backgrounds similar to that of Raul and Eliana.

The young Christians of the Center are fervent disciples, already having gained experience in conquering sin and the world. They live, breathe, and think about the Lord Jesus twenty-four hours of every day of the week. They are wholly absorbed in following Jesus. They are bearing their cross after Jesus.

Raul and Eliana became Christians at the Center with the understanding that a Christian is someone who is following Christ with his whole heart. Christ is the Focus of his life, the Guide and Reason for every decision, every action. The disciples at the Center are learning every moment of their life how to serve the Lord more effectively. For each of them, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Raul and Eliana began to attend a church where the pastor is aware of the transition the Holy Spirit is making—the transition from the clergy-laity concept to the Body of Christ concept.

Their pastor understands he is training disciples who will learn and who will bring to other people that which he is teaching. He is not desirous of gaining large numbers of persons to fill the building each Sunday. His concern is that each person whom he is instructing is receiving and mastering what is being presented so person soon may be able to present the Kingdom of God to others.

The pastor who is teaching people who will never carry on his teachings is wasting his time and God's time. The Gospel never will cover the earth until every person who is being taught is committed to teach others also. There no longer is time to "play church."

The pastor of Raul and Eliana, because of his commitment to discipleship, is more interested in building up the saints than he is in building up the attendance. He understands thoroughly that in Kingdom work it is far better to have twenty dedicated disciples than two thousand casually interested church-attenders.

Two thousand lukewarm believers will do little else than seek counsel for their family problems and complain about their lack of convenience and comfort. But twenty dedicated disciples will shake the earth in the name of Jesus.

The assembly of saints that Raul attends is little different from the conventional church. The customary piano, organ, pews, pulpit are all present. The principal difference is that most of those who attend are active disciples. They are assembling in order to worship God and to charge their spiritual batteries so they can go forth as light bearers in this dark world.

There is prolonged, fervent worship in the Spirit. The time comes for presenting the Word of God. The pastor teaches on the subject of forgiving those who sin against us. He stresses the importance to the spiritual life of keeping one's heart free from grudges, from bitterness, from revenge, from malice.

Raul and Eliana are intensely interested. They know how important grudges and revenge are to the gangs in their neighborhood. They take notes so they can study the Scripture references at home. They are so anxious to please Jesus that they are eager to know more of this spiritual principle. Forgiveness is, they learn, central to our fellowship with God.

The number one vocation of Raul and Eliana is their discipleship. Their jobs by which they earn the money for their food and shelter are secondary in importance.

As soon as they relate the principle of forgiving others to their own spiritual condition they will be able and ready to share this understanding with others. It will not be long before they will be heard teaching the new young people who are coming to the Center that we have to forgive those who have harmed us if we expect God to forgive our sins.

There is a difference in kind between Fred Smith and Raul Sanchez. Fred's chief interest is becoming a journeyman printer and finally owning his own shop. Fred does attend church each Sunday. Each service he hears a well-outlined sermon concerning the moral issues of our culture.

He will do his best to conform to the preaching provided he is not attacked spiritually to the point that he is unable to overcome. If that happens he will go the route of numerous men—divorce, alcohol, anxiety, the worship of money. He no longer will find time to attend church.

Raul Sanchez is a dedicated disciple, working at mastering the principles of the Christian life as vigorously and selflessly as the most dedicated musician works at mastering the principles of his instrument.

Raul Sanchez will learn more of Christ in one year than Fred Smith will learn in his entire life. Raul Sanchez soon will find more open doors to share his faith than he will have the time and strength to manage. Fred Smith may never throughout his entire life bring a vital testimony to bear on another human being.

Fred will be taught that saving souls is important. But he will find no practical way to go about saving souls, except perhaps in a time of Sunday-school canvassing of the community.

Raul Sanchez will be taught how to worship and obey God, how to live and fight in the Spirit of God. His whole life will be a supremely powerful force effecting change in his family, his relatives, his friends, and a multitude of other people who are brought by the Holy Spirit to drink of Raul's fountain of living waters.

When referring to people being blessed by Raul Sanchez we are not speaking of the evangelical zealot who goes about attempting to get people to subscribe to the "four steps of salvation," alienating the Jews and others with whom he comes in contact, or to the Christian who has been given by the Spirit a special gift of soul winning.

Rather, our reference is to the true disciple of Jesus. The true disciple is a believer who is becoming a new creation, who is being made the living expression of Christ. Christ is the eternal moral law of God made flesh, the eternal Witness of God. Those who give their life wholly to the Lord Jesus always have a profound effect on those with whom they come in contact. They are true witnesses of God, and all true witnesses bear witness for eternity.

There are billions of human beings today who are living their life without Christ. The pastor-congregation pattern of role expectations (the pastor preaches and the congregation sits and listens) never will reach the majority of this mass of souls as far as conforming them to the will of God is concerned.

But the Holy Spirit is calling out from these spiritually inefficient assemblies a warlike remnant of people, young and old, who are ready to be disciples of Christ in the New Testament sense of the word.

Before Christ returns from Heaven these new disciples will make an impact on every human being on the earth. Because of their acceptance of death with Christ on the cross, their absolute, single-minded obedience to the Father, they will accomplish more in the next few years than has been accomplished over the past two thousand years of church history.

### **The "Muster Gate"**

The "Muster Gate" ("the gate Miphkad"—Nehemiah 3:31) speaks to us of the military aspect of the Christian discipleship. Discipleship and being a soldier have many points in common.

*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (II Timothy 2:2-4)*

*Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (II Timothy 2:3)*

Notice the close relationship between discipleship and being a soldier of Christ. A soldier is a man under discipline. He is dedicated to the service of his king. He will give his life for his country. He will obey orders, even to death. He lives to serve his king and country. So it is with the disciple of Christ.

A good soldier endures hardness without complaining. He realizes that in order to win a war there must be much suffering, much danger, much discomfort to one's self. He does not complain because complaining would weaken the hands of his fellow soldiers and aid the enemy.

*No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. (II Timothy 2:4)*

A soldier has one goal in life—to keep himself prepared to destroy the enemy of his king. Every other matter is secondary in importance. A good soldier does nothing that will enable the enemy to catch him off guard and do damage to what he has been assigned to protect.

Fred Smith is entangled with the affairs of this life. His heart is set on making money so he can get married, buy a house, own a new car, furnish his home with nice things, and gradually acquire additional articles of comfort and convenience. The church is a place where he goes on Sunday because that is what a "Christian" is supposed to do. Fred's mind seldom is on "things above." He is not seeking first the Kingdom of God. He is seeking first the material riches. Matters pertaining to his religion are secondary in importance. He will give some attention to church activities when he finds the time.

Fred does not view himself as a soldier of Christ. The concept that he should keep his involvement in this world to a minimum in order that he may effectively serve the Lord Jesus is foreign to him.

He believes he should work hard, and that if he attends church regularly it will help insure he will go to Heaven when he dies. Since he will not die until he is an old man (so he thinks) he will put off worrying about Heaven until he gets closer to it. By the time he is elderly his habits will have become so deeply ingrained that should he desire to become a disciple of the Lord Jesus he might find it quite difficult.

Raul's attitude of mind is altogether different. His mind, his heart, are kept on "things above." The seeking of the Kingdom of God is first in importance to him. He deliberately keeps his involvement in the things of this life to a minimum so he always will be alert and ready to serve the Lord.

Raul, a skilled auto mechanic and a conscientious employee, already has turned down one excellent job opportunity because he would have had to work nights and Sundays frequently and this would have seriously interrupted his meeting with the saints and his ministry at the Center. By the time Raul is elderly he will have become a prophet—an eternal witness of God.

Raul has the spirit of the Christian martyrs. He would give his life for his testimony if that were required. To Raul, Heaven is not a far off place where he will go when he is seventy or eighty. Heaven is his homeland, the place that each day is becoming more real to him. He is ready to die in his twenties because his heart leaps with joy at the thought of seeing his Christ and the saints in glory.

When Raul's pastor preaches on the cross, on suffering, on giving one's life for the Lord, Raul is filled with glory and joy. His spiritual life is an adventure, a joy, a romance with Jesus. He is continually growing in power and vision.

When Fred's pastor preaches on the cross, on suffering, on giving one's life for Jesus (which is seldom because the congregation enjoys "positive" preaching and would soon leave if the pastor became "negative"), Fred is disquieted and dismayed. He sees no necessity for dwelling on pain and misery. He would far rather think about the passages of the Scripture that bring assurance to him that God loves him and will protect and bless him. His "promise box" at home contains no "negative" passages.

If the Lord Jesus were to call Fred to service in some foreign land, this would interfere with Fred's ambitions, hopes, and dreams. He probably would not obey and would continue with his pursuits, hoping the "feeling" would go away. Although he might be somewhat aware he may be disobeying Jesus he would trust that he will go to Heaven anyway because "we are saved by grace and not by works."

Fred is ignorant of the fact that the Kingdom of God will come to the earth in the near future. He never has been taught this. His concept of future events is that some day he is going to Heaven to live in a "mansion."

If Fred is pressed hard enough he may compromise his Christianity. He does not have enough inner fire to stand up for Jesus if it means painful personal sacrifice or martyrdom.

Fred is not a soldier of Christ. He is not a disciple, a saint, a man of God, an active member of Christ's Body. Because he is not a victorious, conquering saint he is not eligible for the first resurrection—the resurrection of God's kings and judges. He is not ready to be revealed to the creation as a son of God. Fred is being taught that he will be caught up in his lukewarm state in a rapture so he will not be called on to suffer tribulation.

The doctrines of the "rapture," of gaining material possessions by faith, of being saved by "grace" independently of the kind of behavior the believer practices (lawless grace), are perfectly suited to Fred. These doctrines, which are foreign to the concept of Christian discipleship, have deceived Fred into believing he can live as a worldling and yet enjoy the rewards of the Christian martyrs and prophets.

Raul is a soldier of Christ, a disciple, a saint, a man of God, an active member of Christ's Body, His army. Raul is eligible for the first resurrection because he is an overcomer. In fact, his daily life is an attaining of the first resurrection as he begins to share in the incorruptible resurrection life of Jesus and the sufferings of Jesus. Raul is being prepared to be revealed with the Lord Jesus at His appearing.

If the Lord called Raul and Eliana to the mission field they would be filled with rejoicing.

Fred is a man of this world, although he hopes that through his agreement with the doctrines of his church he holds a ticket to Heaven. He does not care particularly about dwelling in Christ and God or They in him. He just desires to avoid Hell when he dies.

Raul is starting out to become a prophet. Every true saint of God is a witness and a prophet. The Spirit of the most high God rests on Raul and dwells within him. He is walking in the steps of Moses, of Jeremiah, of Abraham, of Daniel, of Paul, of Peter, of James. He is one of the elect, the remnant of whom this world is not worthy.

Fred is at home in this world. Raul is a pilgrim and a stranger. He is spending his life looking for a city that has foundations, an abiding place of rest in the heart of God. He is seeking—and he shall find—the full knowledge of God through Christ, the "city which hath foundations."

Raul has the promise of Christ that he will be guarded during the hour of temptation that soon is to come upon us. He has kept the word of Christ's patience and Christ will keep him throughout the age of moral horrors that is on the horizon.

Fred already has surrendered to the antichrist spirit, the spirit of worldliness and material gain, and therefore is in danger of everlasting torment.

Raul Sanchez and Eliana Martinez are disciples. They are Christians.

Fred Smith and Shirley Samson are not disciples. They are not Christians.

The final mention of the "Sheep Gate" reveals that our Good Shepherd always will be among His sheep, gently and lovingly making them lie down in green pastures and leading them beside the quiet waters (Isaiah 40:11).

Even while we are making our pilgrimage through this "valley of the shadow of death," striving to please God while we yet are in a physical body that is "dead because of sin," Christ leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Such are the wall and gates of Jerusalem. The gates of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, are *twelve* in number (Revelation 21:21). There were twelve tribes of Israel. *Twelve* is the number that symbolizes the *completeness* of God's household.

There is an important concept embodied in the *twelve* gates. It is that God is going to guide His sheep until every one attains the perfection required for his or her place in the new Jerusalem.

We are not implying that everyone ultimately will be saved. Rather, we are stating every individual whom Jesus regards as one of His own will be made perfect through His redeeming glory, provided, of course, he or she obeys the Lord and cooperates with Him in the program of redemption. There is no place in the Kingdom of God for the lazy, disobedient person.

### **Three Levels of Attainment in Christ**

The Scripture appears to set forth three levels of attainment in Christ. These three levels are mentioned in the eighth chapter of the Song of Solomon.

The first level, the hundredfold, are the mature saints who are a wall of resistance against sin and who are exceedingly fruitful and strong in the Lord Jesus. They have found favor in the sight of Christ (Song of Solomon 8:10; see also Revelation 14:1-5).

The second level, the sixtyfold, have not attained the maturity and fruitfulness of the hundredfold. But they have attained sanctification and can resist sin through Christ's grace. God will build on these a glorious palace of redemption (verse 9).

The third level, the thirtyfold, have not attained spiritual strength and fruitfulness. They are "doors," that is, they are unable to resist the enemy. Eve was a "door" who opened to allow the enemy to destroy the human race.

God will instruct His builders to enclose the weaker members with the beautiful boards of cedar used in the building of Solomon's Temple. *Cedar* is associated with strength and beauty in the Scriptures (Song of Solomon 8:9; I Kings 6:18; Job 40:17).

The holy city, the new Jerusalem, the Wife of the Lamb, the Temple of God, the Body of Christ, are terms applied to the Church of Christ. The Church consists of the firstfruits, the "mighty men," the hundredfold; and also those of Israel who are not brought to the first rank of rulership in the Kingdom.

In order for the number *twelve*, the completeness of God's household, to be brought to fulfillment, each member of the Church must be made perfect at his or her level.

*And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. (Hebrews 8:11)*

"From the least to the greatest."

The strong members are not to please themselves but are to aid and teach the weaker members. The whole Body of Christ, from the weakest to the strongest member, is precious in the eyes of Christ.

The Servant of the Lord will not "break the bruised reed" nor "quench the smoking flax" until He brings forth judgment unto truth (Isaiah 42:3). This is a vivid way of stating even the weakest Christian, the feeblest member of the heavenly Jerusalem, will be guided and nourished by the Good Shepherd until the judgment of God has wrought the truth of Christ in him or her. Then he will be free from sin and eternally will be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

In speaking of the feeble members of the heavenly Jerusalem we are not referring to the "Fred Smiths," to those who have neglected their salvation, who have buried their talent. The New Testament is clear that the believers who do not take up their cross and follow Jesus, who do not maintain oil in their lamp, will suffer very great loss in the Kingdom. In fact, they may, as Esau, lose their inheritance. They will suffer eternal loss of their personality if their works are burned with fire, although their spirit may be saved.

The "Christian" who chooses to wait until the Lord returns before he makes the effort to achieve victory over sin may find himself rejected by the Lord in that Day. The branches that do not bear fruit shall be cut out of the Vine according to the Word.

It is true also there are ranks in the Kingdom of God. Not every Israelite was a member of Gideon's army. The members of Gideon's army (which is a type of the Lord's firstfruits) were chosen by the Lord to overcome the enemy on behalf

of all Israel. Gideon's 300 soldiers are a type of a chosen firstfruits being used by the Lord to achieve victory for all Israel, that is, for all the members of the new Jerusalem.

Those who have been given the opportunity to attain the first resurrection but who choose to save their life in this present world will be dealt with by the Lord as lazy, disobedient servants.

Ranks in the Kingdom are by Divine election. But each member of the elect must grasp the inheritance to which he has been called. If he does not, his place will be taken by another and the neglectful believer will be cast into outer darkness. The disciples who become spiritually strong in this life, who achieve victory through Jesus, who are attaining the first resurrection from among the dead, are charged with building up all Israel, including the weakest members.

If we are conquerors we are soldiers in the Lord's army. We will ride to victory with Him in the Battle of Armageddon, as well as in the lesser everyday battles that are the prelude to Armageddon. We will gain back our bodies from the grave and will be revealed together with Christ.

Notice that *before* the thousand-year Kingdom Age, at the time of the Battle of Armageddon, the Wife of the Lamb is "arrayed in fine linen," the fine linen being the righteous conduct of the saints (Revelation 19:8). This means those who through the grace of Jesus are able to attain righteous conduct will be a firstfruits of the Bride and will ride with Jesus in the Battle of Armageddon.

Notice also after the thousand-year period, when there is a new sky and a new earth, the Wife of the Lamb will descend from Heaven through the new sky and be established for eternity on the new earth. Now we are not beholding a *firstfruits* of the Bride. Now we are viewing the completed and perfected Bride, including all who truly are of Israel (Hebrews 8:11; Romans 9:6). This is why the number *twelve* is employed in the description of the holy city.

If it is only a righteous firstfruits, a remnant, who appear at the *beginning* of the thousand-year period, that is, at the return of Christ to the earth. If the whole perfected Bride does not appear until the *conclusion* of the thousand-year Kingdom Age, then we understand the Kingdom Age to be a time of growth for the members of the Body of Christ.

*Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time. (Isaiah 60:21,22)*

The Christian Church, the Wife of the Lamb, the new Jerusalem, will be perfected in righteousness and glorified during the thousand-year period. The thousand-year period is the spiritual fulfillment of the Levitical Day of Atonement.

When the Lord Jesus descends from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, He will bring with Him His conquering saints. These are God's kings, priests, and judges of whom the Hebrew prophets spoke. The remnant on the earth will experience an eternal change in their body and will ascend, as so many Enochs and Elijahs, to join the army of conquerors in the air (I Thessalonians 4:16,17; Revelation 20:4-6).

Then the Lord will attack Antichrist and his forces, destroying him with the fury of His anger. This marks the destruction of sin and sinners out of the earth and the installation by force of the Kingdom of God (II Thessalonians 1:7-10).

All who have called on the name of the Lord in sincerity will be saved in that hour. This is the coming of the army of the Lord (Joel, Chapter Two; Habakkuk, Chapter Three; Matthew 24:30,31; Jude 1:14,15)—the Lord Jesus and His "mighty men of valor."

After the thousand-year Kingdom Age has come to an end, the present universe will pass away with great heat and noise. Then a new sky and a new earth will be brought into existence at the Word of Christ.

Down from the new sky will descend the completed and perfected Church, the Wife of the Lamb. Every member will know God, from the least to the greatest. This is the result of the working of the new covenant.

There is no temple in the new Jerusalem because God and the Lamb are the Temple of it. This means every member without exception of the holy city will have direct access to the glorious Throne of God and of the Lamb.

By this time there has been total reconciliation to the Father and total, complete marriage to the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, between the Lord and His chosen, every wall, such as the wall of a temple, has been removed for eternity. God's saints will appear in His Presence—every one of them!

Today, in Heaven, there *is* a temple.

*In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. (Isaiah 6:1)*

When we die and go to Heaven we still will have to pray to God in His holy Temple, just as we do today on the earth. We are not ready as yet to stand in the full Presence of the unshielded Glory.

But through the body and blood of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, *Christ*—the eternal dwelling place of God—is being formed within us. Christ Himself *is* the eternal Temple of God.

As soon as Christ has been brought to full stature within us the wall of partition will be removed and we will behold the Face of the Father—the Almighty God (Ephesians 4:13). We then shall know as we are known. This is a state of being and glory so stupendously greater than anything we can imagine that we can only believe it and then wait for God's Spirit to bring it all to pass.

We did not state that every one of God's saints will receive the same reward, the same position of authority and glory, for that is not true. There are astonishing rewards for becoming a hundredfold disciple.

Not all who profess to know Christ will arrive at the marvelous destiny to which the elect have been called. The Scriptures charge us to make our calling and election sure.

There is too much carelessness today with respect to who are the Lord's people, who actually are accepted of Him. Too much is being taken for granted.

Many who believe they are true Christians are going to hear the dreadful sentence, "Depart from me ye cursed into outer darkness." There indeed *shall* be wailing and gnashing of teeth as those who thought God was approving of their indifferent attitude toward salvation are dragged from the light of Christ's Presence and cast into the regions of darkness.

How can any human being insure that he or she will be permitted to remain in the Presence of the Lamb? Only by turning to Him right now in utter sincerity and seeking His Presence and His will. Assenting to the "four steps of salvation" is not enough. There must be a genuine coming before the Lord Jesus and a bowing before Him in worship and total obedience of mind and heart.

We have heard there will be deception in the last days. Even now there is much deception. Many who claim to be the Lord's ministers are proclaiming that no person who professes faith in Christ will hear any negative comment in the Day of Christ nor will be allowed to suffer tribulation.

How can this be true in the light of the Gospel accounts, and the writings of the Apostles who teach us that the righteous scarcely are saved (I Peter 4:18)?

If the righteous are being saved with difficulty, and if we are to be working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, saving ourselves by giving ourselves wholly to the things of Christ and by enduring with patience the fiery afflictions that come on us, what, then, is the source of the current casual approach to salvation?

Hear the Apostle Paul!

*For we must all appear [be made manifest] before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (II Corinthians 5:10)*

It appears from the above verse that the Christian's recompense will include the evil he has practiced in his body. The twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew teaches us that some of the Lord's servants will receive a punishment much more severe than merely the loss of rewards.

How will we Christians escape if we *neglect* our great salvation?

The teachers who are putting the believers at ease by telling them they will not be permitted to suffer great tribulation in this world are doing untold harm. They are doing untold harm to God's people because great tribulation indeed *is* coming and we must arm ourselves today to suffer in the flesh so we will be able to stand in the days to come.

Christ will not return until *after* the "tribulation of those days" (Matthew 24:29).

There will be much deception in the last days. Each of us can stand if he pays close attention to the Scriptures, watches and prays, and—above all—remains willing to take up his cross each day and follow Christ. But we definitely *will be deceived* if we attempt to escape our cross, to escape suffering and reproach in this world.

The elect will experience times of the greatest joy and exultation and also periods of intense anguish (made bearable by the deep peace the Lord always gives His faithful saints). But most of our discipleship consists of the minor satisfactions and frustrations each day brings. The person who makes a success of the Christian life is the one who keeps on serving Christ each day, patiently enduring to the end of his life on earth.

This world is a valley as far as the saint is concerned. It is a valley covered by the shadow of sin and death. If we attempt to turn it into Heaven by pampering our flesh and soul we will fall into deception. But God insures that the faithful saint is blessed each day with numerous goodnesses and mercies. We must endure hardness, but the goodness of the Lord is with us.

The hope of the Kingdom of God is a hope for the future. It is a message of suffering in this life and glorious joys and pleasures in the future. We can endure the cross if we will keep our eyes fixed on the pleasures that are at the right hand of God.

If we are experiencing joy and pleasure now in the things of the world we will experience mourning in the future. If we are weeping and carrying our cross now we will receive indescribable joy and pleasure in the ages to come. This is the way of the Kingdom of God.

As we have said previously, the *wall* of the new Jerusalem is emphasized in the vision given to the Apostle John. This is because there never again shall be an unwallled, unprotected glory.

Never again throughout eternity shall sin and rebellion be allowed to rise up in the Presence of the Father.

Every person who is permitted to enter through the gates into the holy city will be a *doer* of the commandments of the Lord (Revelation 22:14). The new Jerusalem is not a city of imputed (assigned) righteousness, that is, of right standing with God given to us legally on the basis of the righteousness of the blood of Jesus.

The new Jerusalem is a city of actual righteousness, an actual righteousness brought about by means of the Divine Substance and Nature of Christ working in us, being wrought within us, causing us to hate sin and to love righteousness (I John 3:6).

Every member of the holy city is holy. He practices righteous behavior. No person who is sinning shall be allowed into the holy city, for it then would become the unholy city.

*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. (Revelation 22:14)*

We do not enter the holy city by grace or election but by doing the commandments of the Lord. Election and grace provide the opportunity for doing the commandments of the Lord. Election and grace are not an alternative to obeying the commandments of the Lord, which currently is being taught.

God's conquering saints will stand guard around the Divine Glory throughout eternity, just as they are learning to stand guard today. No rebel against God shall get past their post.

The work of restoration, then, is for the purpose of bringing about obedience to God, and the worship of God, in the earth. God has many eternal purposes, eternal desires, that He has spoken into being. Now He is resting.

Our task is to enter that rest, into that finished work of God. We find our rest in His rest. We find our restoration as we enter the restoration of all that is important to the Lord God of Heaven.

Let every one whose heart stirs him to do so, enter now into the glorious work of the Lord. There is a part of the work that has been assigned to *you*. Will you place your stone in the wall? Will you come to the help of the Lord against the mighty? Will you stand in your place round about the camp?

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