



A Remnant Will Return

At Christ's Table ~ ACTpublications

"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."

1 Corinthians 2:13

© 2017

W.D. Furioso, Writer ~ Frances Furioso, Editor

At Christ's Table Ministries ~ ACTpublications ~ <https://www.AtChristsTable.org>

ACTpublications may be freely shared, reproduced, and distributed - unaltered, in digital or print formats. Any quotations or excerpts must also be unaltered and referenced with the above information.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART 1

Christendom in Exile

Isaiah 8	p 5
Preface: God's People in Political Alliance	p 10
Christendom	p 12
The Demise of Christendom	p 15
Post-Christendom	p 17
Christendom & Post-Christendom in America	p 19
Civil Religion	p 20
"Hiding His Face"	p 22

PART 2

The Testimony of God

Christendom in Exile	p 25
The Heart of the Matter	p 27
The Cross & the Glory of God	p 28
"A Holy (Separated & Dedicated) Nation"	p 32
Is There Life After Post-Christendom?	p 38
The Testimony of God	p 45

Part 3

The Law of the Land

"Bind up the Testimony, Seal the Law"	p 48
The Law	p 50
"The Law of the Land"	p 54
"Seek First the Kingdom of God"	p 56

Part 4

Bind the Testimony, Seal the Law

Bind up and Seal the Word of God?	P 62
Only Jesus Can Open the Seals	p 65
Bound and Sealed	p 67

Part 5

Turning Captivity Captive

Introduction	p 73
Instruction for the End of the Ages	p 74
God's Purpose in Captivity	p 76
The Captivity	p 80
The Return	p 84
The Process	p 87

PART 6

A People Prepared

Introduction	p 96
Where are they prepared?	P 101
▪ <i>“Church in the Wilderness”</i>	p 104
Who are they?	P 107
What do they look like (now)?	P 109
▪ <i>“Already, But Not Yet”</i>	p 109
▪ <i>“Just as I Said, But Not as You Thought”</i>	p 111
▪ <i>“Church of the First-Born”</i>	p 114
▪ <i>“A Glorious Church”</i>	p 118
▪ <i>A New Covenant People</i>	p 129
▪ <i>Pure Devotion to Christ</i>	p 132
▪ <i>The Ministry of the Remnant in the End-Time</i>	p 135
Prepared for Who?	P 141
Prepared for What?	P 145

Isaiah 8¹

1 Then the LORD said to me, "Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it in ordinary letters: *Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey.*

2 "And I will take to Myself faithful witnesses for testimony, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah."

3 So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz;²

4 for before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."

5 Again the LORD spoke to me further, saying,

6 "Inasmuch as these people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah³ and rejoice in Rezin⁴ and the son of Remaliah⁵;

7 "Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, even the king of Assyria and all his glory; and it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks.

8 "Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through, it will reach even to the neck; and the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

² Meaning: "A Remnant Will Return"

³ i.e., The Pool of Siloam

⁴ i.e., King of Syria

⁵ i.e., King of Israel

9 “Be broken, O peoples, and be shattered; and give ear, all remote places of the earth. Gird yourselves, yet be shattered;

Gird yourselves, yet be shattered.

10 “Devise a plan, but it will be thwarted; state a proposal, but it will not stand, for God is with us.”

11 For thus the LORD spoke to me with mighty power and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people, saying,

12 “You are not to say, ‘It is a conspiracy!’ in regard to all that this people call a conspiracy, and you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it.

13 “It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, and He shall be your dread.

14 “Then He shall become a sanctuary; but to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, and a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

15 “Many will stumble over them, then they will fall and be broken; they will even be snared and caught.”

16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

17 And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.

18 Behold, I and the children⁶ whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

⁶ "the children": Isaiah's two sons – "A Remnant Will Return" and "Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey"; but also, "the disciples" who are the main focus of this article; as well as "Christ's brethren" – the "many sons brought to glory" (Cf. Hebrews 2:10-18).

19 When they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?

20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

21 They will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward.

22 Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness.

The Historical Context of Isaiah 8

- ❖ After the death of King Solomon, the Hebrews were divided into two kingdoms – the northern kingdom known as Israel and the southern kingdom known as Judah.⁷
- ❖ Uzziah, a godly king, had just died. It was a time of turmoil, and God’s peace was taken from the Hebrews.
- ❖ Ahaz, the new king in Judah, is actually the one this prophecy was spoken to. He was not a good king and Judah was in a mess, physically and spiritually.
- ❖ The Assyrians were threatening to invade and conquer both Judah and Israel.
- ❖ Israel and Syria, being threatened by Assyria, formed a coalition, and asked Judah to also align with them.
- ❖ Yet at the same time, Israel and Syria were conspiring to take over Judah.
- ❖ What would be a good strategy for King Ahaz to pursue for Judah? Should he trust Israel and join their coalition with Syria in order to try to withstand the Assyrian invasion? Should he rather concede to Assyria, join the “big guns”, and have his brothers in Israel as enemies? Or, as the prophecy advises, should he do neither and trust God?
- ❖ Ahaz was “between a rock and a hard place”. He decided to join with Assyria, and in 722 B.C. they defeated Israel. But then in 586 B.C., when Babylon defeated Assyria, they also turned against Judah and defeated them.
- ❖ They had received wise counsel – “trust and obey God”. But because of their sin and lack of faith, God’s people experienced

⁷ For a history of why and how the Hebrew nation became divided, one can begin reading in I Kings 12 or II Chronicles 10.

God's judgment at the hands of the Assyrians, and then the Babylonians.

❖ It is important to understand that the purpose of God's judgment is always and only to bring people into a place of God's blessing. This is quite clear throughout the book of Isaiah: from chapters 1 through 39 we read of God's judgment upon Israel and Judah, as well as, all the other pagan nations, including Assyria and Babylon. And then in chapters 40 through to 66, the last chapter, we read of God's blessings on His people.

❖ Often, God's judgment on His own people is in the form of an "exile" – a captivity to a foreign and pagan nation. There was such an exile of the citizens of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. But this particular historical context of the book of Isaiah concerns the 70-year Exile in Babylon of the tribe of Judah which began in 597 B.C. This passage in Isaiah 8 (and other prophetic passages) explain that after this Exile took place, "*a Remnant Will Return*" – that is, a re-gathering of the people of God for a restored expression of His kingdom. With this in view, it is verses 16 through 18 of Isaiah 8 which the Holy Spirit used to instruct and direct Isaiah and his disciples. And they would be for "*signs and wonders in Israel*" – that is, models to lead in a restoration movement.

Preface

God's People in Political Alliance

Earlier in the history of their walk with God, we see that Israel had insisted on having a king *"like all the other nations"*, and in so doing, rejected the Lord as their King.⁸ Most of Israel's kings turned out to be ungodly in varying degrees. And under the leadership of this particular king, Ahaz, God's people made a political alliance with Assyria. This was a human effort, independent of God, **to secure a sense of political security** in a way which was not only at variance with the way God had counseled but was also nothing less than a demonstration of the fact that **the foundation of their faith was a human alliance rather than a divine alliance**. As it turned out, Babylon defeated Assyria, as well as, both Israel and Judah, and took God's people into Exile.

But their misplaced faith in a human king and in political alliances resulted in far more than physical defeat and Exile. More significantly, this misplaced faith manifested a counterfeit religion which had originated at the beginning of the era of Israel's succession of kings with the inauguration of Saul (1 Samuel 8). And we see it manifested again here during the reign of Ahaz. But this counterfeit religion also went on to permeate the Church in Western nations throughout church history, starting with the reign of Constantine (312 A.D.) right up to this very day. This faulty faith foundation distorts perception of and entrance into the Kingdom of God (John 3:3-6), and manifests in a form of

⁸ 1 Samuel 8

"Constantinianism" which is commonly referred to as "Christendom".

Later in the article, we will return to our discussion of this counterfeit religion which led to God's people entering into judgment and Exile in Babylon. **The theme of this article is that God's ultimate purpose in this Exile was to "Turn (their) Captivity Captive"**. But, because their form of counterfeit religion was not unlike the "Christendom" of our day, I think it would be germane to first take some time in Part 1 to elucidate the nature and character of "Christendom". The following extended quote from an article published by the Anabaptist Network (in Britain and Ireland)⁹ effectively defines and gives an historical overview of "Christendom". This particular excerpt is specifically in reference to Europe. But, I believe everything it says about Europe is also coming to pass in America, and I will comment on the American "mutation" of Christendom at the end of the quote.¹⁰

⁹ <http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com>

¹⁰ I have "**under-lined**" certain passages which I think specially make reference to the times in which we live and/or are especially salient to certain points I wish to make in this article.

Christendom

"Early in the 4th century the Roman emperor Constantine I adopted the Christian faith, issued an edict of toleration that ended the threat of persecution to Christians in the Roman Empire, and brought the churches in from the margins to the centre of society.

He and most of his successors heaped favours and money on the churches, applied increasing pressure on those who held other religious beliefs, and **implemented all kinds of political, economic, cultural and social programmes that were justified on the supposed basis of Christian theology.**

During the following centuries, the system of Christendom took shape – **an alliance of church and state**, where Christianity took on all the trappings of an imperial religion, **the church became associated with power, wealth, status, and coercion**, and almost all Europeans (except the Jews) were regarded as Christian by birth rather than choice.

Most Christians welcomed this unexpected development, **seeing it as the triumph of Christ over the empire and over paganism, and accepted the compromises required to achieve it.** But some were convinced that the church had been domesticated and perverted by this alliance and pointed in dismay to the changes that had occurred:

- Huge nominal congregations replaced the counter-cultural communities of disciples of earlier centuries.
- Mission became first coercive and then obsolete once almost all were assumed to be Christian.

- Christians were now persecuting dissenters rather than being persecuted themselves.
- **Justification of warfare superseded the culture of peace that characterised the early churches.**
- The cross was transformed from a symbol of suffering love into a military emblem that brought death and destruction.
- Clerical domination squashed initiative and the exercise of spiritual gifts by other Christians.
- The oppressive practice of tithing funded the system but caused huge resentment, especially among the poor.
- Practices derived from Old Testament and pagan sources usurped the example and teaching of Jesus.

Christendom was a brilliant culture. European civilisation owes an enormous debt to a system that steered it from antiquity through the so-called Dark Ages into the medieval world and on towards modernity.

Wonderful developments in art and architecture, music and sculpture, philosophy and scientific discoveries, health care and education, spirituality and theology were nurtured by this culture.

But Christendom was also deeply flawed. The inquisition, witch hunts, crusades and persecution of dissidents revealed its coercive, totalitarian instincts. **Massive corruption allied to inordinate wealth produced an unedifying spectacle and discredited the gospel.**

Christendom flourished for many centuries and adapted remarkably well to different contexts – from partnership with the fading glory of Rome through the chaos of the next centuries to

become monolithic medieval Catholicism. **The 16th-century Reformation represented, not the end of Christendom, but an attempt to reform this system. What resulted was a fractured Christendom, as Europe divided into mini-Christendoms (Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican) – each still operating with Christendom assumptions but antagonistic towards each other.**

However, it was in this era that the seeds of Christendom's demise were sown. The Anabaptist movement, heir to the dissident tradition of earlier centuries, was persecuted in all the mini-Christendoms but represented the emergence of churches free from state control. Over the coming centuries, free churches proliferated and eventually even state churches have begun to be disestablished.

Furthermore, **the various mini-Christendoms bequeathed by the Reformation went to war against each other, provoking a reaction against religion and stimulating the Enlightenment and its attempt to base human life on reason. Modernity turned towards secularism and undermined the foundations on which Christendom was built.**

The Demise of Christendom

Over the past three centuries Christendom has gradually unraveled. The impact of the Enlightenment and more recently post-modernism has presented serious philosophical challenges and diminished the authority of the church. Huge social and economic changes (such as industrialisation and urbanisation) have disconnected people from the churches. The success of the modern missionary movement that has led to a truly global church has overflowed the boundaries of historic Christendom and demonstrated that Christianity can flourish without state endorsement or support.

Although the vestiges of this impressive system are evident across western culture, Christendom is dying. The church is in serious and sustained decline. Growing churches and networks are in no way offsetting this decline. Thousands are leaving the churches every week. We are struggling to recruit new members or even to hold on to our own children. The church is no longer at the centre of society but back on the margins. Most Europeans no longer believe the big story told by Christianity to explain the way the world works.

This is not to say that Christendom is extinct. The Christendom idea was exported through missionary activity in the colonial period to many other nations and some commentators detect new versions of Christendom appearing in the southern continents.

We can also note its mutation into an unofficial but no less powerful system in the United States of America with its vision of 'one nation under God.' Christendom seems to be a tenacious mindset.

But European Christendom is dying. Whatever our assessment of Christendom – a necessary compromise that resulted in a rich and remarkable culture, or a perversion that distorted Christianity for centuries – this era of European history is ending. **The pretense of a Christian society is fading. Imposing Christianity has in the long run not worked. The church's alliance with power, wealth and status is now a stumbling-block. Christianity is widely perceived as passé. The church is regarded as an obsolete and instinctively oppressive institution.** Post-Christendom is with us."

Post-Christendom

"What is post-Christendom? What is emerging out of the ruins of the Christendom era? We may not be able to look far into the future or pronounce with any confidence on whether European culture will be increasingly secular or characterised by multiple alternative forms of spirituality (different social commentators vary enormously in their assessments), but what are the components of this transitional phase? We might begin with this suggested definition:

Post-Christendom is the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence.

Post-Christendom makes no sense without a Christendom past. In societies where churches have flourished and declined, where the Christian story has been told and has influenced individuals and even the culture as a whole, but where other stories have had a definitive or equal influence alongside the Christian story, Post-Christendom is not an appropriate term to describe the diminished influence of the churches or the story they tell.

The demise of Christendom may be sudden or gradual. **It involves both institutional and philosophical changes, for Christendom is both a power structure and a mindset.** Sustained persecution may lead to the demise of Christendom (as in some parts of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe), or it may result from the official choice of another story (as in the transition from Christianity to Islam in North Africa).

But the demise of Christendom in western culture is the first instance of such a cultural shift occurring without the pressure of persecution or the adoption of a different story. Here the Christian story has not been replaced by another more persuasive story but by **skepticism about all explanatory and culture-shaping stories**. In this sense, Post- Christendom in western culture is different from earlier versions: we really have not been here before.

Post-Christendom is a transitional phase – a twilight zone between Christendom and whatever is emerging within European society. This phase combines many vestiges and legacies of Christendom but also many indications that the long era of Christendom is passing. Transitional phases are unsettling and confusing, requiring careful reflection. **Many commentators compare the situation of the church in western culture with the Exile of the Israelites in Babylon. Psalm 137 records the pain, disorientation, anger, and confusion of some of these exiles.** Taunted by their captors they retort, ‘How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?’ Many Christians in Post- Christendom may feel equally dismayed and wrong-footed, unsure how to worship or witness in this strange new land, but the Israelites learned to be the people of God in exile, and it became a period of great spiritual and cultural renewal. Maybe Post-Christendom can be the same for Christians in Western Europe."

Christendom & Post-Christendom in America

The above quote is from the Anabaptist Network in Britain and Ireland and is specifically making reference to Christendom in Europe. It mentioned a particular "mutation" of Christendom found in the United States. As I said, I believe everything said about Christendom in Europe is coming to pass in America. I have written extensively on Christendom in America in other articles such as *The Way of God & The Way of Humanity, Politics: Vanity of Vanities, and How Does God Govern Fallen Humanity?*¹¹

¹¹ Complimentary copies of these articles can be obtained in .pdf or printed formats by contacting me: AtChristsTable@gmail.com A list of other articles is available on our website: www.AtChristsTable.org

Civil Religion¹²

In his article, "Civil Religion in America",¹³ Gary Scott Smith had this to say by way of defining "Civil Religion": "Civil religion provides a religious sanction for the political order and a divine justification of and support for civic society and a nation's practices. It is the State's use of consensus religious sentiments, concepts, and symbols for its own purposes."¹⁴

This was descriptive of the American Church and State, but now no longer applies. For decades now, we have been experiencing the demise of Christendom in the United States. Whereas Christendom was the dominant force in the founding and history of America, the United States has now entered into Post-Christendom in its culture and politics. We are now left with merely the "dying embers" of the "Civil Religion" of American Christendom.

We saw the rise of the Fundamentalist - and later, Evangelical - "Religious Right" fighting the "culture war" in an effort to regain what was slipping away from our mythical "Christian Nation". But it is my personal opinion that as a result of the way it has conducted itself – culminating during the 2016 presidential campaign - this movement has now reached its putrid zenith; and a seemingly irreversible death blow has been dealt to the Evangelical witness in America. The Evangelical movement has lost all credibility with the American society. In reaction, we see some emergence of a "Progressive Christian" movement which is

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_civil_religion

¹³ *Christianity Today*, 2008.

¹⁴ Gary Scott Smith, "Civil Religion in America", *Christianity Today*, 2008.

merely a resurfacing of the "Social Gospel" and "Social Action" movements of previous generations. But it is my personal opinion that the American society will now no longer abide ANY Christian-oriented movement. And because culture precedes politics (not the other way around), we are about to see the demise of Christendom, bringing the United States into an era of Post-Christendom.

"Hiding His Face"

Regardless of any perceived successes in "taking America back for God", the Lord Himself will no longer abide the continuance of Christendom in America, be it a politically Right or Left variety. Both the Religious Right Christians and the Progressive Left Christians, while politically opposite, have made the exact same mistake of looking to human government rather than to God Himself. And they have both essentially abdicated the call to be the witness of the Kingdom. While espousing different political philosophies, both movements have looked to the government to do that which God has called the Church to do for itself and for the on-looking society. This has brought the judgment of God. And that judgment will be experienced in the form of a spiritual Exile – not being carried off into a foreign country – but exiled within our own country. **The purpose of this article is to attempt to communicate what the Spirit of God is instructing and directing at such a time of judgment and exile.**

But before moving on to that, this issue must be made clear: Christendom and its Constantinian Civil Religion *"has the appearance of godliness but denies its power"* – that is, the ruling power of God through the cross of Jesus Christ.¹⁵ Christendom is NOT biblical Christianity. I offer here a definition of biblical Christianity given by the apostle Paul in Philippians 3:3:

"... for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh..."¹⁶

¹⁵ 2 Timothy 3:5. Greek: *dunamis*, Strong's # 1411.

¹⁶ NASB

If we look at this verse in the context of Paul's epistle, and consider what Greek scholar, W.E. Vine, has to offer, this verse could very well be translated like this:

"... those truly consecrated to God¹⁷, who serve and minister¹⁸ in the Spirit of God and take pride in and boast in¹⁹ Christ Jesus and are not persuaded by nor have confidence in²⁰ nationality²¹".²²

Normally, we (me included) have understood "confidence in the flesh" to mean "confidence in our own human efforts and abilities". (This would include putting confidence in human government instead of God.) I think this is a legitimate interpretation and is part of what Paul is saying.²³ But if we look at the context – the next 2 verses²⁴ - we see that he is specifically referring to the possibility of his **being persuaded by and putting confidence in his national background**. Let's look at his words:

"... although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee...."

He told the Philippians that *"these things he had counted loss"* (in some real sense of the word) **in order to "gain and know" Christ²⁵** - he had to make a choice between the two – he could not swear allegiance to both. Paul also told the Colossians that **he had to**

¹⁷ Greek: *peritome*, Strong's # 4061

¹⁸ Greek: *latreuo*, Strong's # 3000

¹⁹ Greek: *kaucamai*, Strong's # 2744

²⁰ Greek: *peiqo*, Strong's # 3982

²¹ Greek: *sarx*, Strong's # 4561 Note contextual reference to nationality: Philippians 3:4-6

²² W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*

²³ v. 5b-6, 9

²⁴ Philippians 3:4-5

²⁵ v. 7-11

“lose” his national distinctives in order to truly and completely “put on” Christ; so that “Christ is all”.²⁶ There is no room in our hearts for nationalism to be mixed with our allegiance to the kingdom of God. In Philippians 3:20, Paul clearly declares: “*Our citizenship is in heaven.*”

The demise of Christendom is discomfoting. Living in Post-Christendom is grievous. But, ultimately, this is a good and necessary thing for the kingdom of God. God desires to move His people beyond imitation Christianity to Biblical Christianity.

²⁶ Colossians 3:10-11

PART 2

The Testimony of God

Isaiah 8:16-18

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

¹⁷ And I will wait for the Lord who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.

¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

Christendom in Exile

In Part 1 we discussed the phenomenon of God's people slipping into a form of counterfeit religion which led to their judgment and Exile into Babylon. The spiritual roots of this counterfeit religion appeared in the Garden²⁷, and its spiritual fruit continually manifested itself throughout history. A particularly significant time was at the inauguration of Saul as Israel's first king (1 Samuel 8). This was particularly significant because, for the first time, Israel had blatantly chosen a human king over a divine king. This is actually the essence of the counterfeit religion. The phenomenon repeated itself continually in Israel's history of ungodly kings – including Ahaz. This same spiritual virus then infested the New Covenant Church at the time of Constantine, essentially putting a veil over the reality of the New Covenant

²⁷ The choice of human government instead of divine government originated with Adam and Eve in the Garden.

which Christ established for the Church. This cancer continued throughout European church history, and on into American church history – even up to the present day. This is a history and a portrait of the arrogant ignorance of faith in the ability of human government rather than the humility of faith in God Himself.²⁸ And, as a consequence of not understanding the true nature of the Kingdom of Heaven, the people of God (at least in Western nations) have by and large abdicated the call to be the witness of the Kingdom, and instead have looked to human government to do that which God has called the Church to do as a witness to the on-looking world. **This is Christendom; and this Christendom is a spiritual captivity** – not a physical, but a spiritual captivity.

But God has allowed this Christendom to crumble, resulting in an Exile – not a physical exile into a foreign land, but **a spiritual exile** within our own country. **God's intended purpose in this Exile is to "Turn Captivity Captive" - that is, to turn captivity to self into captivity to Himself.**

²⁸ I use the phrase "arrogant ignorance" quite intentionally. I consider having faith in Humanity, rather than God, as the epitome of the human arrogance which originated in the Garden. And I consider it ignorance in that there is absolutely no precedent in all human history one could refer to as a reason for continuing to hope that Humanity may one day be able to govern itself independently of God.

The Heart of the Matter

So, after a brief initial period of approximately 300 years, Christianity became Christendom. Essentially, what changed? Well, the Scripture refers to Jesus as "the Author and Perfecter of (our) faith" (Hebrews 12:2). In other words, being the very first Christian, so to speak, Jesus defined authentic Christianity. Therefore, we can conclude that around the time of Constantine and afterward, Christians, in general, stopped being like Jesus in some essential ways, and substituted a different religion in place of the spiritual movement Jesus had started. And so, Christendom developed and spread for the next 1700 or so years. Because the riches of Christ are "unsearchable" (Ephesians 3:8), the list of Christian shortcomings over church history could be infinite. But what were those "essentials" Jesus had modeled, and Christians failed to continue? I would like to offer that **the Heart of the Matter – the quintessential aspect of the Christianity Jesus started and lived out as an Example for us - had to do with His Testimony of God.** If we spend some time looking how Jesus related to the Father and how He related the Father to others, we will see that **Jesus lived His life for the glory of God.** But what exactly does that look like? What does "living for the glory of God" look like? Two things emerge from the example of the Pattern Son: **The Way of the Cross and Holiness (separated and dedicated). These two things capture Jesus' Testimony of God. This is how Jesus "lived His life for the glory of God".**

The Cross & the Glory of God

"Living your life for the glory of God" - in "every day" terms - what might that look like for us?

I'd like to suggest that it can look like anything from serving as a missionary in a foreign land to becoming an adoptive parent to a child from a foreign land. It can look like anything from being a professor in a highly-respected seminary to working as a cleaning person in the facility of some charitable social organization. It can look like anything from mentoring an under-privileged child from the inner city to being a care-giver for an elderly family member. In fact, what it looks like – externally – is not really the issue. What our hearts look like is the issue, for *"God does not see what man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."* (1 Samuel 16:7b)

In any case, no one can dictate specifically what the Lord would have for our lives; for if they did, they would then be lord of our lives. But if Jesus is, in fact, Lord of our life, we are wanting to embrace whatever it is that He has placed before us to be and to do for His plan, purpose and glory. While that may seem obvious and simple, it can easily become evasive by being replaced with ardent pursuit of esoteric theology or fervent work in a highly public ministry. Never-the-less, to be and do for God's glory is the essence of our discipleship and His Lordship. This is the heart of "The Remnant Who Will Return". The heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. "The Remnant Who Will Return" are a Davidic people who "have a heart after God's own heart who will do all My wills". (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22)

What might "*all My wills*" possibly mean? While God's purpose is eternal and is to be summed up in Christ at the fullness of times²⁹, both our comprehension of "*the mystery of His will*", and the out-working of His plan and purpose is progressive throughout human history. For a few centuries, the Church has understood that preaching the gospel and making disciples is "The Great Commission". But, while in no way desiring to supplant the Great Commission, I believe there is an aspect of "*the mystery of His will*" which we might want to label "The Even Greater Commission", in a manner of speaking. And that is: "**The Way of the Cross**".

I have written at length about "**The Way of the Cross**" in other articles such as *Seeing the Kingdom Through the Cross*, *The Way of the Cross*, and *The Cross & The Powers of Darkness*.³⁰ Suffice for this article is to define "The Way of the Cross" as Jesus defined it: **Denying yourself for the glory of God**. (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; John 12:23, 28) Again, **this is the heart of "The Remnant Who Will Return" – those who will deny themselves for the glory of God**.

I'm constrained to clarify that the self-denial I am referring to is not *for the sake of people*, but **for the glory of God**. Many people are sensitive to human need and are actively trying to meet those needs. Some of these people worship the biblical God, but most do not, and are essentially Humanists.³¹ The object of worship –

²⁹ Ephesians 1:9-10

³⁰ Complimentary copies of these and other articles can be obtained in .pdf or printed formats by contacting me: AtChristsTable@gmail.com A list of articles is available on our website: www.AtChristsTable.org

³¹ "Humanism is a progressive life stance that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead meaningful, ethical lives capable of adding to the greater good of humanity." (American Humanist Association) Other definitions clearly indicate that Humanism

be it God Himself or Humanity itself – is the distinguishing aspect of the two groups. In no way am I denigrating Humanists who live sacrificial lives in the service of Humanity. Also, I am not saying that the efforts of Humanists are to be dismissed as illegitimate or worthless. I'm certain that many would say to me: "You are being picayune – it doesn't make any difference as long as people are being helped".

Actually, it does make a difference, if professing Christians are not in touch with their own motivations for living sacrificial lives in the service of Humanity. I am appealing to those professing Christians to question themselves as to whether they are doing so **for the glory of God** or *for the sake of people*. In fact, God did the same when He asked His people this question: "*When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?*" (Zechariah 7:5)

If we deny ourselves *for the sake of people*, the center from which all our activity emerges is Humanity – and we, by nature of the case, **remain in the arena of Christendom**. After all, the better the condition of Humanity, the better the condition of our own lives, and the more affirmation of the "self" life. In this way, Christendom is "self-serving". But in the kingdom of God, which is full of abundant "*righteousness, peace and joy*" (Romans 14:17), the center from which all activity emerges is God Himself, the King of the Kingdom. Obviously, God does and will lead us to deny ourselves for people, because God loves all the people He created. (John 3:16) If we deny ourselves as the Lord leads us in serving Humanity, the result will be **the glory of God** – not *the*

is basically atheistic: <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/definition-of-humanism/>

glory of self, or the glory of Humanity. The essential difference is the center from which emerges all our activity: Is it "a heart after God's own heart"? Or is it for the sake of Humanity – including self?

We easily agree that Jesus is the Pattern Son "leaving us an example for us to follow in His steps" (2 Peter 2:21); but it may give us pause when we realize that what He did for Humanity, was, in reality, the consequence of His obedience to the Father. Jesus stated that He did nothing except what He heard from the Father. (John 5:19; 8:28) **Jesus was all about glorifying the Father.** (John 12:28; 13:32; 17:1)

We may also be taken aback with what Dietrich Bonhoeffer said about Jesus, the Kingdom of God, and the needs of Humanity: "Jesus concerns himself hardly at all with the solution of worldly problems. When he is asked to do so His answer is remarkably evasive (Matt 22:15; Luke 12:13). Indeed, He scarcely ever replies to men's questions directly, but answers rather from a quite different plane. His word is not an answer to human questions and problems; it is the answer of God to the question of God to man.... Who actually tells us that all worldly problems are to be and can be solved? Perhaps the unsolved state of these problems is of more importance to God than their solution, for it may serve to call attention to the fall of man and to the divine redemption."³²

³² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York; Touchstone, 1995, 1949).

"A Holy (Separated & Dedicated) Nation"

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation"

(1 Peter 2:9)

This is one description of the Church of Jesus Christ found in the New Testament. I would like to offer that it is surely a description of "The Remnant Who Will Return". But what does it mean to be "a holy nation"? According to W.E. Vine, the Greek word "hagios" means "separated" and "dedicated".³³ What does that mean from God's perspective, as opposed to some pharisaical perspective? What does it look like to be "separated" to God and "dedicated" to God? As always, Jesus is the Pattern Son and our Example:

"Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." (John 5:19)

"I can do nothing by Myself; I judge only as I hear. And My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." (John 5:30)

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me." (John 6:38)

" ... I do nothing on My own, but speak exactly what the Father has taught Me." (John 8:28)

³³ Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words.

"I have not spoken on My own, but the Father who sent Me has commanded Me what to say and how to say it. And I know that His command leads to eternal life. So, I speak exactly what the Father has told Me to say." (John 12:49-50)

"... The words I say to you, I do not speak on My own. Instead, it is the Father dwelling in Me, carrying out His work." (John 14:10)

All that Jesus said and did, He said and did **under the authority of the Father**. That's what it looks like to be "separated" and "dedicated" to God. In the same way, all that we say and do, if it is to be for the glory of God, must be said and done **ONLY under the authority of Christ**. That's what it means to be a "holy nation".

Interestingly, there seems to have developed in Western nations a silent assumption that the **ONLY** way to address the needs of Humanity is through political policies and programs. Whether this has developed along with the secularization of our culture, or because of the Church's abdication of its witness to the Kingdom of God, what we have is the State campaigning itself as the "redeemer" of society, and society – including most Christians – demanding (read: voting) that the elected politicians "make good" on their campaign promises. Western society – including most Christians – has increasingly put itself in the place of increasing dependence upon the State. Amazingly, it has done so under the false assumptions that the State is "all knowing" and "all powerful". And it has done so despite consistent proof that the State is an inefficient administrator and certainly not an "expert" in any sphere of human life, with the possible exceptions of legal and penal coercion and warfare.

There are many sincere people – both humanist and Christian - who are involved in self-denying, sacrificial social work. But, if our efforts are done under the authority (under the name) of some political alliance, then that particular political program or organization will receive the "glory" so to speak. Christian service must be kept "holy", for the glory of God.³⁴ From a biblical perspective, this is a quintessential aspect of "Separation of Church and State". What is done in the name of a political program or party will be to the glory of the State. What is done in the name of Christ will be to the glory of God.³⁵ The spiritually bizarre situation we have in Western nations is this: With regards to addressing needs of Humanity like poverty, health care, education, etc., Christians of both the Left and Right political persuasions are insisting (read: *voting*) that the government do what God told the Church to do. This approach results in not only the glory of the State but also emperor worship, which is inherent in such Statism. To say that this is over-Stating the case (excuse the pun), is to say that Jesus was over-stating the case when He said: *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* (Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:24)

Jesus, Himself, faced and overcame this very temptation – that is, looking to and trusting in the governments of the world to solve the problems of Humanity:

⁵ "Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has

³⁴ Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

³⁵ Unfortunately, what is done in the name of a Christian denomination, when motivated to build the reputation of that denomination, often appropriates God's glory for itself.

been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.” ⁸ And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ”

(Luke 4:5-8)

Satan offered Jesus all the "authority" and "glory" of the kingdoms of the world. Jesus did not deny that the kingdoms of the world actually do belong to Satan, *"for the whole world lies in the power of the evil one"*. (1 John 5:19; Cf. Ephesians 2:2) But in refusing Satan's proposal, Jesus basically rejected the idea of addressing the human condition using the *purported* power of politics. Why did He refuse to harness the power of politics to help meet the painfully obvious needs of human society? Firstly, because it would have been done in the name of and for the glory of Satan, "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 2:2), instead of in the name of and for the glory of God the Father. As Christians, we too must discern and decide whom our efforts will glorify – Self, State, Satan - or God.

Secondly, the *purported* power of politics, at best, can only address external needs. The Way of God is truly holistic in that the receiving of His Spirit converts and redeems the whole of the human being. "Holistic" is a buzz word freely used today, which purports to mean looking at human need in a comprehensive way – that is, addressing the physical, mental, emotional, social, educational, financial aspects of Humanity – individually and collectively. But, according to Jesus, the reality is this: *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life"*. (John 6:63 NIV) From God's perspective, the root cause of Humanity's problem is not physical,

or mental, or emotional, or social, or educational, or financial, but rather spiritual. Therefore, only the reception of His life-giving Spirit can truly change the human condition. As Christians, we need to decide if we really believe this to be the case or not.

In his book, *"The Myth of a Christian Nation"*, Greg Boyd observes: "Tragically, the history of the church has been largely a history of believers refusing to trust the way of the crucified Nazarene and instead giving into the very temptation he resisted (Luke 4:5-8). It's a history of an institution that has frequently traded its holy mission for what it thought was a good mission. It is a history of an organization that has frequently forsaken the slow, discrete³⁶, nonviolent, sacrificial way of transforming the world for the immediate, obvious, practical, and less costly way of improving the world. It is a history of a people who too often identified the kingdom of God with a 'Christian' version of the kingdom of the world."³⁷ ... "Preserving the distinctness of the kingdom of God has always been the most important and most difficult task for the Church - as well as the task we have most consistently failed at."³⁸

Indeed, what is most grievous is those examples in church history when the Church has actually "succeeded" in its Constantinian goals is, not only working in co-operation with the State, but being the whore of the State so that the marriage represents a demonic counterfeit of the kingdom of God.³⁹ Not only are people deceived

³⁶ i.e., "separate"

³⁷ Ibid. p.75

³⁸ Ibid. p. 57.

³⁹ I have written extensively about the difference between the Kingdom God and the kingdoms of the world in other articles – *Politics: Vanity of Vanities, Seeing the Kingdom Through the Cross, The Way of God & The Way of Humanity* and *How Does God Govern Fallen Humanity?* Complimentary copies of these and other articles can be obtained in .pdf or

and oppressed; not only is the kingdom of God misrepresented; but also, God's holy name is tarnished.

"Our Father in heaven, let your name be kept holy"

(Matthew 6:9)⁴⁰

"The Remnant Who Will Return" are those who have the discernment and dedication to keep the Kingdom of God holy – that is, *separated* and *dedicated*, as to be able to be distinguished from the kingdoms of the world.

printed formats by contacting me: AtChristsTable@gmail.com A list of articles is available on our website: www.AtChristsTable.org

⁴⁰ *God's Word Translation* and *NLT*. Cf. *HCSB*, *ESV* footnote, *AMP* footnote.

Is There Life After Post-Christendom?

Thus far, I've attempted to present a case that Christendom is in Exile, Christians in Western nations are living in a Post-Christendom context, and that this is fundamentally a result of our failure to live for the glory of God. But **ultimately, the purpose of this article is to discern what the Lord is saying to His people now in this spiritual Exile.** What is the instruction and direction from the Lord to His people at such a time? What would be the "correct" move in this spiritual situation?

Is there some Ahaz-like alliance the Church can make which would prove to be "politically correct"? Various human REACTIONS to Post-Christendom might be:

- Deny the reality of Post-Christendom and just continue on in Christendom.
- Seek and wait for "revival" within Christendom.
- "Reimage" the concept of "Church" and devise some "new" way of doing church.
- Give in to spiritual despondency and the inevitability of the decline of Christianity.

The spiritual condition of both the Church and the surrounding culture is very grievous. And if the analysis I've presented regarding how we got into this situation has merit, then yes, **we would do well to follow in Jesus' footsteps once again: walking humbly before our God, endeavoring to submit all we say and do under His authority, embracing the Way of the Cross, and living for His glory.**

But what about the damage done – how can we "fix" that? How can we "undo" the tarnishing of the name of the Lord. How can we ever restore our Christian witness which now, in the eyes of the surrounding culture, is essentially in the gutter?⁴¹

Christians long for "revival". For many Christians, rather than focusing on the "holy habits" which make for daily growth in their relationship with Christ, their spiritual lives are all about looking forward to the next "out-pouring of the Holy Spirit". They will travel far and wide in order to experience "the anointing". Yes, Christian communities enjoy "revivals" – so much so, we even manufacture them ourselves (without the Holy Spirit) – and then market them to other Christian communities! I've been a Christian for more than 40 years; and I've seen many so-called "revivals" come and go. But in my lifetime, I've only seen one which had any lasting impact - the "Jesus Movement" of the early 1970s.⁴² As it is, more than affecting the surrounding culture, that movement only served to establish a vibrant Christian sub-culture. In fact, it has always amazed me to read the records of famous revivals throughout church history,⁴³ but not see any lasting effects in the surrounding culture that would evidence the revival had ever taken place (with the exception of some

⁴¹ With regards to Christianity's standing in the surrounding culture: I do affirm that *"All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"* (2 Timothy 3:12). But I also do not fail to admit that Christians acting ungodly – both through personal immorality, as well as, through collectively exercising ungodly political power at various times in church history – have severely damaged the Christian witness. But I am particularly and specifically referring to the consequence of having caucuses labeled "Evangelical Christians", as well as, "Progressive Christians", having been aligned with the political travesty demonstrated in the 2016 American Presidential Campaign. It seems to me that the consequent damage done to the Christian witness in Western nations is now humanly irreparable.

⁴² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_movement#Growth_and_decline

⁴³ e.g., <http://patrickmorley.com/blog/2015/6/23/a-brief-history-of-spiritual-revival-and-awakening-in-america>

monuments and church buildings).⁴⁴ It seems that any impact revivals have faded in less than a generation. The evidence is now imperceptible, and the culture continues to go from bad to worse – in spite of the "revivals".

We must conclude that God's plans and purposes in the visitations of His Spirit have more to do with the Church than with the surrounding culture. Yet, as with the vineyard pictured in the Book of Isaiah, the Lord may be heard asking: *"What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?"*⁴⁵ For even in spite of these historic revivals, we do not see the Church in Western nations going *"from strength to strength"* – quite the opposite – we are in need of restoration – a restoration of apostolic Christianity.

Yet today, instead of "restoration", there seems to be more talk of "re-thinking" and "re-imagining" – "re-thinking" this in theology and "re-imagining" that in the Christian life; and "being done" with this and that in the Church; and being "simple" and "organic" in a house, etc. I am in full support of a return to apostolic Christianity, but can we really expect these current feeble efforts of spiritually weak and immature Christians to produce anything essentially different than the Christendom which anemic spirituality had produced to begin with? And do we really expect

⁴⁴ For example: Rochester, New York is my hometown. Not until after I surrendered my life to Christ at the age of 30, did I ever even hear of the fact that in 1830 Charles Finney had held a revival in Rochester (September 1830 - March 1831), in which it is reported that over 100,000 people surrendered their lives to Christ. For 30 years, I had not seen any evidence of that – nor can I see any evidence of that today in the culture of Rochester, New York. (*From the Writings of Charles Finney*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFwfSj3UEUQ>)

⁴⁵ Isaiah 5:4-5. Cf. vv. 1-7.

the surrounding culture to be impressed and jump on our band wagons of "new ways of doing church"?

Our *"falling short of the glory of God"* - He will forgive. But the consequences of our foolishness are rarely simply erased⁴⁶ – particularly in the eyes of the surrounding culture. I must admit, I have absolutely no idea how the mess we have made can ever be cleaned up. It seems there is really nothing we can say or do, because no one would listen or even bother to look. But I do know that only the Holy Spirit moving over this *"formless and void darkness"* can create something truly of God. (Genesis 1:2) We cannot "fix" this situation any more than the Israelites, with Pharaoh rushing in on them and their backs to the Red Sea, could "fix" their situation. But God can make a way when there is no way – just as He promised those of the Babylonian Exile in Isaiah 43:

¹⁴ *"Thus says the Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, 'For your sake I have sent to Babylon* ¹⁵ *"I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.'* ¹⁶ *Thus says the Lord, who makes a way through the sea and a path through the mighty waters, ¹⁷ who brings forth the chariot and the horse, the army, and the mighty man* ¹⁸ *Do not call to mind the former things or ponder things of the past.* ¹⁹ *"Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert....* ²¹ *"The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise."*

This is reality: Our only real option is utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit. *"Not by might, nor by power"*, but by the Lord's Spirit

⁴⁶ Cf. The death of the child born from David's adultery with Bathsheba. 2 Samuel 12:15-24

(Zechariah 4:6)⁴⁷ will the "former things" by "fixed". When we cannot find our way, He will "make a way in the wilderness". I believe that the Lord can, plans to, and will do "something new". It will emerge out of this spiritual desert we find ourselves in. When God does something new, He ALWAYS begins in the wilderness – ALWAYS.⁴⁸ **And that "new thing" is none other than the manifestation of the New Covenant** Jesus has already established for His Bride, His Body.

Meanwhile, we can learn some lessons from Scripture:

"He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered." (Proverbs 28:26)

"Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD." (Jeremiah 17:5)

"It is better to take refuge in the LORD Than to trust in man."
(Psalm 118:8)

This is wisdom: To RESPOND to the instruction and direction of the Spirit, rather than choosing some human REACTION. Church history is full of *reactionary* men, ministries, and movements which, in retort to human abuses and failures, swing sideways like a pendulum - in the opposite direction, away from the negative - in hopes of finding something better. REACTIONARY men, ministries, and movements ALWAYS fall short of the will

⁴⁷ Cf. John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6.

⁴⁸ I have written a short piece on this – "Church in the Wilderness". Complimentary copies of this and other articles can be obtained in .pdf or printed formats by contacting me:

AtChrist'sTable@gmail.com A list of articles is available on our website: www.AtChrist'sTable.org

and purpose of God simply because it is not the work of God, but rather, merely human engineering.

In fact, very often the impetus behind *reactionary* ministries and movements is men, longing for recognition and power, who develop a reputation and followers for themselves by criticizing existing spiritual leadership. Absalom's conspiracy against his father, David, is a classic example of this in Scripture. (2 Samuel 15-18) This type of human engineering may have "*a form of godliness*" but "*denies its power*". (2 Timothy 3:5) Church history is littered with examples of the spiritual failures of human engineering. We can learn lessons from history; but we can also learn from Scripture:

"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."
(John 6:29)

"The zeal of the Lord will perform this." (Isaiah 9:7; 37:32)

"Behold, all you who kindle a fire⁴⁹, who encircle yourselves with firebrands, walk in the light of your fire and among the brands you have set ablaze. This you will have from My hand: You will lie down in torment." (Isaiah 50:11)

"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25)

The only true forward movement is to RESPOND to the instruction and direction of the Spirit, who is the Governor of the

⁴⁹ Fire is associated with zeal: Zephaniah 3:8. This passage in Isaiah is referring to human zeal.

Kingdom, so to speak, guiding us into all the truth and the manifest reality of God's eternal purpose which are in Jesus.

(Ephesians 4:21; 3:11)

Can the Spirit speak prophetically to us today through words recorded in the Old Testament? Can we learn the present-day instruction and direction of the Spirit through the words of Isaiah? The apostle Paul answered that question in the affirmative in at least two places in the New Testament:

"Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." (1 Corinthians 10:11)⁵⁰

"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." (Romans 15:4)⁵¹

Therefore, let's look again at the instruction and direction the Spirit gave through Isaiah, and see what we can learn:

⁵⁰ Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:8-10; 10:5

⁵¹ Cf. Romans 4:23-24

Isaiah 8:16-18

¹⁶ "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

¹⁷ And I will wait for the Lord who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.

¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion."

The Testimony of God

The Lord instructed Isaiah: "*Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it in ordinary letters.*" (Isaiah 8:1) It is obvious that the Lord intended for the message to be easily seen and understood by all. Yet, Isaiah instructed his disciples (presumably being instructed by the Lord) that it be bound and sealed.⁵² So, our goal, as "The Remnant Who Will Return", is to understand what it means that, while we are called to "shine as lights in the world holding forth the word of life" (Philippians 2:15-16), in some way, and for some particular reasons, we are, like Isaiah, also to **"bind" and "seal" the message "among disciples"**.

Firstly, we need to discuss what is meant by the terms "*The Testimony*" and "*The Law*". Based on the context (Cf. 8:20), the two terms, "*The Testimony*" and "*The Law*", could be understood to be two aspects of one whole – that is, **the whole of the word of God**.

⁵² In his article, "*Bind Up the Testimony: Isaiah 8:16 and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*", Jaap Dekker presents a very good case that the prophets did not depend upon oral tradition alone to preserve the prophetic word but were in the habit of recording – or having scribes record – the prophetic word. Isaiah 8:16, along with Habakkuk 2:2 and Daniel 9:4 & 12:24, present a strong case against the "Deutero-Isaiah Theory" (as well as the "Documentary Hypothesis" and the "JEDP Theory"), which oppose the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures.

In Greek, there are two different words translated "word": "*Logos*"⁵³, which W.E. Vine defines as "the expression of thought"⁵⁴ – that is, God's thoughts. Doctrinally, "*Logos*" is understood to be "the nature and mode of God's revelation"⁵⁵ – His Self-revelation. The other Greek word is "*Rhema*"⁵⁶, which W.E. Vine defines as "that which is uttered in speech or writing".⁵⁷ Doctrinally, "*Rhema*" is understood to be the words inspired by the Holy Spirit which He has also ordained to be recorded in the Scriptures. God's "*Logos*" is not separate from Himself. (John 1:1⁵⁸) Neither is God's "*Rhema*" separate from Himself. (Psalm 138:2⁵⁹)

Hebrews 1:1-2 reads: "*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the ages.*" From this passage, we can understand the "*Logos*" to be the whole of the "*Rhemas*" which God has spoken to Humanity; and that whole message has been embodied in "His Son".

"The Testimony" can also be understood to be specifically that which the Lord had given to Isaiah to prophesy to Ahaz and Judah; but the inherent implications were very far-reaching – even to the first century, as well as, to our own century also! The Lord had given Isaiah a prophecy about a Son to be born, who

⁵³ Strong's # 3056. As in John 1:1

⁵⁴ *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*

⁵⁵ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/logos/>

⁵⁶ Strong's # 4487. As in Hebrews 4:12

⁵⁷ *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*

⁵⁸ "The Word was with God and the Word was God."

⁵⁹ Adam Clarke translates this verse in this way: "For thou hast magnified thy name and thy word overall," or, "on every occasion." God's name represents God. God's word represents God. God has chosen to reveal Himself through both His names and His words. He is, therefore, faithful to both His name and His word.

would be "a sign", and whose name would be a prophetic promise. This, of course, is in reference to the Messiah: *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."* (Isaiah 7:14; Cf. Matthew 1:21-23)

As God gave His Son as a sign, He also gave Isaiah two sons who were to be "signs". They, of course, also typify Jesus Christ and His Body. Isaiah's first son, *Shear-Jashub* ("**A Remnant Will Return**"), typifies the Body of Christ, and is essentially the theme of this article. The second son, *Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz* ("Swift is the booty. Speedy is the prey."), typifies Jesus Christ as our Deliverer.⁶⁰

This was the heart of *"The Testimony"* – that is, what the Father had to say about the Son. *"The Testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son."* (1 John 5:9b)

And this Testimony of God will also be **The Testimony of "The Remnant Who Will Return"** – a Testimony *"concerning His Son"* (Romans 1:3). Of all the spiritual things they could testify about, **their Testimony will be about Jesus!** - *"Christ, the mystery of God, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* (Colossians 2:2b-3) - *Christ, the Sum of All Spiritual Things.*⁶¹ Again, **the heart of "The Testimony" of "The Remnant Who Will Return" is "concerning His Son", for "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."** (Revelation 19:10)⁶²

⁶⁰ Judah was delivered when Syria and Israel were defeated by Assyria.

⁶¹ This is the title of a wonderful book by Watchman Nee.

⁶² I have written much more extensively about "The Testimony" in my article, "The Testimony of God". A complimentary copy of this and other articles can be obtained in .pdf or printed

Part 3

The Law of the Land

Isaiah 8:16-18

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

¹⁷ And I will wait for the Lord who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.

¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

"Bind up the Testimony, Seal the Law..."

As discussed in Parts 1 and 2, God's judgment on His people can be in the form of an "Exile" – a captivity to a foreign and pagan nation. There was such an Exile of the citizens of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. But the particular historical context of this series of messages concerns the 70-year Exile in Babylon of the tribe of Judah which began in 597 B.C. Various passages in the Book of Isaiah indicate that after this Exile took place,

"A Remnant Will Return" – it would be a re-gathering of the people of God – for a restored expression of His kingdom. With this in view, it is verses 16 through 18 of Isaiah 8 which the Holy Spirit used to direct Isaiah and his disciples. And they would be for "signs and wonders in Israel" – that is, leaders in a restoration movement.

formats by contacting me: AtChristsTable@gmail.com A list of articles is available on our website: www.AtChristsTable.org

He said to "**bind up the testimony, seal the law....**" In the *The Torch of the Testimony*, we discussed the significance of *The Testimony*. Here, I'd like to point out one aspect of the significance of *The Law* – something that will help us properly understand the significance of God's law – that is, that **the Law and the Land are integrally connected.**

The Law

What was the "Law"? In this case, it was basically the contents of the book of Deuteronomy, but particularly what we call the Ten Commandments. (Deuteronomy 5:1-22, viz. 6 – 21) However, the essence of the Law is given in Deuteronomy 10:12: *“And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but **to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul....”***

Three things we need to clearly understand about God and Law: Firstly, we need to see God’s original intention for His Law. While the Mosaic Law eventually became a negative source of national pride⁶³ and legalism for the Jews, that was not the spirit with which they originally received God’s Law. For God, and originally for the Hebrews, the Law was not merely a set of rules and regulations. A legalistic understanding of “Law” carries with it the sense of performance and punishment. But originally, the Israelites were instructed in this way: *“And these words which I command you today shall be **in your heart.**”*⁶⁴ **For God, the Law is a matter of the heart – not external performance.** The passage goes on to say: *“You shall teach them diligently **to your children**, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”*⁶⁵ So we see that there was

⁶³ Cf. Romans 1:17-24; Ephesians 2:14-17; Philippians 3:2-6

⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 6:6. Relates to the *Shema*: “Hear, O Israel.”, Deuteronomy 6:4-5

⁶⁵ Deuteronomy 6:7. Relates to the *Shema*: “Hear, O Israel.”, Deuteronomy 6:4-5

a “parental” aspect associated with God’s giving the Law⁶⁶: Its essential dynamics were not performance and punishment; but rather nurturing and blessing. As our heavenly Father, it is not His intention to “*provoke His children to wrath*” with His Law, “*but (to) bring (us) up*⁶⁷ *in nurture*⁶⁸ *and admonition of the Lord.*”⁶⁹

The Hebrew word most often translated “Law” is *torah*, essentially meaning “**direction**”, “**instruction**”, or “**teaching**”.⁷⁰ The root word for the noun, *torah*, is the verb form, *yarah*, which means “**to point out**” or “**to show.**” Thus, God’s *Torah* points the way to life (Psalm 119:50 & 93) – the abundance of life that Jesus came to give (John 10:10). For Christians, the New Testament is also God’s “instruction” that “points the way” to “newness of life” in Christ.

The second thing we need to see clearly is that, although when reading Isaiah, we are considering Old Testament or Old Covenant Law, it would be wrong to think that there is no Law in the New Testament or New Covenant. The fact is, God always had Law; and God always will have Law. God’s Kingdom always has and always will operate according to His Law. The righteousness of God is fundamentally His Kingdom Law. God has never been without His righteousness, and never will be

⁶⁶ Gesenius’ Lexicon defines *torah* instruction “as that of parents.” This idea, along with others, is discussed in a very worthwhile article published by *Bridges for Peace* entitled “For the Love of Torah” which can be accessed and downloaded at: <http://www.bridgesforpeace.com/teaching-letter/article/for-the-love-of-torah/#>

⁶⁷ Ephesians 6:4

⁶⁸ (Greek): *paideia*: education and training, Strong’s # 3809

⁶⁹ (Greek): *nouthesia*: a bringing to mind or remembrance

⁷⁰ *Vines Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*

without His righteousness. Bear in mind that we have been instructed to “*seek first His kingdom and His righteousness*”.

(Matthew 6:33)

All the people in the Old Testament lived under God’s Law – from Adam and Eve to Moses and Joshua, from the judges and prophets, through all the kings in the Old Testament. Through Moses, God gave a law to govern the morality, social mores, and sacrificial worship, specifically, of the Hebrew nation.⁷¹ This law is known as the "Law of Moses" or the "Mosaic Law".⁷² And while we who are of the New Testament or New Covenant may not be under the Mosaic Law, it does not mean that we are not under the Law of God. We need to understand that when Paul stated, “*you are not under the law*”, he was specifically referring to the Mosaic Law. Paul wrote: “*To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law (i.e. the Mosaic Law), as under the law though not being myself under the law (i.e. the Mosaic Law), so that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ....*”⁷³ So, Paul, the apostle of grace, saw himself as under the Law of God – a New Covenant Law - namely “**the Law of Christ**”.

And what is “**the Law of Christ**”? It is the equivalent to “**the teaching of Christ**”. As we said, for to the Jew, the “*Torah*” (*the Law*) meant the “direction” or the “instruction” or the “teaching”. And in the phrase “**the teaching of Christ**”, as in 2 John 9, some

⁷¹ We must consider the fact that there is absolutely no indication in the Bible that God intended any other nation, other than the Hebrew nation, to try to obey and live according to this specific law.

⁷² Romans 6:14 (Cf. John 1:17); Romans 7:4-6 (Cf. 8:2).

⁷³ 1 Corinthians 9:20-21; also, Galatians 6:2; Cf. Romans 8:2.

Greek scholars identify the case to be subjective, rendering, "the teaching OF Christ" (i.e., the teachings which Jesus gave). Other Greek scholars identify the case as objective genitive, rendering, "the teaching ABOUT Christ" (i.e., the teachings which Jesus gave about Himself, as well as the teachings the apostles gave about Christ). We can take it both ways!

Paul, as well as all the other apostles, understood the clear connection between God, His Christ, His Kingdom, and His Righteousness. Their understanding was based on "**the teaching of Christ**" in the Sermon on the Mount where He said: *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy (the Law) but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless **your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.**"* (Matthew 5:17-20) So, what is "**the Law of Christ**"? **It is that body of teaching which includes the Beatitudes and what follows in the Sermon on the Mount⁷⁴ and other commandments of Christ found in the Gospels.**

⁷⁴ "The Beatitudes" exemplify the character of both The King and His Kingdom, and therefore embody the essence of the Law of the Kingdom. A complimentary copy of my book, *The Character of the King & His Kingdom*, can be obtained in a digital .PDF format by emailing AtChristsTable@gmail.com

The Law of the Land

And most significant to this particular article, the third thing we need to see clearly is that **the Law was given to Israel for when they would live in the Land**. Moses repeatedly made that point clear to Israel. He said:

“Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess.” (Deuteronomy 4:5)

And “... the Lord commanded me ... to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess.” (Deuteronomy 4:14)

Again, “Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess.” (Deuteronomy 6:1)

And again, “These are the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth.”

(Deuteronomy 12:1)

The Land and the Law are integrally connected. The Land is an Old Testament type and shadow representing the Kingdom of God. **God’s kingdom operates according to His Law.** By giving them the Law as they were about to enter the Land, God was

communicating to His people that **life in the Kingdom operates according to His Law**. For Israel, the “**Law of the Land**” would be the Law of God. Life in the Land would be the Kingdom lifestyle. Of course, as we will discuss, under the New Covenant, the locus of the Kingdom is not a physical land, but the hearts of a people.

“Seek First the Kingdom of God”

Jesus referred to the Kingdom of God in this way: *“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* (Matthew 6:10) Based on this, we can essentially define the Kingdom of God as **the rule of God in the midst of His people**. In the Old Covenant, the Law of God governed the external lives of His people. In the New Covenant, it governs their internal lives as well. In the New Covenant, His rule is not externally imposed, but rather, **internally, from within people’s hearts**. This was prophesied through Jeremiah: *“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*⁷⁵ The apostle Paul confirms that this is, in fact, the case with those who have entered into the New Covenant when he writes: *“... clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.”*

(2 Corinthians 3:3)

God’s intention was that the Israelites should have a new and different life in the promised land from the life they had in Egypt. He led them into and through the Jordan River, which was an Old Testament type and shadow representing baptism into Christ

⁷⁵ Jeremiah 31:31-33 (Also Hebrews 8:7-13)

Jesus. And, if they would then live according to the Book of the Law, they would experience a **“newness of life”** in the promised land that would be altogether different from the life of bondage they experienced in Egypt.

In the same way, under the New Covenant, God intends that those who have become His people through baptism into Christ Jesus would walk in a **“newness of life”**. I take this phrase from a passage in Paul’s writings: *“... as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* (Romans 6:3-4) This baptism into Christ Jesus, that is, our identification with His death, burial, and resurrection, is the New Covenant reality of what was represented in the crossing of the Jordan River. What follows is **“newness of life” in Christ Jesus - living according to the Law of Christ, namely, the Kingdom lifestyle - experiencing “righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”**. (Romans 14:17) In their epistles, the apostles describe what it means to **“walk in newness of life” – namely, to live according to “the Law of Christ” - to live the Kingdom lifestyle, “seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness”**. If you read the epistles of James, Peter, John and Paul with a “wide lens” so to speak, you will see that **their exhortations to the Church on how to live out the Christian life are all based upon Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount.**⁷⁶ It was through His Sermon on the Mount that the King of the Kingdom laid out the Law of the Kingdom with a fair measure of detail in Matthew 5 – 7. Thirty-four verses of this sermon in Matthew’s gospel are

⁷⁶ Examples from Paul’s epistles: (cf. Ephesians 4:17-24) Ephesians 4:25-6:9 and Colossians 3:12-25.

also found as a sermon in Luke's gospel.⁷⁷ The other parts of this sermon in Mathew's gospel are also found in other places in Luke's gospel.⁷⁸ It is way beyond the scope of this article to deal adequately with The Sermon on the Mount. But here I'll offer just a very brief overview:

As an introduction to The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew writes: "*And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when he was seated, His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them....*" (Matthew 5:1-2)

It was when Jesus saw **the multitudes** that He went up on the mountain and began teaching His disciples. Why were **multitudes** following Jesus? The previous chapter in Matthew's gospel tells us that Jesus had initiated a movement: He traveled about teaching and preaching the good news that change was coming - a new order of things – something called "**the Kingdom of God**".⁷⁹ Matthew wrote that "*His fame went throughout all the region*", and that "*great multitudes followed Him*".⁸⁰

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain...."
(Matthew 5:1)

What is the spiritual significance of **the mountain**? On **the mountain**, God gave the Law which was to govern life in the kingdom for Israel under the Old Covenant.⁸¹ That is exactly what Jesus is doing here in The Sermon on the Mount: He is

⁷⁷ Luke 6:17-49

⁷⁸ Luke 11:2-4, 12:22-34

⁷⁹ Matthew's term "kingdom of heaven" is synonymous with the term, "kingdom of God".

⁸⁰ Matthew 4:17-25

⁸¹ Exodus 19

giving the Law which is to rule life in the Kingdom of God for the Church under the New Covenant.

We do not have to wait for eternity to see this Kingdom. Jesus said, *“The Kingdom of Heaven is in your midst.”*⁸² He said, if you are *“born of the Spirit”*, you can *“see”* and *“enter into”* this Kingdom now.⁸³ **The Kingdom is every place where people submit their hearts and lives to the rule of God** - *“on earth as it is in heaven”*. (Matthew 6:10) The Church of Jesus Christ is **IN the world** but **OF the Kingdom of Heaven**.

In the passage commonly called the “Beatitudes” (Matthew 5:3-13), Jesus is revealing the **personality** of the King, the **nature** of His Kingdom, and the **character** of those who live the Kingdom lifestyle and prove to be *“salt and light”* on the earth.⁸⁴

Following the Beatitudes, Jesus then goes on to detail much of **the Law of the Kingdom** by laying out various “bylaws” regarding how life is to be lived in the Kingdom of God.⁸⁵ For example, 5 times in Matthew 5 (calling to mind the 5 books of the Mosaic Law) Jesus says: *“You have heard it said ... but I say to you....”* In so doing He confirms the Law of God that had been given on the tablets of stone but extends the Law to be written on human hearts.⁸⁶ This is what the apostle Paul referred to as *“the law of Christ”* and *“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”*⁸⁷ - the

⁸² Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 10:7, 12:28.

⁸³ John 3:3-5

⁸⁴ **The Beatitudes: The Character of The King & His Kingdom** is a self-study / small group-study I have written which is freely available in .PDF format by emailing: AtChristsTable@gmail.com

⁸⁵ Matthew 5:13-7:29

⁸⁶ Jeremiah 31:31-33 (Also Hebrews 8:7-13); 2 Corinthians 3:3

⁸⁷ 1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2

Law which rules life in the Kingdom of God. It is these things which are to be “sealed” among the disciples – the disciples of the King and His Kingdom.⁸⁸

Having established this connection of The Land and The Law of the Old Covenant with The Spiritual Kingdom (“*righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*”⁸⁹) and The Law of Christ⁹⁰ of the New Covenant, it is essential to keep in mind that the nature of the New Covenant is “according to the Spirit” – not “according to the letter”⁹¹. In other words, the keeping of the Law of Christ – the Sermon on the Mount and other commandments of Christ found in the Gospels – is done “*according to the Spirit*”. The meaning of that phrase is, of course, quite profound. But one brief way of seeing how the "Law of Christ", is “*according to the Spirit*” and not “*according to the letter*” is this:

Jesus used the phrase, “*You have heard ...but I say unto you....*”, six times in the Sermon on the Mount. While not “doing away with” the Mosaic Law, He went “**beyond**” the Mosaic Law (and personally fulfilled the Law of God). But what effect did He intend to accomplish with regards to *our* understanding and keeping the Law of God? He “internalized” the law⁹² (written on hearts of flesh) instead of being merely external (written on stones)⁹³. And, in a manner of speaking, He “raised the bar” -

⁸⁸ Cf. Matthew 13:52

⁸⁹ Romans 14:17

⁹⁰ I Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2. I believe “The Law of Christ” is the same as what James referred to as the “*royal law*”(2:8), that is, the law of the King, “*the perfect law of freedom*”(2:12).

⁹¹ 2 Corinthians 3:6

⁹² e.g., Matthew 5:27-28

⁹³ 2 Corinthians 3:3

giving the true spirit behind the letter of the Law of God, revealing the depth and width and height of God's perfection and holiness.

I believe Christ's intention towards His commandments, is similar to what His intention was towards the Old Testament scriptures. Namely, to go **"beyond"** the letter and externalism. That is, that the Church should not look at the New Testament scriptures the way Israel looked at the Old Testament scriptures - a "letter" to accomplish through human/self-effort. Rather, the Church is to look at the New Testament scriptures as indicating principles of Spirit-generated fruit – that is, Spirit-generated life⁹⁴ manifesting from *"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"*⁹⁵. Illustrations of Spirit-generated activities include, but are not limited to, are what is recorded in the New Testament - a manifestation of the New Covenant in and through the Church, with the Person of Christ Himself being the Pattern - not the letter of Scripture. Of course, this Pattern would NEVER be contrary to Scripture. Nevertheless, this Pattern – Christ Himself - is so rich and perfect, it can be somewhat described - but not fully prescribed - in the words of Scripture. And *"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"* can do what *"the letter"* is too *"weak"*⁹⁶ to do – namely cover every possible life situation.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ John 6:62, 2 Corinthians 3:6

⁹⁵ Romans 8:2

⁹⁶ Romans 8:3

⁹⁷ That which is mentioned above is not only the case with regards to the individual disciple's personal growth in Christ, but that it also is the principle (*"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"*) which governs the corporate or collective life and activities of the Church, which is His Body.

Part 4

Bind the Testimony, Seal the Law

Isaiah 8:16-18

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

¹⁷ And I will wait for the Lord who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.

¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

Bind up and Seal the Word of God?

In previous articles, we discussed the word of God as "*the Testimony*" and "*the Law*". In the context of Isaiah and this particular period in the history of God's people, these terms refer to a prophetic word from the Lord to give guidance to His people at the appointed time – a word of direction which they should consult rather than turning to "*mediums and spiritists*" for guidance. (Cf. 8:19-20) The message was written "*on a large tablet*", and we can assume proclaimed publicly, as it was testified to by two faithful witnesses (Cf. 8:2). But in verse 16 of Isaiah 8, it says that after this public proclamation, the prophet would then "**bind up, and seal**" the message. "*Bind up the testimony, seal the law....*" Why?

My hope for this article is to offer an answer to that question, which may be instructive on how we are to conduct ourselves in the time in which we live with regards to the message, ministry,

and mission of God. I also hope it will unveil personally to each one of us a **particular spiritual disposition** - a particular self-awareness of who we are as the "**Called**" in Christ, as well as an **appreciation of the preciousness** of what He has given us to share. Hopefully, this will influence how we share the word of Christ entrusted to us. We have been given something **precious**; and we who are **called** to share it, are **privileged**. We need to truly **appreciate the privilege** in order for the **preciousness** to be truly communicated to people.⁹⁸

So, after it was published abroad, why was the message then "*bound up*" and "*sealed*"? Later in the history of God's people, He told another prophet – Daniel – to do the same.⁹⁹

Daniel 8:26

"The vision of the evenings and mornings which has been told is true; but keep the vision secret, for it pertains to many days in the future."

Daniel 12:9

"And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words will be kept secret and sealed up until the end time."

One explanation is that, after the prophecy was publicly proclaimed, it was to be "*sealed*" until the time of its fulfillment. The God of creation proclaims something, and the God of history brings it to pass, so to speak. **When He has His prophets speak out His word, it is then recorded, bound up and sealed – until**

⁹⁸ 1 Peter 2:7; 2 Corinthians 2:16

⁹⁹ Isaiah prophesied prior to the Exile (approximately, 740-680 B.C.), and Daniel prophesied during the Exile (approximately, 605-536 B.C.)

the time of its fulfillment. Why? In order to demonstrate that God was just in His judgment.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ e.g., Genesis 15:16; Cf., 2 Peter 3:9

Only Jesus Can Open the Seals

Revelation 5

The Book with Seven Seals

1 "I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. 4 Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; 5 and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." 6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. 7 And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 10 "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

In this passage, we see that only Jesus is worthy to "take up the book and open the seals", because it is only His finished work of

redemption which makes the fulfillment of prophecy possible. Only Jesus will build His Church. (Matthew 16:18) Only Jesus will *"abolish all rule and all authority and power, and hand the kingdom to God the Father."* (1 Corinthians 15:24) God's eternal purpose is accomplished only in and by and through Christ. (Ephesians 3:11). Those who are called to share the word of Christ – do so in His Name, recognizing that **only He is worthy and able to "open the seals" of that which He calls us to share.** Therefore, we speak in faith¹⁰¹ – that is, in absolute reliance upon Christ. It is because of this absolute reliance upon the Spirit of Christ that disciples of Christ can hope to walk in absolute submission to His Lordship.

¹⁰¹ "To believe": (Greek) pistueo, Strong's # 4100: to rely upon.

Bound and Sealed

A Famine for the Hearing of the Word of the Lord

Again, it may sound very strange to us that the word of the Lord should be *"bound up"* and *"sealed"*, even after it has been proclaimed. But there are times when there is a *"famine for the hearing of the word of the Lord"* (Amos 8:11). For example, there was the 400 "silent years" of the intertestamental period¹⁰². The reason for the temporary silence? People chose to stop listening; and God chose to stop speaking. In this sense, the word of God was *"bound and sealed"*. We can see the spiritual principle in Romans 1:26: *"For this reason God gave them over"* And 2 Thessalonians 2:10b-12: *"... because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason, God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth but took pleasure in wickedness."*

Holy Pearls

Jesus said some things which also may sound very strange to us: For example: *"Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you."* (Matthew 7:6 ESV) What did Jesus mean by saying this? Pigs cannot tell the difference between pearls and kernels of corn. Many people, when they discover that what has been given to them is not what they were expecting, will trample the

¹⁰² i.e., Between the Old and the New Testaments

word of the Lord and attack the prophet. What God freely gives is holy and deserving of reverence; but many people have no reverence for the holy. **If in a particular situation or spiritual season the Holy Spirit is saying, "Do not throw your pearls", in this way the word of God is being "bound and sealed".**

"Among My Disciples"

The Holy Spirit specified that the word be "*bound and sealed*" "*among My disciples*". Why? While the Lord "*desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Timothy 2:4), the Lord entrusts His "*treasures of wisdom and knowledge*"¹⁰³ to His true disciples as curators of His word, while His knowledge and truth are "*bound and sealed*" to others.

In His *Parable of the Pearl of Great Value* the Lord depicted His true disciples in this way: "*Upon finding one pearl of great value, (they) sell all that (they) have and buy it*". (Matthew 13:46) Those who are truly disciples of Christ recognize and revere the "great value of the pearl". This is what Jesus said to His disciples: "*To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.... blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.*" (Cf. Matthew 13:10-17) In this way, the word of God is "*bound and sealed*" "*among His disciples*", and "*bound and sealed*" from others. The difference has to do with recognizing and believing¹⁰⁴ the precious value of what God has to say and give.

¹⁰³ Colossians 2:3

¹⁰⁴ (Greek) pistueo, Strong's # 4100: to trust in, and rely upon, i.e., to utterly depend upon.

As Peter said: *"This precious value, then, is for you who believe."* (1 Peter 2:7) So, *"the teaching"*¹⁰⁵ is *"bound and sealed"* *"among My disciples"* because it is precious to them.

Those who *"continue in the word of Christ, are truly disciples of Christ; they will know the truth, and the truth will make them free."* (John 8:31-32) In comparison to the majority in the conventional churches, the true disciples of Christ have a spiritual abundance with regards to authentic knowledge of God, His word, and His ways. Yet, their "glory" is not in flaunting their spiritual "wisdom", or their spiritual "power", or their spiritual "riches". They are deeply mindful that the **preciousness and privilege** which have been given to them is that they "know and understand" God. (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

Called, Chosen, Privileged

From the *Parable of the Wedding Feast*, we know that *"many are called"*; but not everyone responds to the call. We also know that even among those who do respond to the call, *"few are chosen"*.¹⁰⁶ Jesus chose His disciples. And He still chooses His disciples today. Unlike the man in the parable who was improperly dressed, the disciples whom Jesus chooses are those who recognize and revere the **preciousness and privilege** of His call. Those who *"have the Spirit of Christ and belong to Him"*¹⁰⁷ have been *"chosen in Him before the foundation of the world"*. (Ephesians 1:4) What a privilege!

¹⁰⁵ ESV

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Matthew 22:1-14

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Romans 8:9

The Early Church knew they were privileged to belong to Christ. In Acts 5:41 it says, *"So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name."*

They knew it was a privilege to be a member of Christ's Body. In 1 Corinthians 14, the apostle Paul refers to the non-believer in a way that sets apart the believer. In verses 16 and 23, he uses the Greek word *"idiotes"*¹⁰⁸ in reference to the non-believer. This is obviously the root of our English word, "idiot", but the meaning wasn't quite as derogatory. Some translations render the word as the "unlearned",¹⁰⁹ and "those who don't understand",¹¹⁰ distinguishing them from those who belonged to Christ as those who were "learned" and had "understanding" of the spiritual things of Christ. Other translations render the word as "the outsiders", distinguishing them from those who belonged to Christ, who were members of His Body, chosen to be in the family of God, *"predestined to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will"*. (Ephesians 1:5) There are many ways the Scriptures describe the true Church, but they all depict a highly **privileged** calling – a calling of which we may have lost a keen awareness and appreciation. It is a *"high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 3:14)

In the apostle John's first epistle, I see him making a clear distinction between those who know and belong to Christ and

¹⁰⁸ Strong's # 2399

¹⁰⁹ KJV, NKJV, ASV

¹¹⁰ NLT

those who don't. John unabashedly uses the proverbial "us and them" phrase: *"They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us."* (1 John 2:19)¹¹¹ It seems to me, the early Church had a strong sense of being *"chosen to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth"* (Deuteronomy 7:6)¹¹², *"a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession"* (1 Peter 2:9), "set apart by calling"¹¹³ and in that sense, knowing they were **privileged**.

What is my point in highlighting this sense of preciousness and **privilege**? Obviously, we all know that Christians are not "better" than other human beings. We all know that we are not more "deserving" of the riches of Christ than anyone else. That is not the point. The point is this: The word of Christ is to be *"bound up and sealed"* because **it is precious**, and **we are privileged** to be its curators.

Should we ever "unwrap" it? Yes - as in unwrapping some fine jewelry wrapped in a velvet cloth. What we have been freely given is *"a pearl of great value"*. It is not "cheap grace" and should not be "priced at a deep discount". It should not be put out on the "bargain table". It doesn't need to be – and should not be – hyped. It is highly esteemed, yet it will be ridiculed. It is highly desired, yet it will be rejected. It cannot be "cheapened" in an effort to make it more "accessible" or

¹¹¹ Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:19 (NIV) "No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval."

¹¹² Deuteronomy 14:2; 26:18 & 29; Exodus 19:5

¹¹³ Cf. Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2: "Saints" – "sanctified" or "set apart" ones.

"acceptable". We are **privileged** to be curators of its **preciousness**. Its acceptance or rejection is not our responsibility – that is a matter between God and each individual. In the end, when *"every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father"* (Philippians 2:10-11), I don't know if that will take place as a sign of defeat for some, or if it will be an act of worship by all; but in this age, the mystery of Christ is *"bound up and sealed"* except to those who, by the grace of God, *"have ears to hear and eyes to see, and hearts to understand, and turn to the Lord to be healed"*. (Isaiah 6:10; Matthew 13:15) And those who do – however many or few – are **highly privileged** to have what God freely gives.

We have been called and we are to *"walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called"*. (Ephesians 4:1)¹¹⁴ The apostle Paul prayed for us: *"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."* (Ephesians 1:18) *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."* (Ephesians 2:10) We are **privileged** to have this *"high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:14) to preach something so **precious** as the mystery of Christ.

¹¹⁴ Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2

Part 5

Turning Captivity Captive

Isaiah 8:16-18

16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

17 And I will wait for the Lord who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.

18 Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

Introduction

In the previous article, we discussed the spiritual reasons why the teaching of Christ was to be *"bound and sealed" "among the disciples"*. But there was also a more practical reason if you will: **The teaching needed to be "bound and sealed" because of the coming Exile or Captivity. During the course of the Captivity, the teaching would need to be "bound and sealed", watched-over and kept "among the disciples", because they were to be "for signs and wonders" after that Captivity – forerunners of a restoration movement, which would be initiated by the proclamation of the Logos – a fresh revelation of the testimony of Jesus through the spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19:10)**

But this testimony – and those who would preach it – would emerge out of Captivity.

Instruction for the End of the Ages

There are five examples of Captivity in Israel's history that we are to learn from, for Paul said: *"These things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."*¹¹⁵

- 400 years in Egypt
- 40 years in the Wilderness
- Approximately 875 years of living in the midst of the nations of Canaan
- **70 years in Babylon**
- And after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the dispersion of the Jews into Gentile nations

In this message, we are focusing specifically on the Babylonian Captivity. In 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, devastated the city of Jerusalem, and took captive the skilled, educated, wealthy and prominent citizens of Jerusalem and led them into captivity in Babylon.¹¹⁶

According to Jeremiah,¹¹⁷ 3,023 Jews were deported in the first wave, 832 in the second wave, and 745 in the third

¹¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 10:11; Cf. Romans 15:4

¹¹⁶ At that time, some of the Jews fled and escaped into hiding in Egypt. (Jeremiah 24:8)

¹¹⁷ Jeremiah 52:28-30.

wave, making 4,600 in all. However, it is likely that only the men were counted. Including women and children it is estimated that 14,000 to 18,000 people would be the full number. Since scholars estimate the total population of the Kingdom of Judah during this time at between 120,000 and 150,000, less than 1/4 of the population was actually taken into Captivity. However, since this included a high percentage of court officials, priests, skilled craftsmen, and other wealthy citizens, the captives constituted majority of the cultural elite of the nation.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ *New World Encyclopedia*. A larger estimate is given in 2 Kings 24:14-16, which refers only to the first deportation 597 B.C. Verse 14 gives the numbers as 10,000 men, while verse 16 puts the number at 8,000, an estimate roughly double that of Jeremiah's for all three deportations. Scholars tend to accept Jeremiah's figures as more accurate.

God's Purpose in Captivity

It is important to understand that **God has a purpose in Captivity – and that purpose is not primarily punishment, but rather to "TURN CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE" - a process in which He works to captivate the hearts of His people with Himself – His plans and purposes.** We will speak more of this process, and as we do, we will be "tracking", as it were, the development of Isaiah's son, Shearjashub¹¹⁹ – "The Remnant Who Will Return" – for he was prophetically named to represent "*A People Prepared for the Lord*".¹²⁰ But God has purposed that this process of preparation take place in Captivity, so let's see what we can learn from Israel's times in Captivity.

In order to truly see God's plans and purposes, we MUST see things from God's point of view. This is how J.B. Phillips translated Colossians 1:9: "*We are asking God that you may see things, as it were, from his point of view by being given spiritual insight and understanding.*" Seeing from a human point of view will only and always be a self-centered or Man-centered point of view, serving our own plans and purposes. It is true that this is "only natural". But, actually, we are called to be also "supernatural": "*God is spirit, and they that worship Him MUST worship in spirit and truth.*" (John 4:24) Our struggle with this is that God's thoughts and ways are NOT our thoughts and ways. The ways of God can appear to

¹¹⁹ Isaiah 7:3

¹²⁰ Luke 1:17

be "foolish" (1 Corinthians 1:18-25) or even "insane" (Mark 3:21; Acts 26:24). But, in fact, God's thoughts and ways are "higher" – "super-natural". (Isaiah 55:8-9) So, if we are going to walk with God as His sons, we MUST be "*born of the Spirit*" (John 3:3-6) and be "*led by the Spirit*" (Romans 8:14). If we are going to work with God as His co-laborers (1 Corinthians 3:9), we MUST have continual revelation of His plans and purposes so we can work with Him and not against Him. All this is "un-natural" and "supernatural", so, we MUST "*live by every word that proceeds (continually) from (His) mouth*" (Deuteronomy 8:3), because "*the words that (He) speaks are spirit and are life*" (John 6:63). Of course, not one of us can do this perfectly. Nevertheless, in order to truly understand – that is, have revelation knowledge of – God's thoughts, words, plans, and purposes, we need to EXPERIENCE THEIR MEANING IN OUR LIVES. We see this principle in the life of Joseph in his Egyptian captivity: "*Until the time that His word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested (or better, "refined") him (Joseph).*" (Psalm 105:19)¹²¹

So, we see that **God brings "A People Prepared for the Lord" - the Remnant - through a process, which can be referred to as "TURNING CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE" – that is, a process which changes us from being captive to our plans and purposes to our being captive to His plans and purposes.**

It is interesting to note that this process not only takes place during Captivity, but apparently needs to be re-enforced, as

¹²¹ Hebrew: *tsaraph*, Strong's # 6884: tested, refined.

it were, even after Captivity. This may be so because it is human nature to tend *"to forget the Lord your God"* (Deuteronomy 8:11) when our need is to *"remember"* (Deuteronomy 8:10; 18). The Holy Spirit works uniquely in each individual life. But in this process of "TURNING CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE" the Lord has one end, which He has stated in this way:

"That you might know what is in your heart"

(Deuteronomy 8:2)

Deuteronomy 8 speaks of our tendency to forget the Lord during times of blessing, and our need to remember that the Lord, not ourselves, is the source of blessing (vv. 11-18). It also speaks of our continual need for the word of God which is spirit and life. (v. 3) In this chapter, the Lord is explaining to Israel WHY He led them in the wilderness for 40 years – WHY He was needing to *"turn their captivity captive"*. We can summarize what He says in the whole chapter with the following: *"To humble you, to know what is in your heart"*. (vv. 2-3; 5; 16) This "humbling" came in the form of the absence of material comforts and was a pre-requisite to what the Lord wanted to accomplish spiritually: **That you would know what is in your heart.**

Why is this self-knowledge so important? Those who are called to share the word of Christ must be ever aware that *"What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit."* (John 3:6); and *"that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh."* (Romans 7:18) It was a Man-centered perspective

and pride in human ability which necessitated the Lord allowing His people to be taken into Captivity in the first place. Therefore, the "Remnant Who Will Return" will, of necessity, have to be different – *"A People Prepared for the Lord"* - in order to be for *"signs and wonders"* in the next expression of the Kingdom – *"The ones who serve by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and do not put confidence in the flesh."*¹²² Actually, this is simply a definition of an authentic New Covenant Christian.

¹²² Philippians 3:3

The Captivity

Isaiah 8, verse 17 reads: *"And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him."* This prophetic picture of the Lord *"hiding His face"* speaks of what life is like in Captivity.

The opposite of the Lord *"hiding His face"* is seen in the oft-quoted blessing: *"The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you."* (Numbers 6:25) It follows then that when the Lord *"hides His face"*, there is the absence of many of the blessings of God. These are the blessings of God which we normally take for granted but realize are missing when we experience Captivity. In this spiritual situation, if we turn to the Holy Spirit as Isaiah did, we will receive this direction: *"wait for the Lord ... even look eagerly for Him"*. (Isaiah 8:17)

We could say that this would be the direction given by the Holy Spirit at all times, as both Jesus and Paul tell us to pray *"at all times"*.¹²³ But it is a direction given specifically at times of judgment – when the Lord is *"hiding His face"*, during seasons of Captivity. We see it in the life of David when he sought refuge in the Cave of Adullam because of Saul's persecution. He prayed: *"Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, for my soul takes refuge in You; and in the shadow of Your wings, I will take refuge until destruction passes by."*¹²⁴

¹²³ Luke 18:1, 21:36; Ephesians 6:18.

¹²⁴ Psalm 57:1. Cf. 1 Samuel 22:1.

I'd like to point out two things here: Firstly, notice that David is taking physical refuge in a cave, yet there he finds spiritual refuge in the presence of God that is so real he likens it to being "*in the shadow of God's wings*". (Psalm 57:1)¹²⁵ We may or may not have access to a cave, as it were, but we can enter into His "Rest". "Rest" is not a ceasing of activity, but rather, it is a place – a place in the Spirit – in the presence of God – which we enter into through faith and obedience. We can enter this place of "Rest" in the Spirit, even if we find ourselves in the "wilderness cave" - in spiritual Captivity.¹²⁶

Secondly: David said, "*I will take refuge until destruction passes by.*" This is the direction of the Holy Spirit – this is exactly what God would have us to do when the Lord is "*hiding His face*", in times of Captivity: Wait for the Lord ... even look eagerly for Him until the judgment passes over. This is a spiritual principle we see in David's life, and he mentions it numerous times in his psalms.¹²⁷ This is also the direction of the Spirit in the historical context which we are dealing with in Isaiah – impending judgment and Captivity. We see this not only in Isaiah 8:17, but also in Isaiah 26:20 where the Lord says: "*Come, my people, enter into your rooms and close your doors behind you; hide for a little while until indignation runs its course.*"

¹²⁵ David wrote this phrase when he fled from Saul into the Cave of Adullam (Psalm 57:1). But he also wrote this phrase during other times of adversity as well (Psalms 17:8; 36:7; 63:7).

¹²⁶ Cf. Hebrews 3:18-19.

¹²⁷ Psalms 17:8; 27:5; 31:20; 143:9

Of this verse, Adam Clarke comments: "It seems to be an allusion to the command of Moses to the Israelites, when the destroying angel was to go through the land of Egypt, '*not to go out at the door of their houses until the morning.*' (Ex. 12:22) And before the passage of the Red Sea: '*Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah. Jehovah shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*' (Ex. 14:13-14)" It is that place in the Spirit – a place of Rest.

Why this place of Rest? Shouldn't we be doing something? Shouldn't we be "righting our wrongs"? Isn't that what Repentance is? Not exactly. Repentance is "changing perception";¹²⁸ and consequently, turning direction – turning back to God – "TURNING CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE". Simply doing what we conceive to be "right" things after having done "wrong" things is not repentance – at best, that may be "*producing fruit in keeping with repentance*" (Matthew 3:8) – that is, a result of Repentance.¹²⁹ In any case, the arrogance of believing that we know the "right" thing to do, and that we have the ability to do the "right" thing, and that in so doing we can redeem ourselves from "reaping what we have sown" – redeem ourselves from "*the pit which we have made*" (Psalm 9:15) – redeem ourselves from this judgment which we have brought upon ourselves. Redeem ourselves? It is such spiritual arrogance which has led us into Captivity! We are in such a spiritual mess we do not have a clue as to what we could do to "right the wrong". IT IS TIME TO REST IN GOD

¹²⁸ Greek: *metanoia*. Strong's # 3341. *Meta*: "change" + *noeo*: "perception".

¹²⁹ I have discussed these things in my article, "*Repentance*", a complimentary copy of which can be obtained by emailing AtChrist'sTable@gmail.com

– learn to “*serve by the Spirit of God*” (Philippians 3:3), so as to be ready when “*the indignation has run its course*” and “*the destruction passes over*”.

In the phrase, “*hiding His face*”, the word translated “hiding” is a Hebrew word with a root meaning “to hide (as in one’s bosom), to cherish (with affection)”.¹³⁰ The Lord is “keeping to Himself”, as it were. Interestingly, that is **what the Spirit is saying to those who find themselves in a spiritual Captivity: “Keep to yourself. Hold your peace. Be still and at rest yet wait for the Lord and look eagerly for Him, until the indignation runs its course, and the destruction passes over”.**

An additional thought:

If we are troubled by the idea that God is telling us to “hide” in this sense, we need to understand that God is not telling us to hide from our enemies in fear. Rather it is to **hide the word in our heart - cherish the message and calling He has given – keep it close to our bosoms, seek the “secret place” of His presence - enter into His “Rest”, for it is from that place we can emerge after the Captivity with strength, vitality, and “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”.**

(Ephesians 6:17)¹³¹

¹³⁰ (Hebrew): *chabah*, Strong’s # 2247. Primary root: Strong’s # 2245 – *chabab*. Compare with Strong’s # 2244 - *chaba*: to be secret.

¹³¹ As the Lord used the ministry of Ezra teaching the word of God in the restoration of Jerusalem. Cf. Ezra 7 and Nehemiah 8.

The Return (Aliyah)

The Hebrew word, "aliyah", means "going up". For the Jew, "making aliyah", means going up to or moving to Israel. For the Jews who were in Captivity in Babylon, it was a "Return" to Jerusalem. Those who made the trip to "Return" were considered by God to be the "Remnant" – and remember, **it is that Remnant that was pictured in Isaiah's son and disciples. Interestingly, "the Return of the Remnant" from Babylon to Jerusalem took place in stages.**¹³²

In 538 BC, there was an Aliyah under Zerubbabel¹³³ involving Jews from the of tribes of Judah, Levi, and Benjamin¹³⁴. These people set the altar on its foundation, celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, and restored the foundation of the temple in Jerusalem.¹³⁵ But because of the devastation of war, they had returned to a city with a severe housing shortage and high taxes. They also found themselves surrounded by the harassment of the Samaritans, their adversaries.

¹³² This may be a pattern for us in the Church Age.

¹³³ There is some question as to whether "Sheshbazzar" was the Babylonian court name of Zerubbabel, or of Zerubbabel's father, Shealtiel. This is addressed in *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1992). © 2014 Norman Geisler. (http://defendinginerrancy.com/bible-solutions/Ezra_1.8.php) Ezra 1:7-8, 11 tells us that under Sheshbazzar, prince of Judah, Jews returned to Jerusalem carrying the gold and silver vessels (5,400) which Nebuchadnezzar had taken. Some see this as another separate Aliyah. But since most scholars agree that it took place in the same year (538 BC), it may have been just a contingent of Zerubbabel's group who were specifically in charge of the vessels.

¹³⁴ The meanings of the names of these three tribes may carry some spiritual significance: *Judah* means "He shall be praised" (Gen. 29:35), the tribe from which would come the Messiah. *Levi* means "joined" (Gen. 29:34), the tribe of priests who conducted the "service of worship". *Benjamin* means "the son of the right hand" (Gen. 35:18), indicating kingdom authority. (*A Dictionary of Scripture Proper Names* (Neptune, NJ; Loizeaux Brothers, © 1909), J.B. Jackson.

¹³⁵ Ezra 3

In 458 BC, there was an Aliyah which took place under Ezra, who was instrumental in restoring the Law of the Kingdom back into the hearts and minds of the Remnant.

And in 445 BC there was the Aliyah of Nehemiah, to whom the king of Persia supplied an army escort. Under Nehemiah's leadership, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt; yet the inhabitants suffered such impoverished conditions under the rule of Persia that they had to mortgage their lands, homes, and vineyards just to buy grain to eat.¹³⁶

Some scholars estimate that only 1/6th (16.5%) of the Remnant Who Returned were wealthy – all the rest were poor. This indicates that the decision to leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem was less appealing to those Jews who had become "well-established" in Babylon, which was a relatively prosperous and luxurious place to live. Essentially, life in Babylon could be compared to living in America – comparatively prosperous and pleasant, albeit under the control of a worldly and ungodly government. During the 70 years of Exile, most of the Jews had settled into a comfortable lifestyle. And, therefore, most of the Jews did not opt to "Return".¹³⁷

Isaiah 6:13 reads: *"Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, and it will again be subject to burning, like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump."* The Remnant

¹³⁶ Nehemiah 5

¹³⁷ Hebrew: "shuv", Strong's # 7725 – "turn back", "return", but is also translated "repent".

is not the whole tree – it is just the stump – a 10th, a tithe. Without knowing the exact rates of birth and death (including casualties of war) – both in the Promised Land and in the Babylonian Captivity - scholars feel that actual numbers are difficult to ascertain. But it is generally held that approximately 602,000 Jews entered the promised Land.¹³⁸ And approximately 42,000 Jews returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity.¹³⁹ The difference, which is conceivably those who remained in Babylon, is 560,000. So, **"the Remnant Who Returned" figures to be fairly close to the tithe for the Lord which was prophesied by Isaiah.**

¹³⁸ 601, 730 Cf. Numbers 26:51

¹³⁹ 42,360 Cf. Ezra 2:64-65

The Process

Processing the Remnant – the process of "TURNING CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE" - begins before the Captivity, continues throughout the Captivity. It is also interesting to note that the processing of the Remnant continues even after the Return.

Before Captivity

Hezekiah, king of Judah, represents the whole of God's people in the historical context before their Captivity in Babylon. The following is an excerpt from the Nelson Study Bible regarding Isaiah 38:1-39:8 – "Although Hezekiah trusted in God to heal him (38:1-22), he failed when the Babylonian envoys visited him. After his recovery, he paraded his own glory, not the Lord's. (39:1-2). Thus, he implicitly placed his confidence in military strength and political alliances instead of the strength of the Almighty God. Because of his unbelief, Judah would go into Captivity. (39:3-8)"

Just an aside:

In that he placed his confidence in military strength and political alliances, it is obvious that Hezekiah also typifies the contemporary American Church. This is a subject in and of itself, of which I have written in other articles.¹⁴⁰ Does this mean that the Church in America is headed toward Captivity? I

¹⁴⁰ e.g., *The Way of God & The Way of Humanity* and *How Does God Govern Fallen Humanity?* A complimentary .pdf copy of these articles can be obtained by simply emailing me at AtChristsTable@gmail.com

believe that the Church in America – as well as the visible Church in every nation – is already in Captivity. It is more of a matter of the aspects of Captivity increasing. I believe the people of God have been in Captivity since the Babylonian Captivity in 597 B.C. While the kingdom of Heaven is "within" us and "in our midst", there is no physical "promised land" or "holy land" that has been given to the Church (consisting of both Jews and Gentiles in Christ). Therefore, for the whole of the Church Age, that is, until the return of Christ – the Church (consisting of both Jews and Gentiles in Christ) will live under the political rule of spiritually fallen human governments.¹⁴¹ I also believe that this perspective corresponds to what Jesus called "*the times of the gentiles*" - maybe better translated "*the times of the nations*".¹⁴² "The Powers" were defeated at the Cross (Colossians 2:15); but this is now a time in which Almighty God has allowed the "*god of this world*"¹⁴³ to have sway over the human governments of this world.¹⁴⁴ The judgment has been "written" so to speak (Psalm 149:9); but it will be "executed" by "The Faithful and True" – "The Word of God" – "The King of kings and Lord of lords" - when He returns to Earth riding upon a white horse with the armies of heaven. (Revelation 19:11-16)

¹⁴¹ Mine is obviously not a dispensationalist view.

¹⁴² Greek: *ethnos*. Strong's # 1484.

¹⁴³ 2 Corinthians 4:4; Cf. John 14:30, 16:11; Ephesians 2:2, 6:12; 1 John 5:19.

¹⁴⁴ 1 John 5:19; Cf. Luke 4:3-13 – particularly v. 6.

During Captivity

There are two issues which the Lord brings face-to-face with those in Captivity in an effort to "TURN THEIR CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE": Blessings and the Absence of Blessings.

We can conclude that the Lord actually blessed the Jewish exiles in Babylon, for He said to them:

"Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into captivity and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare, you will have welfare." (Jeremiah 29:7) On February 1, 2015, archeologists displayed Babylonian clay tablets they have discovered which date back to 572-477 B.C. The tablets contain records of agricultural and commercial transactions showing that the Jews living in Babylon during the Captivity were undoubtedly better off materially than those who remained behind in the devastated Jerusalem. "What these texts really show us is how the Babylonian Jewish community established itself quickly and successfully in the immediate aftermath of the captivity."¹⁴⁵

Those in Captivity would continue ceremonial fasting in an effort to secure continued blessings from the Lord. But this is what the Lord had to say about that: *"Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted? When you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves?'"*¹⁴⁶ "The Lord says: "This

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.aish.com/jw/s/Archeology--Jewish-Life-in-Ancient-Babylonia.html>

¹⁴⁶ Zechariah 7:5-6

people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote."¹⁴⁷ Such as these are those who were quite comfortable living in captivity in Babylon and were not the raw material the Lord would choose to be for "*signs and wonders*". The Remnant would have formed in their hearts, not only authentic thanksgiving for blessings, but also an authenticity which would pervade the whole of their relationship with God and their service of worship.

After Captivity

One would assume that blessings were just about "guaranteed" for "*the Remnant that Returned*"; but that is not the case, because this issue can have a residue in the heart even after coming out of Captivity. This is what the Lord had to say to the people who returned to rebuild the Lord's house:

*2 "This people says, 'The time has not come, even the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.' 3 Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 'Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?'"*¹⁴⁸

So, we see that their own personal blessings still held a higher priority than their blessing the Lord.

The Lord continues:

5 "Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Consider your ways! 6 You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there

¹⁴⁷ Isaiah 29:13

¹⁴⁸ Haggai 1:2-4

is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes.’ 7 Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Consider your ways! 8 Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,’ says the Lord. 9 ‘You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why?’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house. 10 Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce. 11 I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands.’”¹⁴⁹

Not a picture of blessings! It seems that this process of "TURNING CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE" is long and intense, even continuing after the Captivity, as the Lord must address and rectify some of the most basic aspects of our fallen human nature.

Just to round off the story:

12 “Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him. And the people showed reverence for the Lord. 13 Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke by the commission of the Lord to the people saying, “‘I am with you,’ declares the Lord.” 14 So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel

¹⁴⁹ Haggai 1:5-11

the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God.”¹⁵⁰

But are we to conclude that the Lord is a hard taskmaster more concerned about His plans and purposes than our blessings – or even our basic human needs? Obviously not. Firstly, what we see in the scenario is humanity striving to meet its own basic human needs without faith – that is, without utter reliance upon God. But also, God wants us to realize that His plans and purposes not only include our blessings, but in fact, include *“THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”¹⁵¹* Of course, we miss all that, if we are just obsessed with our blessings.

Spiritual Alienation¹⁵²

I have been discussing material blessings. But there are also those "spiritual blessings" in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3) And it is the absence of these spiritual blessings we come face-to-face with in Captivity.

*1"By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down and wept,*

¹⁵⁰ Haggai 1:12-14

¹⁵¹ 1 Corinthians 2:9; Cf. Isaiah 64:4.

¹⁵² I have written extensively on this topic in my article, "A Stranger in a Strange Land", a complimentary copy of which can be obtained by emailing AtChrist'sTable@gmail.com

*When we remembered Zion.
2 Upon the willows in the midst of it
We hung our harps.
3 For there our captors demanded of us songs,
And our tormentors' mirth, saying,
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion."
4 How can we sing the Lord's song
In a foreign land?*

This picture painted in Psalm 137:1-4 is a sad picture indeed. In the Old Covenant, God's people had a physical land from which they were exiled and were living in a "foreign land". While a majority of the Jews became quite comfortable in Babylon, "the Remnant that Returned" did so because they always felt alienated in Babylon. But for us under the New Covenant, who have our "*citizenship in heaven*" (Philippians 3:20) and are not of the world but are in it (John 17:16), our exile is just as real. Again, it may be that the majority of Christians feel quite comfortable in the world system, but those called to be the Remnant have been "separated" by the truth of God's word (John 17:16) and find themselves feeling quite alienated. I've written at length regarding this spiritual alienation in my article *A Stranger in a Strange Land*, but here is a bit of Old Testament typology which captures its essence: Exodus 2:22 reads: "*Then she gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, 'I have been a sojourner in a foreign land'.*" "Gershom" is a transliteration of the Hebrew words *ger sham*, meaning "a stranger there". Moses felt like "a stranger in a

strange land". He felt that way in the land of Jethro. The name "Jethro" means "Remnant".¹⁵³

Captivity Turned Captive

Psalm 126 is a song penned by "the Remnant that Returned" after the Captivity:

*1 "When the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion,
We were like those who dream.*

*2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter
And our tongue with joyful shouting;
Then they said among the nations,
"The Lord has done great things for them."*

3 The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad.

*4 Turn again our captivity,¹⁵⁴ O Lord,
as the streams in the South.*

5 Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.

*6 He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed,
Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with
him."*

"Turn again our captivity." – that is, "TURN CAPTIVITY
CAPTIVE". *"... as the streams in the South"*: The Hebrew word
translated "South" is "Negeb", which is from a root word
meaning "parched".¹⁵⁵ "Negeb" was the Southern district of
Judah. This is F.B. Meyer's comment on the word: "The

¹⁵³ *Dictionary of Scripture Proper Names*, J.B. Jackson. [Loizeaux Bothers, 1909]

¹⁵⁴ KJV, ASV, et al.

¹⁵⁵ Strong's # 5045.

metaphor of streams in the South is derived from the rapidity with which dry water-courses become flushed with torrent streams."

What does it feel like when the Lord "TURNS CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE"? Like BAPTISM! Like "*rivers of living water*" – but from the inside. (John 7:38) Like "*times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord*". (Acts 3:19) "LIKE THOSE WHO DREAM".

Part 6

A People Prepared

Isaiah 8:16-18

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

¹⁷ And I will wait for the Lord who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.

¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

Introduction

This series of articles is an endeavor to identify “**The Remnant**”. Some reject the whole idea of “Remnant Theology” as being Old Covenant, rather than New Covenant. However, I believe the concept of “**a Remnant**” is a biblical concept. Both with the Old Covenant Israel and the New Covenant Church, we see “God’s people” – who collectively fall short of His glory. But, from this collective God reserves “A Remnant” in each generation whom He has prepared to move forward in His kingdom plan and purpose.

But, having said that, I do not think it is a biblical perspective to see “**The Remnant**” does not see itself as *separate* from the rest of “God’s people”. I believe prophets truly appointed by Christ, like Christ Himself, identify themselves with the *whole* of God’s people, and “intercede”, “bearing the sins of the many”¹⁵⁶, and are

¹⁵⁶ Hebrews 9:28

“numbered with the transgressors”.¹⁵⁷ The Old Testament prophets like Daniel did not speak in terms of “us and them” but rather “we”.¹⁵⁸ I cannot endorse any hermeneutic or movement which divides God’s people into “first-class” and “second-class” citizens, so to speak.

I hope this will become more clear as we go: “the Remnant” is NOT all who profess Christ – that is, the whole “professing church”. But “the Remnant” IS synonymous with “the Ecclesia”. I have been speaking of that people not having an un-Christlike, arrogant, spirit. Jesus didn’t separate some people and redeem only them.¹⁵⁹ He died for all, that “whosoever”¹⁶⁰ might believe and be saved. God desires that all would be saved.¹⁶¹

So, I think more in terms of the Kingdom of God having only one class of citizens – that is, “authentic” citizens – namely, *“the spirits of the righteous made perfect”*¹⁶². This seems both godly and Christ-like to me.

But I must also make it clear that this “perfection” – i.e., “completion”¹⁶³ – exists only in heaven – not during this age, on this earth. **I understand “The Remnant” to be those whom the Lord is preparing during this age, on this earth, to be added to the “church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven”¹⁶⁴ in the**

¹⁵⁷ Isaiah 53:12

¹⁵⁸ e.g., Daniel 9:4-19

¹⁵⁹ I am not a “hyper-Calvinist” in that sense.

¹⁶⁰ Joel 2:32; John 3:16, 6:40, 8:12, 12:46; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13; Revelation 22:17

¹⁶¹ 1 Timothy 2:3-4

¹⁶² Hebrews 12:23

¹⁶³ This “perfection” or “completion” will be discussed later in the article in association with “the Church Glorious” (Ephesians 5:27).

¹⁶⁴ Hebrews 12:22

age to come, in the new heaven and the new earth. The Negro Spiritual from the early 1900s, “When the Saints Go Marching In”, ends with these words: “Oh Lord I want to be in that number, when the saints go marching in.” In His *Parable of the Marriage Feast*, Jesus said: “*Many are called but few are chosen.*”¹⁶⁵ There is only one group of people in the New Covenant,¹⁶⁶ and the writer to the Hebrews describes them in this way:

*“ 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.”*¹⁶⁷

That is the New American Standard Bible’s rendering of the passage. However, I will use the following translation of the passage:

*“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable multitude, a general assembly of angels, the church of the Firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.”*¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Matthew 22:14 (Cf. vv. 1-14)

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Jeremiah 31:34 & Hebrews 8:11. The prophecy of the New Covenant specifies one class of people - “they ALL shall know Me”. Even ancient Israel’s understanding of this verse as a promise of a “Renewed” Covenant” envisioned only one class of people.

¹⁶⁷ Hebrews 12:22-24

¹⁶⁸ Marvin R. Vincent’s *Word Studies in the New Testament* has this comment regarding verse 22 in this passage: “To an innumerable company of angels (μυριάσιν ἀγγέλων)

Considering Greek scholar Marvin R. Vincent's notes on the passage (see footnote below), this rendering makes good sense to me, as it eliminates the unnecessary and confusing repetition of "general assembly and assembly (church) of the firstborn".

So here on "Mount Zion", in "the city of the Living God", "the heavenly Jerusalem", we have:

- ❖ God, the Judge of all
- ❖ Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant
- ❖ An innumerable multitude¹⁶⁹ consisting of ...
 - A general assembly¹⁷⁰ of angels
 - **The church¹⁷¹ of the Firstborn¹⁷² (populated by) the spirits of the righteous made perfect¹⁷³ – which I am identifying as "The Remnant" – "A People Prepared"**.

On this whole passage (Hebrews 12:22-24) it is to be observed that it is arranged in a series of clauses connected by καὶ . Accordingly, μυριάσις to myriads or tens of thousands stands by itself, and πανηγύρει festal assembly goes with ἀγγέλων angels Μυριάς (see Luke 12:1; Acts 19:19; Revelation 5:11; quite often in lxx) is strictly the number ten thousand. In the plural, an innumerable multitude. So A.V. here. Rend. "to an innumerable multitude," placing a comma after μυριάσις , and connecting of angels with the next clause. This use of μυριάσις without a qualifying genitive is justified by numerous examples. (See Genesis 24:60; Deuteronomy 32:30; Deuteronomy 33:2; 1 Samuel 18:7, 1 Samuel 18:8; Psalm 90:7; Song of Solomon 5:10; Daniel 7:10; Daniel 11:12; 2 Maccabees 8:20; Judges 1:14. Χιλιάδες thousands is used in the same way. See Daniel 7:10)."

¹⁶⁹ Greek: *urias*, Strong's # 3461

¹⁷⁰ Greek: *paneguris*, Strong's # 3831, an assembly (*pan* – all)

¹⁷¹ Greek: *ekklesia*, Strong's # 1577, the "gathering" of citizens called out to discuss the affairs of a kingdom

¹⁷² Greek: *prototokos*, Strong's # 4416. I believe it is associated with "the firstborn from the dead". Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5; Cf. Acts 26:23; 1 Corinthians 15:20.

¹⁷³ Past perfect participle of Greek: *teleioo*, Strong's # 5048, "having been fully completed"

It is in this context that this article will investigate the identity of **“The Remnant”** – this people being prepared here and now - during, this age, on this earth ...

- *Where are they prepared?*
- *Who are they?*
- *What do they look like (now)?*
- *Who and what are they prepared for?*

Where are they prepared?

As we discussed in the previous article, “Turning Captivity Captive”, the Lord’s work of preparing “The Remnant” took place during their 70 years of captivity in Babylon. Although Babylon, situated in the Tigris-Euphrates River Valley, was physically a beautiful place, and materially quite a comfortable place to live as well, it was a **spiritual wilderness** for the Jews. Their lament in Psalm 137 speaks of their **wilderness experience** in captivity: *“We sat down and wept. We hung up our harps. How can we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?”*

The journey from Babylon back to Jerusalem - nearly 900 miles (1,448 km)¹⁷⁴ - took four months to traverse. And the few Jews (approximately a tenth) who did make that journey out of Babylon found a **“wilderness”** back in the City of Jerusalem also, for it had been devastated and left unproductive for 70 years. In 538 BC, there was an *Aliyah*¹⁷⁵ under Zerubbabel. But because of the devastation of war, they had returned to a city with a severe housing shortage and high taxes. They also found themselves surrounded by the harassment of their adversaries, the Samaritans. Then, in 458 BC, there was an *Aliyah* which took place under Ezra. And again in 445 BC, there was the *Aliyah* of Nehemiah. The inhabitants suffered such impoverished conditions under the rule of Persia that they had to mortgage their lands, homes, and vineyards just to buy grain to eat.¹⁷⁶ The Lord’s work of “Turning Captivity Captive” most certainly took

¹⁷⁴ ESV Study Bible notes.

¹⁷⁵ The Hebrew word *aliyah* translates as “elevation” or “going up.” It is, in fact, used for moving to Israel or returning to Jerusalem.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Nehemiah 5

place in a **“wilderness experience”** – a costly experience in which there was a stripping away of all the security and comfort of the status quo, and a reduction to the core and essence of one’s existence.

Isaiah 40:3 reads: “A voice is calling, ‘Clear the way for the Lord **in the wilderness**; Make smooth **in the desert** a highway for our God’.” This verse speaks of that **“wilderness experience”**. It does not specifically tell us that the one calling out is *in* the wilderness. But it doesn't tell that the one calling out is *not in* the wilderness either. However, when John quotes the verse in his gospel, it reads this way: “‘I am the voice of one crying out **in the wilderness**, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said’.” This clearly indicates that **God is initiating a movement in the wilderness**.¹⁷⁷ There are, in fact, many other scripture references indicating that **God’s Spirit often begins moving in the wilderness**.

But, as it says, this voice is calling out *in the wilderness*. You won't hear this voice unless you are *in the wilderness*. Those in “*the city*”¹⁷⁸ are hearing a different voice: “Peace, peace” (when there is no peace.)¹⁷⁹ That is the message heard in Christendom. **But the message to “The Remnant” in the wilderness is: “Prepare the way of the Lord.”**

¹⁷⁷ Cf. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/lightfoot-new-testament/mark/decades/the-wilderness-of-judea-where-john-the-baptist-was.html>

¹⁷⁸ Signifying Jerusalem, viz. Christendom, “Christian City”. Suggested Reading: “Escape from Christendom” by Robert Burnell on “Wilderness Voice”:

<http://www.awildernessvoice.com/Escape.html> Recorded on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGuveDD8dlg>

¹⁷⁹ Jeremiah 6:14 and Ezekiel 13:10

To those who can identify with this spiritual wilderness experience, I would ask: **How did you get out into that wilderness?** Ideally, you were led by the Spirit, like John and Jesus. Somehow, you became aware that there was someone out in the wilderness with a message, and you went out to hear. You were looking for something more – or something other - so you came out. You must have strongly desired this, because it was quite a costly journey to get out there into the wilderness.

But I would also ask you this – as did Jesus: *"But what did you go out into the wilderness to see?"* About 30 years ago, I wrote, and have included here, a short piece of inspirational writing entitled, *Church in the Wilderness*. It is grounded in a plethora of scripture passages which are referenced in footnotes. It asks the same question: *"But what did you go out into the wilderness to see?"*

Church in the Wilderness¹⁸⁰

Matthew 11:7

"But what did you go out into the wilderness to see?"

*God has a purpose
in the wilderness.*

He wants His people to SEE

- "Something Better".¹⁸¹

People see what they want to see

- usually quail.¹⁸²

"But what did you go out into the wilderness to see?"

*Our father of faith "obeyed to GO OUT
as a sojourner in the land of promise".¹⁸³*

It takes faith to see your way through the wilderness.

In the Wilderness of Sin¹⁸⁴ -

"Moses saw Him who is invisible".¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ Acts 7:38

¹⁸¹ Viz. JESUS. The basic theme of the Book of Hebrews is found in the word "better," in describing the superiority of Christ in both His person and His work. Christ provides: • Better revelation. 1:1-2 • Better expectation. 6:9 • Better priesthood. 7:7-11, 20-28 • Better hope. 7:19 • Better testament, covenant. 7:22, 8:6 • Better promises. 8:6 • Better sacrifices. 8:6 • Better possessions. 10:34 • Better country. 11:16 • Better resurrection. 11:35 • Better things. 11:40; 12:24

¹⁸² Exodus 16; Numbers 11.

¹⁸³ Hebrews 11:9

¹⁸⁴ Exodus 16-17; Numbers 33-34; Deuteronomy 32:51

¹⁸⁵ Hebrews 11:27

*In the wilderness of Ziph¹⁸⁶ -
those who were "in distress, in debt and discontented"
saw the difference between Saul and David¹⁸⁷
- "The Glory of Israel."¹⁸⁸*

*In the Wilderness of the People¹⁸⁹ -
a remnant saw the restoration of
"The city which has foundations,
whose architect and builder is God"¹⁹⁰.*

*In the Wilderness of Judea¹⁹¹ -
many heard the crying, WENT OUT,
and saw one decrease and Another increase.¹⁹²*

"But what did you go out into the wilderness to see?"

*God always "makes a way in the wilderness".
He always "makes rivers in the desert".
And He always "does a new thing" in the wilderness.¹⁹³*

*Yes, when Gomer was allured into the Wilderness of Trouble¹⁹⁴,
she learned to sing a song of Hope to her Husband*

¹⁸⁶ 1 Samuel 23:14; 26:1-2

¹⁸⁷ 1 Samuel 22:1-2; 23:13; 1 Chronicles 11:15

¹⁸⁸ Micah 1:15

¹⁸⁹ Ezekiel 20:35 Or the wilderness of the "tribe", or "flock", or "congregation".

¹⁹⁰ Hebrews 11:10

¹⁹¹ Matthew 3:1-3

¹⁹² John 3:30

¹⁹³ Isaiah 43:19

¹⁹⁴ Hosea 2:14-15 Viz. "Achor" which means "Trouble".

and was betrothed to Him forever in faithfulness.¹⁹⁵

So, you have to GO OUT into the wilderness in order to SEE.

But one of two things will happen:

You will either SEE JESUS,

or you will die of leanness, rebellion, or idolatry.

“But what did you go out into the wilderness to see?”

¹⁹⁵ Hosea 2:19-20

Who are they?

“The Remnant” are those who are characterized by these two verses in a psalm by the Sons of Korah: **“In whose heart are the highways to Zion.... Each one appears before God in Zion.”**¹⁹⁶

“The Remnant” are those whom God has prepared to - **“Go through, go through the gates, clear the way for the people; build up, build up the highway, remove the stones, lift up a standard over the peoples.”**¹⁹⁷

There are many ways to label **“The Remnant”**. For this article, I have chosen the phrase: **“A People Prepared”**. It's not just "a people" – it's "a people prepared" – **a people who have undergone a process of preparation**. Not everyone who names the name of Christ fits that description.

We could consider that the origin of the concept of *“A Remnant People”* may be that "great nation" which the Lord promised to bring forth from Abraham. What made that nation "great" in Abraham's eyes was that the numbers would be *“as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore”*.¹⁹⁸ But, will the Remnant be "great" in number?¹⁹⁹

Let's consider this: That "great nation" beginning with Abraham, and continuing through Isaac and Jacob, ended up in Egypt,

¹⁹⁶ Psalm 84:5b & 7b. The whole of Psalm 84 fits this context beautifully.

¹⁹⁷ Isaiah 62:10

¹⁹⁸ Genesis 22:17

¹⁹⁹ I believe ultimately “the souls of righteous men made perfect, enrolled in heaven” (Hebrews 12:22-23) will be a great number. The question posed is with regard to any one generation.

where they, in fact, did continue to increase in number. But the first generation of that "great nation" under Moses died off in the wilderness. Then there was the Joshua generation, and succeeding generations under Judges, and then a long line of kings, up to the time of the Babylonian Captivity. And, as we have already discussed in previous articles, the actual Remnant returning to Jerusalem from Babylon was just a "portion" – **approximately a tenth** – that had undergone the Lord's **process of preparation**.

What do they look like (now)?

Permit me to share on a number of perspectives which may prove to give some understanding of the context in which we will see the Church (Ecclesia), and also help us to recognize some qualities and characteristics of that Remnant.

“Already, But Not Yet”

“A People Prepared” – prepared for what? To reign in the Eternal Kingdom on the new earth in the age to come? Or to reign on this earth as the Remnant of the church age? “Reigning” – both the Lord’s reigning and our reigning with Him - has to do with “Kingdom”. Our understanding of the what, when, where, why, and how we reign with the Lord is the stuff of “Kingdom Theology”. And as is the case with other aspects of the Church, our ecclesiology is determined by our theology of the Kingdom. For example: Is the Church the same as the Kingdom? Or does the Church reflect and represent the Kingdom? Does the Church build (establish) the Kingdom? Or does the Kingdom build (establish) the Church? How we see the Kingdom of God – during this age, on this earth – will influence how we see the Church, and to our point here, what that **“A People Prepared”** might look like.

The theology of the Kingdom I hold²⁰⁰, and is most commonly held by bible scholars and theologians, is that which is known as “Inaugurated Theology”. The term was coined by Gerhardus Vos. Later, George Eldon Ladd further popularized the concept with

²⁰⁰ What I am discussing here is merely one aspect of the theology of the Kingdom.

the phrase *“Already, but Not yet”*. Very briefly, the idea is that the King of the Kingdom came to this earth in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth; and the efficacy of the Kingdom has been inaugurated by Jesus’ crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. We who belong to Christ *“have tasted of the powers of the age to come”*²⁰¹, but the fullness of the Kingdom will come with Christ’s second coming at the end of this age along with a new heaven and a new earth. So, the Kingdom is **“already”, but “not yet”**. Through the planted Seed and *“Firstborn from the Dead”* - Jesus Christ,²⁰² the Kingdom of God has come, is growing and can be seen and entered into now in the hearts of people²⁰³, in this age, on this earth.²⁰⁴ Yet, while it is *“IN this world, it is not OF this world”* – it is *“born from above”*.²⁰⁵ Those who *“belong to Christ”*, that is, those who are *“not in the flesh, but in the Spirit”*,²⁰⁶ *“are raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenly places”*.²⁰⁷ *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”*²⁰⁸ Therefore, *“flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, for this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality”*.²⁰⁹ And, at the end of this age, there will be *“a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth (will have) passed away, ... and the holy city,*

²⁰¹ Hebrews 6:5. Also, Romans 8:30, Ephesians 2:6, and Hebrews 2:8-9 all speak of a present reign, yet there is more fulness coming in the next age, in a new heaven, on a new earth.

²⁰² Acts 26:23; Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 1:5

²⁰³ John 3:3-6; Luke 17:21

²⁰⁴ That is, it is NOT, as some would say, “breaking through”. It has already come, but will come in its fulness, NOT by being imposed by the “advance of the church” during this age, on this earth, but by the second coming of its King, Jesus Christ, which will be accompanied by a creation of a new earth and the ushering in of Eternity.

²⁰⁵ John 17:15-21; 18:36

²⁰⁶ Romans 8:9-10

²⁰⁷ Ephesians 2:6

²⁰⁸ John 3:3-8

²⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:50 & 53; Cf. vv. 20-54.

new Jerusalem (will come) down out of heaven from God”.²¹⁰ This is some of what is meant by “already”, but “not yet”.

When seen in this context, there are two scripture passages which are very fitting for our purpose here:

God “subjected the world to come” to Man and “has put all things in subjection under his feet.... But now we do not yet see all things put under him (Man). But we see Jesus....” Cf. Hebrews 2:5-11

“Now we are children of God, AND IT HAS NOT APPEARED AS YET WHAT WE WILL BE. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as he is.” 1 John 3:2

So, we don't know what this people will look like in the next age, on the new earth, but let's discuss more perspectives in an effort to see **what The Remnant looks like now....**

“Just as I Said, but Not as You Thought”

⁸ *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord.*

⁹ *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

¹⁰ *For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it produce and sprout,
And providing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;*

²¹⁰ Revelation 21:1-2

*¹¹ So will My word be which goes out of My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the purpose for which I sent it."*

Isaiah 55:8-11

I would like to offer something I have learned from the Holy Spirit and the scriptures regarding how we understand and are to interpret the work of God: A little over 40 years ago, the Holy Spirit impressed on my heart and mind that **what God is doing is always just as He said, but not as we thought**. That is, what God does will always be just as He has said with His words - the scriptures. And the same Spirit who inspired those words will affirm them in our spirits and hearts. But what God does will not be as our minds perceived it would be. This is *always* the case. Our understanding of the working of God's Spirit is always imperfect – specifically, incomplete. We may have enough understanding to be led by the Spirit and obey “what the Spirit is saying to the Church”, but our understanding, at the time, will not be complete or perfect. Only after we enter into the experience²¹¹, do we receive more fulness of understanding. This is because our understanding at any given point in time can only be based on our previous experience and understanding; and we can only gain more understanding through more experience and revelation. So, it is not that we don't have any idea of what God is saying and doing, it is just that our perception is incomplete – or we're “*seeing in a mirror obscurely and knowing in part*”²¹² - until He brings us into the revelatory experience of what He has said. I

²¹¹ i.e., “After the glory passes by”, so to speak. Cf. Exodus 33:21-23.

²¹² 1 Corinthians 13:12

have found the following passage of scripture very instructive in the work of God:

“Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of His Servant, that walks in darkness and has no light?”²¹³

Here we have someone who “fears the Lord” and “obeys His voice”, YET doesn’t perfectly or completely see and understand what God is saying and doing.

“Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.”²¹⁴

The counsel of the Lord in this situation is to trust and rely on God. Because -

“Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who encircle yourselves with firebrands, walk in the light of your fire and among the brands you have set ablaze. This you will have from My hand: You will lie down in torment.”²¹⁵

If when we don’t fully understand what God is saying and doing, and we impatiently “manufacture”, through our own efforts, an “Ishmael” – our own provision, instead of the Lord provision – we will have to “live with the consequences”, so to speak. And worse, we will have to settle once again for yet another “work of our hands” rather than an authentic kingdom expression of the Church Jesus is building. Our prayer should be:

²¹³ Isaiah 50:10a

²¹⁴ Isaiah 50:10b

²¹⁵ Isaiah 50:11

“Let Your work appear to Your servants and Your majesty ^[r]to their children. May the kindness of the Lord our God be upon us; and confirm for us the work of our hands; yes, confirm the work of our hands.”

Psalm 90:16-17

So, with regards to what “The Remnant” looks like now - I think we can say that it **will not** look *exactly* like anything seen throughout Church history. In fact, the apostle Paul encouraged us that God “is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams], according to His power that is at work within us.”²¹⁶ Paul also wrote: “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.” Yet, “these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.”²¹⁷ Our prayer should be: ***“Let Your work appear to Your servants.”***

Psalm 90:16

So, what more has the Spirit revealed to us through the scriptures with regards to **A People Prepared** – and what they look like (now)?

“Church of the First-Born”

This article is about “**A People Prepared**”. I have identified this people as “**The Remnant**”. If we wanted to give this people more labels, we might apply the following terms: “the Ecclesia”, “the

²¹⁶ Ephesians 3:20 AMP

²¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 ESV

Church of the Firstborn”, or “the Glorious Church”. **In my perspective, these terms are synonymous with “The Remnant”.**

“ 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.”

Hebrews 12:22-24



Of course, the description of “The Remnant” given by the writer to the Hebrews identifies them as being *in heaven*. But these are a people who have all been **prepared** here *on earth*. My understanding is this: Some of those who make up the Remnant are *in heaven* - “*the spirits of just men made perfect*”. And some of the Remnant are now on earth - “*just men made perfect*” (so to speak). They are found in every generation on earth, before being added

to “*the spirits of just men made perfect*” in heaven. Am I saying that these people are living here on earth in “sinless perfection”? No. Neither did those people who are now in heaven live in sinless perfection while they were on earth. When Paul wrote that the Ephesians 4 ministries was for the “perfecting”²¹⁸ of the saints, he obviously did not mean that these ministries would bring the Body into a state of “sinlessness”. The Greek word translated “perfecting” is *katartismos*, which means *maturing* and *equipping*, also *furnishing*, and *completing* – bringing the Body to the place of being, in the Lord’s sight, “*to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*”²¹⁹

So, the “perfection” being referred to is not “sinlessness”, but rather “maturity” – a “completeness” with regards to preparation. Of course, the Lord deemed those in heaven to be “completely prepared” in His sight – that is, He had “completed” their preparation here on earth and decided to “take them home” to be with Him. And those still living on this earth, are still in the process of preparation. But in the Lord’s sight, He deems them to be part of “**The Remnant**”. And there will come a time when the preparation of each of them on earth will be deemed “completed” by the Lord.

Moreover, Scripture speaks of those who belong to Christ and are still on earth as ALSO having a place in heaven as well: The

²¹⁸ Ephesians 4:12 (KJV)

²¹⁹ Ephesians 4:13. The meaning of *katartismos* also includes repairing and restoring, and particularly means fitting, framing, and joining together. These ministries are gifted with the discernment and ability required to help disciples take their place in the Body of Christ, and in this way “set in order” the church. Titus 1:5. See my article “Discipleship & The Equipping Ministries”: <https://www.academia.edu/video/jX6AoI> and <https://www.academia.edu/video/k6orMj>

apostle Paul said that those who belong to Christ are **now** “*raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenly places*”.²²⁰ That is past tense and exists now. Also: the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews said to “*the general assembly and church of the firstborn*”, “*You have come....*”²²¹ That is also past tense and exists **now**.

Some may be inclined to label the perspective I just put forth as “predestination”. Even though I lean more toward Arminianism than Calvinism on the matter, I find the term, “predestination”, acceptable and appropriate, because I understand “predestination” in this way: God’s eternal decree on this matter is that He will have a people who are “perfected” and “glorious” according to His desire and determination. THAT is what He has predestinated. He has not forced certain people to be part of the Remnant and prevented other people from being part of the Remnant. Yet, in His foreknowledge, He knows who will and who will not desire and submit to His process of preparation in order to be part of the Remnant.

So, as I understand it, in generation after generation, “*just men made perfect*” were **prepared** here on earth and then **added to** “*the Assembly and Church of the Firstborn who are enrolled in heaven*”. This is the “**Glorious Church**” – the body of people which Jesus has prepared to present to Himself – **His Bride**.²²² “**The Remnant**” I have written about in these articles are those people I’ve just been referring to. While we cannot know now what “**The Remnant**” will look like in heaven,²²³ it is still admissible to ask the question – “**What do they look like**” – **NOW** - as long as we

²²⁰ Ephesians 2:6; Cf. Colossians 2:12

²²¹ Hebrews 12:22

²²² Ephesians 5:25-30 (Cf. Hebrews 10:5); Revelation 21:1-2

²²³ 1 John 3:2

are clear that we are speaking in the context of **this age, on this earth.**

From what I have observed, more and more people who have stopped practicing organized religion and are attempting to identify as “The Ecclesia”²²⁴ are basically asking the question – “If what God desires is not the ‘church’ which Man has built, then where do we go from here? – What is it supposed to look like?”²²⁵ Some are satisfied with the 1 Corinthians 14:26 model as that description. I have nothing against “*when you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation.*” But I believe this prescription for “how to do church” in and of itself falls very far short of describing **“A People Prepared for the Lord”**.²²⁶ The Holy Spirit has more insight to give us as to what **The Remnant** looks like (now).

“A Glorious Church”²²⁷

“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Ephesians 5:27 KJV

²²⁴ Many use the label, “Ecclesia” interchangeably with the label, “Remnant”.

²²⁵ Again, unlike some, I do not make a distinction between the English word “church” and the Greek word, “ecclesia”, as if they were two different things – i.e., two classes of Christians. “There is (only) one Body.” (Ephesians 4:4) People do not suddenly understand the mystery of the Body of Christ simply because you use a Greek word to refer to it instead of an English word – they still need to be taught and still need a revelation of the Body of Christ.

²²⁶ As I have communicated in my series, *A New & Living Way*, 1 Corinthians 14:26 is fine, but 1) Paul’s purpose in that passage was to correct, not to prescribe a model; 2) It is not presented as a model in any other church, or any other place mentioned in the New Testament. It is an assumption to understand Paul to be prescribing this as a New Covenant model for all assembling and all assemblies. It is descriptive of one church in one place. It is not prescriptive for all assembling or all assemblies in the New Covenant.

²²⁷ A popular term based on Ephesians 5:26-27.

“His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints”. Revelation 19:7-8 KJV

The verses quoted above are usually the scriptures used to support the concept of **“A Glorious Church”**. As we have been considering the concept of **“A People Prepared for the Lord”**, let us now consider the concept of the **“A Glorious Church”** in the same way. The two terms are not necessarily contradictory, but I think they both carry different connotations with respect to their influence and effect on this earth, during this age. What will that **“Glorious Church”** look like – **not in the next age, with the new heaven and new earth, but in this age, here on this earth?**

It is my conviction that any answer to that question must be placed in the context of this age, here on this earth, with at least these two scriptural facts as definitive of this age and this earth:

Firstly: This creation has been subjected to futility.

19 “The anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what

he already sees? 25But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it." Romans 8:19-25

This passage clearly communicates that the "hope", which we haven't seen yet, is total freedom from futility and corruption; and this hope is in the next age, on the new earth. **During this age, on this earth**, we "*wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, that is, the redemption of our body*". We "*eagerly wait*" for this hope. Meanwhile - **during this age, on this earth** - we have "*the first fruits of the Spirit*".

For an accurate understanding of the manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven being represented by the Church **during this age, on this earth**, I believe it is important to note that this passage and other New Testament scriptures designate that we have been given just "*a taste of the age to come*".²²⁸ That "taste" is "*the earnest of our inheritance*" ("*until the redemption of the purchased possession*").²²⁹ This "*earnest*" is in the form of "*the Spirit*" which only believers receive,²³⁰ and, according to Scripture, may be veiled²³¹ and incomprehensible to all those who are not born of the Spirit.²³² The Greek word which is translated "*earnest*" is *arrabon*²³³. There are other English words used to translate this word – they are: a pledge, a guarantee, a down payment, (essentially a security deposit in a business transaction). So, the first conclusion we can come to is this: **The Church (Ecclesia) has**

²²⁸ Hebrews 6:5; Cf. 2:5. Greek: *geuomai*, Strong's # 1089: "a taste".

²²⁹ Ephesians 1:14

²³⁰ 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5. Greek: *arrhabon*, Strong's # 728, Hebrew root words: *arab*, Strong's # 148 and *arabon*, Strong's # 162, all essentially meaning a "security deposit" in a business transaction.

²³¹ 2 Corinthians 4:4; Cf. Acts 26:18

²³² John 14:17; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Cf. Romans 8:9; 1 John 4:6.

²³³ Strong's # 728

a “taste” – not the “fulness” - of our inheritance, the Kingdom of Heaven, in this age, on this earth.

Secondly: This heavens and earth will melt and pass away.

10“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.” 2 Peter 3:10-13

For an accurate understanding of the manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven being represented by the Church **during this age, on this earth**, I believe it is important to note that the Kingdom does NOT come in its fullness until the King of the Kingdom comes, on the Day of the Lord. The Church is a witness to the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. The Church does NOT establish the Kingdom on earth. And contrary to some “end-time movements”, the Kingdom is definitely NOT established on earth - that is, “*the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God*” by “*the revealing of the sons of God*” before the coming of Christ, on the Day of the Lord.

There are “End-Time” movements which purport a vision and commission for the Church (Ecclesia) to establish the Kingdom

here on this earth, in this age,²³⁴ and this will be fully accomplished by the Ecclesia²³⁵ before the return of Christ, on the Day of the Lord. Following the faulty reasoning of such an eschatology would have God's plan as having the Church establish the Kingdom on this earth, in this age, have Christ return to enjoy His Kingdom on this earth, and then, at some point in time, to destroy this earth – presumably including the fully established kingdom! The only way for this eschatology to interpret God's plans as not being so foolish is to purport that firstly, this heaven and earth will not really be destroyed as the scriptures clearly communicate²³⁶; and secondly, that this age will transition into the next age in some sense, but not as the scriptures clearly communicate – namely, at the future coming of Christ, on the Day of the Lord.

I am familiar with the argument that the earth will be “renewed” because “its works will be ‘discovered’ or ‘exposed’ (Greek: *heurethesetai* – found in the text of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus)”, rather than there being a literal “new” heaven and earth, because the very elements of the first heaven and earth will be “burned up” (Greek: *katakaesetai* – found in the Alexandrian Manuscript) – that is, the elements will be literally “melted” and “destroyed” or “

²³⁴ Presumably because Christendom has fallen, they declare – without any scriptural reference - that the “Church Age” has come to an end we are now in the “Kingdom Age”.

²³⁵ Via “apostolic governance” in every local expression of the Ecclesia. For more background information on these types of “End-Time” movements:

Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominion_theology ,

<https://www.gotquestions.org/kingdom-now.html> ,

and <https://www.gotquestions.org/New-Apostolic-Reformation.html>

²³⁶ 2 Peter 3:10-13; Hebrews 1:10-11; Matthew 24:35; Revelation 21:1

dissolved” (Greek: *luo*). However, *heurethesetai* and the interpretation of a “spiritual purification” of the earth and the whole of the world system, including “*the god of this world*” and the fallen powers, makes little sense in the context of the rest of the 2 Peter 3 passage which is clearly referring to a material destruction. In addition to Peter, the writer to the Hebrews (Hebrews 1:10-11), Matthew (Matthew 24:35), and John (Revelation 21:1) all say the earth will “*pass away*” at the coming of the Lord. So, the second conclusion we can come to is this: **Since this heavens and earth will be destroyed and replaced by a new heavens and earth; God does not plan to have the Church (Ecclesia) establish the Kingdom in this age, on this earth.**

Now, as to the “**Glorious Church**”: For many years I looked at the passage in Ephesians 5 referring to a church “*glorious, without spot or wrinkle*”, then looked at the confessing church, and then concluded: Jesus can't be coming soon, because we have an awful long way to go before we can say the Church – OR EVEN THE “ECCLESIA” - is “*glorious, without spot or wrinkle*”. In fact, it seemed to me that, in almost 50 years of being a Christian, and after living through a number of so-called “revivals”, the confessing church was becoming less “glorious” rather than more “glorious”.

The first 15-20 years of my spiritual journey was influenced by teaching which spoke of spiritual revival and restoration leading to “**a Glorious Church**”, including a great end-time harvest of souls.²³⁷ Many of my friends in Christ also hold this same

²³⁷ e.g., Teaching from the Latter Rain Movement, an overview of which can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latter_Rain_%28post-World_War_II_movement%29

perspective today. While I sincerely appreciate that positive perspective, I honestly do not see that in the future. I believe that we may have traditional assumptions of what a “a **Glorious Church**” might look like. These assumptions need to be evaluated according to scripture - specifically in the context which we have been discussing - that **God has subjected this creation to futility and corruption and has destined it to pass away.**

“First the Natural, Then the Spiritual”

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul lays out in a wonderfully ordered manner the doctrine of the Resurrection. It is beyond the scope of this article to delineate Paul’s entire presentation here. However, I believe Paul’s foundational concepts regarding the Resurrection are also the pillars of sound doctrine and accurate understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven, as distinguished from the kingdom of this world, and the Heavenly Kingdom’s representation through the Church (Glorious) **during this age, on this earth.**

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul establishes the fact that the Resurrection takes place at Christ’s coming, “*then comes the end*”.²³⁸ And he makes clear that which is perishable – that is, “flesh and blood”, biological life – cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. **During this age, perishable humanity cannot live in the full experience of that which is imperishable.** We have only “*a foretaste*” of the age to come.²³⁹ **What exists before the Resurrection is that which is of this age, on this earth. And what comes after the Resurrection**

And teaching of Restorationism, an overview of which can be found at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restorationism>

²³⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:23-24

²³⁹ Hebrews 6:5, Cf. 2:5

is of the next age, in the new heaven and on the new earth. Before the Resurrection, there is an earthly, natural glory. After the Resurrection, comes a heavenly, spiritual glory.²⁴⁰ Again, we have only “*a foretaste*” of the age to come.²⁴¹ Paul lays down the spiritual principle: First the natural, then the spiritual - first the earthly, natural glory, then the heavenly, spiritual glory.²⁴² So, what does that earthly, natural glory look like in the Church during this age, on this earth?

Death & Darkness



As I continue in the study of Scripture, it has become more and more clear to me that ancient Israel and the Primitive Church were much more keenly aware of the Fall and the resulting “death” and “darkness” as the spiritual condition of this age than we have been in our present generation. Just in the New Testament alone, we see numerous references to “death” and “darkness” as a spiritual condition particularly in the writings of

²⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:35-45

²⁴¹ Hebrews 6:5; Cf. 2:5

²⁴² 1 Corinthians 15:46-49

the apostles Paul and John – 55 references, to be exact.²⁴³ The Spirit of truth has made it more and more clear to me that **“death” and “darkness”** as a spiritual condition has, in indeed, *“reigned”* - on this earth, and in fallen humanity - throughout all history.²⁴⁴ And the confessing church has not gone untouched by the invading pestilence.

Those same apostles who wrote of **“death and darkness”** also wrote of authentic Christians *“walking in the light”* and *“reigning in life”*.²⁴⁵ Here, there are even more references – 135 references to be exact. But again, I believe this points to the fact that **they were keenly aware of the existential struggle between the opposing forces of “death and darkness versus life and light”**.²⁴⁶ And yet, we also know that Christ is Victor.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ Paul on “Death”: Romans 5:14, 17, 21; 6:9, 16, 21; 7:10, 13, 24; 8:2, 6, 38; 1 Corinthians 3:22; 15:21, 26, 54-56; 2 Corinthians 1:9-10; 2:16; 3:7; 7:10; 2 Timothy 1:10.

Paul on “Darkness”: Romans 2:19; 13:12; 1 Corinthians 4:5-6; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:8, 11; 6:12; Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5.

John on “Death”: John 5:24; 8:51-52; 1 John 3:14; 5:16-17; Revelation 6:8; 20:13-14; 21:4.

John on “Darkness”: John 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46; 1 John 1:5-6; 2:8-9, 11.

²⁴⁴ Romans 5:14, 17, 23.

²⁴⁵ Paul on “Light”: Romans 2:9; 13:12; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6; 6:14; 11:14; Ephesians 3:9; 5:8-9, 13; Philippians 2:15; Colossians 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:10.

Paul on “Life”: Romans 2:7; 4:17; 5:10, 17-18, 21; 6:4, 22-23; 7:10; 8:2, 6, 11; 11:15; 1 Corinthians 15:36, 45; 2 Corinthians 2:16; 3:6; 4:10-12; 5:4; Galatians 3:21; 6:8; Ephesians 4:18; Philippians 2:16; 4:3; 1 Timothy 1:16; 6:12-13, 19; 2 Timothy 1:1, 10; Titus 1:2; 3:7.

John on “Light”: John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9-10; 12:35-36, 46; 1 John 1:7; 2:8-10; Revelation 21:1

John on “Life”: John 1:4; 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:21, 24, 26, 29, 39-40; 6:33, 35, 40, 47-48, 51, 53; 6:54, 63; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25; 12:50; 14:6; 17:2-3; 20:31; 1 John 1:1-2; 2:25; 3:14-15; 5:11-13, 16, 20; Revelation 2:7-8, 10; 3:5; 7:17; 8:9; 11:11; 13:8,14; 17:8; 20:4-5, 12, 15; 21:6, 27; 22:1-2, 14, 17, 19.

²⁴⁶ 190 references just in the writings of the apostles Paul and John.

²⁴⁷ A discussion regarding the various theories of Atonement is not part of this article. But for the record: I use Gustav Aulen’s term, “Christus Victor”; yet I do not hold to some of the more modern and controversial “re-interpretations” of Aulen’s writing. In other words, I hold to ALL the classic explanations of Atonement: I believe Christ is Victor - through His cross, which also

“Reigning in Life”

When the apostle Paul wrote this phrase, “*reign in life*”,²⁴⁸ he used the Greek word, *zoe* (the God-kind of spiritual life), not *bios* (human-kind of biological life). So, it is reigning “*through the One*”, that is, in and by and through the life of the Eternal One. But how will that *zoe life* be manifested in *this bios life*, so to speak? The spiritual life of God resides in heaven, yet as a “*foretaste of the powers of the age to come*”²⁴⁹, the spiritual life of God has invaded the spirits of people here on this earth and in this age. The nature of *zoe* is heavenly, and the nature of *bios* is earthly. Yet, human beings have spirits – some dead and some regenerated. What does it look like when *zoe* is reigning in the spirits of those who have been regenerated? What are those who have not been regenerated able to see? It is indeed a great mystery – one too profound for this article – but in the scriptures, we have seen the strong connection between life and light. A primary example: “*In Him was LIFE, and THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT of Mankind.*” (John 1:4) This was spoken of Jesus, the Logos. How does this apply to those who have the Spirit of Christ²⁵⁰ and therefore have “*a foretaste of the powers of the age to come*”²⁵¹? And what might that look like on this earth, during this age?

achieved our ransom and penal substitution. I think the following article is a balanced presentation of the Atonement: <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/christus-victor-the-salvation-of-god-and-the-cross-of-christ/>

²⁴⁸ Romans 5:17

²⁴⁹ Hebrews 6:5; Cf. 2:5

²⁵⁰ Romans 8:9

²⁵¹ Hebrews 6:5; Cf. 2:5

“Walking in the Light”

“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you.” Isaiah 60:1-2

This prophetic picture is a direct reference to the Remnant who would return to Jerusalem from Babylon. Combining this prophecy with an earlier prophecy by Isaiah concerning the Remnant²⁵², we see that the glory of the Lord would appear upon **“A People Prepared”** as a signs and symbols IN THE MIDST OF and IN CONTRAST TO the “deep darkness” covering the whole of the earth and all of its peoples. What will THAT look like? – *“like the brightness of the expanse of heaven”, “like the stars”...*

“Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” Daniel 12:3

What we see from these prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel is the same as the apostle Paul’s exhortation to the Church:
“... that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world.” (Philippians 2:15)

The Remnant – the Glorious Church – the People Prepared for the Lord – are a people clothed in the glory of the Lord IN THE MIDST OF and IN CONTRAST TO the “deep darkness” as

²⁵² Isaiah 8:18

signs and symbols²⁵³ representing those in the Kingdom of Light “walking in the light” and “reigning in life” IN THE MIDST OF the Kingdom of Darkness.

(This has more to do with “being” than with “doing”)

A New Covenant People

So, what more has the Spirit revealed to us through the scriptures with regards to **A People Prepared** – and what they look like (now)? The Remnant – the Glorious Church – the People Prepared for the Lord - will be “A New Covenant People” – that is, a people who are individually walking in and collectively operating in the New Covenant – “not according to the letter, but according to the Spirit ... for the Spirit gives life”.²⁵⁴

What is the nature of the New Covenant? It is God’s “new thing”. It is NOT the Athenians’ “new thing” who are always looking for the next new message or the next new experience²⁵⁵ – the next new trend being marketed by some ministry rather than a true move of the Spirit of God. No, in fact, the phrase, “a new thing” prophesied by Isaiah²⁵⁶ points ahead to a New Covenant and “**A New Covenant People**”:

*“Behold, I will do **a new thing**, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? **This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise.**”* Isaiah 43:19 & 21 NKJV

²⁵³ Isaiah 8:18, which will be discussed shortly.

²⁵⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:6

²⁵⁵ Acts 17:21

²⁵⁶ Isaiah 43:19 & 21; Cf. Isaiah 42:9

And the prophet Jeremiah revealed **the essence of the New Covenant and “The New Covenant People”**: *“I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And each man will no longer teach his neighbor and his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me [through personal experience], from the least of them to the greatest,” says the Lord.*” Jeremiah 31:33-34 AMP



Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant²⁵⁷, and His Remnant are a people who carry the Law of Christ in their hearts and minds, responding to the Spirit of Christ in every situation.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Hebrews 12:24

²⁵⁸ For further investigation into the New Covenant, particularly with regards to the life of the Church, see my article *A New & Living Way: An Investigation into New Covenant Worship in Spirit & Truth*, Read: <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/ecards/ACT028.html>

Listen:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTEU_vySHp4&list=PLWSJGEG9yRH6t58K3c3Ym0nzX_nMrGkkd

They are a people who all have a personal, experiential relationship with the Lord; and who walk in the experience of “the doctrine of Christ”²⁵⁹. Many aspire to “A New Testament Church” by pursuing a particular leadership structure²⁶⁰ and/or a practice of body ministry²⁶¹. But the governing principle of the New Covenant is “not according to the letter, but according to the Spirit ... the Spirit gives life”. One can have the scriptural structure and practice and still not have a “New Testament Church”, for “a New Testament Church” is “A New Covenant People” – a people who know their God by way of personal, experiential revelation:

*15 “He said to them, ‘But who do you yourselves say that I am?’¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because **flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock²⁶² I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.’” Matthew 16:15-19*

Jesus was speaking of the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy: “ ... ***the people who know their God will be strong and take action*”²⁶³.**

²⁵⁹ 2 John 9

²⁶⁰ e.g., Ephesians 4:16

²⁶¹ e.g., 1 Corinthians 14:26

²⁶² i.e., this revelation

²⁶³ Daniel 11:32

*Pure Devotion to Christ*²⁶⁴



The scripture does not tell us the Church will be “glorious” because of it will be “great in number” or “great in power”, or even “great in influence”. The scripture tells us the Church will be **“glorious” because of its purity**, being *“a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be **holy and without blemish**”*.²⁶⁵ The Church will be “glorious” because *“It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is **the righteousness of the saints**.”*²⁶⁶ The “righteousness of the saints” is *“the righteousness of God that comes through faith in Jesus Christ”*.²⁶⁷ Therefore, the Church will be **“glorious” because she has “put on Christ”**²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ 2 Corinthians 11:3

²⁶⁵ Ephesians 5:27

²⁶⁶ Revelation 19:8

²⁶⁷ Romans 3:22; Cf. Romans 1:17

²⁶⁸ Romans 13:14; Cf. Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10

It is a Christ-Centered Bride that has been Betrothed

²“For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ³ But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his trickery, your minds will be led astray from sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 11:2-3

Most “End-Time” movements are either focused on Israel – what is going to happen there, or on the Church (Ecclesia) – what it’s going to do. Conversely, our focus needs to be on Jesus. And our Christ-Centeredness needs to be unrelenting.

Like other phrases, “Christ-Centeredness” has become anemic in meaning and application. When there is the preaching Christ and Christ-Centeredness, it is most-often followed by a peculiar apathy in the assembly. While not overt, there is a “passive” rejection - “... *we did not esteem Him*”²⁶⁹. Of course, all who identify as “Christian” will give a “nod” to the term “Christ-Centeredness” - the term appears in the written statements - “*What We Believe*” - published by most churches. But Christ’s preeminence is not truly esteemed. While Jesus spoke of “eating and drinking” of Himself, what is served on the table of Christendom is like a spiritual “smorgasbord”²⁷⁰ of Christian “things” – “a little of this, and a little of that”, “a little something for everyone”. “Hopping” from one church to the next, most Christians remain like the Athenians, “*spend(ing) their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new*”.²⁷¹ Instead of the Person of Christ, their hearts desire some “thing” which is “new”

²⁶⁹ Isaiah 53:3

²⁷⁰ A Swedish term for a buffet offering a variety of foods and dishes.

²⁷¹ Acts 17:21

– for a season, and then some “thing” else, and then another “new thing”, and then another.... Their Christian life is all about Christian “things” rather than the Person of Christ. Yet, in reality, they are unconsciously looking for that which always eludes them – Christ Himself.²⁷²

Paul said, “*I betrothed you to one husband.*” Like the Samaritan Woman at the Well, too many churches are offering other “husbands” beside Christ – encouraging people to give themselves and their devotion to a sundry of religious activities

As a true minister of Christ, the apostle Paul was “*jealous with a godly jealousy*” for “*a betrothed, pure virgin*”. But he found a church which had been led astray from “*sincere and pure devotion to Christ*”.²⁷³ The Greek word, *haplotes*²⁷⁴, which some translations render as “sincere”²⁷⁵ and others as “simplicity”²⁷⁶, is rooted in the Greek word, *haplous*²⁷⁷, which means “single”, in contrast to *diplous*²⁷⁸, meaning “two-fold” or “double”. In other words, **since the Church (Ecclesia) is betrothed to one Husband, the Remnant’s “eye is single”²⁷⁹, with “single in devotion to Christ”.**

²⁷² Watchman Nee gave a wonderful series of messages entitled “Christ the Sum of All Spiritual Things”:

https://thechurchincupertino.net/Watchman_Nee/Books/Christ%20The%20Sum%20of%20All%20Spiritual%20Things.pdf

²⁷³ 2 Corinthians 11:2-3

²⁷⁴ Strong’s # 572

²⁷⁵ e.g., ESV, NIV, NET Bible

²⁷⁶ e.g., NKJV, NASB 1977 & 1995

²⁷⁷ Strong’s # 573

²⁷⁸ Strong’s # 1362

²⁷⁹ Matthew 6:22

*The Ministry of the Remnant in the End-Time*²⁸⁰

²⁵ And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, ²⁸ then he took Him in his arms, and blessed God."

Luke 2:25-28



²⁸⁰ Definitions: **“Present Age”**: Hebrew – *Olam Haze*: Began with the first coming of the Jewish Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) and the age to come will be heralded and begin with his second coming. **“End of Days”**: Hebrew - *Ketz-hayamim* or *Acharit-hayamim*: When the *Olam Haze* (present age) is coming to an end and the *Olam Habah* (age to come) is about to begin. **“End Time”**: A Biblical period of time in which particular events happen, culminating in the end of this present age and the dawning of a new age.

“Looking away”

The character, Simeon, is a prophetic picture of the Church (Ecclesia) in the End Time. The Hebrew root of his name means “hearing”²⁸¹ – that is, to hear with obedience. This is the type of “hearing” commanded by the Spirit of Prophecy in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 – namely, **“Hear what the Spirit says to the churches”**.²⁸²

Luke indicates that Simeon was **“looking for the consolation of Israel”**. In the same way, we in the New Covenant are directed to look for the Second Coming of Christ, on the Day of the Lord:

“... awaiting *and* confidently expecting the fulfillment of our blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus....”²⁸³

“... Looking away from all that will distract us and focusing our eyes on Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of faith....”²⁸⁴

Simeon’s passion was **to see Christ**.²⁸⁵ Ours should be the same. Like Christ-Centeredness, desiring the Second Coming of Christ can easily become a type of “lip-service”.²⁸⁶ Except in the case of old-age and / or chronic illness, most of us – including Christians - don’t often even think about, none-the-less *desire*, the next life simply because we are flesh and blood and very much “invested”

²⁸¹ Hebrew: *Shimon*, Strong’s # 8085

²⁸² Revelation 2:11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; Cf.13:9

²⁸³ Titus 2:13 AMP

²⁸⁴ Hebrews 12:2 AMP

²⁸⁵ Cf. Luke 2:26, 29-32

²⁸⁶ Cf. Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:8

in the “affairs of this life”²⁸⁷. And contrary to **“looking away from all that will distract us and focusing our eyes on Jesus”** most Christian churches and ministries, while giving “lip service” to the Second Coming, unfortunately focus on “the affairs of this life” in an effort to “meet needs” and promote the pursuit of the “blessings” of the “successful Christian life”, which are essentially the same as the pursuits of the surrounding unregenerate culture. But the Remnant will be made up of those who, besides other things, have finished with the “vanity of vanities”²⁸⁸ of this life; and are, in a true sense, **looking for that “blessed hope” and “glorious appearance” of Christ.**

“Looking away” can be understood as the beginning of the “turning away” of repentance²⁸⁹. It may be said that in the End-Time, one will either be “Looking away” or “Falling away”.²⁹⁰ The Greek word, *apostasia*²⁹¹, means “a falling away”, “a separation”, “a divorce”, “a forsaking”. I believe that the roots of apostasy are in the *substitution* of the knowledge of religious things in place of *revelation of Christ*, and the *substitution* of religious activities for *relationship with Christ*. In a revelation-relationship vacuum, people begin to substitute an assortment of religious things and activities in order to fill in the emptiness. The phenomenon of apostasy is the *substitution of something* for Christ. W.E. Vine says that the Greek word, *antichristos*, can mean both “against Christ” and “*instead of Christ*”.

²⁸⁷ Cf. 2 Timothy 2:4

²⁸⁸ Cf. Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12:8

²⁸⁹ Greek: *metanoeo*, Strong’s 3340, *meta* – change, *noeo* – to perceive, change of perception

²⁹⁰ In 2 Thessalonians 2:2-3 Paul said that the Day of the Lord would come after the “falling away” (apostasy).

²⁹¹ Strong’s # 646

Let's consider further what happened that day in the temple: Simeon was waiting and looking for the Christ. He was led by the Spirit. When he saw "the child Jesus", by the Spirit, he was able to recognize this Child was the long-awaited Christ. This was a Child of parents from the common people of Bethlehem. Crowds had not yet begun to follow Jesus; and He had not yet begun to do miraculous signs proving He was the Christ. This was before Christ's "triumphant entrance" into Jerusalem. That day in the temple, Christ had not yet begun to be revealed publicly, yet Simeon was able to see in His infancy the Christ of God who would deliver the promises of God to His people. In Christendom, publicly-recognized success is what gets attention and a following. For the Remnant, it is something that can only be described as the "witness of the Spirit", such as received by John when still in his mother's womb²⁹², and that to which the apostle Peter testified in response to Jesus' question²⁹³ – a phenomenon in the same category as that which the apostle Paul referred to: **"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit...."**²⁹⁴

²⁹² Luke 1:41

²⁹³ Matthew 16:13-17

²⁹⁴ Romans 8:16

“Lifting up” Jesus



“He took Him up in his arms ...”²⁹⁵

This is what A.T. Robertson had to say about this verse: “Arms (*agkalas*). Old Greek word, here only in the N.T. It means the curve or inner angle of the arm.”²⁹⁶ Let’s reflect on this prophetic picture: “He took Him up in his arms....” Jesus said of Himself: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.”²⁹⁷ In other words, as all eyes were focused on the serpent, all eyes are to be **focused on Christ - as the Foundation, The Head, and the Center.** Again, Jesus said of Himself: “And I, if

²⁹⁵ Luke 2:28 ESV

²⁹⁶ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, A.T. Robertson

²⁹⁷ John 3:14. Cf. Numbers 21:6-9. A bronze serpent: i.e., a judged and condemned serpent. Romans 8:3 “... God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf....” i.e., Jesus became judged and condemned as the serpent in the wilderness.

I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."²⁹⁸ **People will focus on whatever - or Whoever - we focus on. Namely, the focus is on Christ – not Israel, and not the Church.**

Let's reflect just a little further on this prophetic picture: "He took Him up **in his arms**...." The apostle John wrote: "...God has given us eternal life (the life of the Eternal One) and this life is in His son. He who **possesses**²⁹⁹ the Son **possesses** the life..."³⁰⁰ What do we "possess" - of Christ with regards to **revelation** and **relationship**? This is the secret to living in and being able to share with others the Resurrection Life³⁰¹ of the Eternal One. **We can only give what we have.** Simeon is a picture of **the Remnant – possessing, embracing – "holding fast to (seizing and retaining)"³⁰² the Head" of the Body.**³⁰³

²⁹⁸ John 12:32

²⁹⁹ Greek: *echo*, Strong's # 2193

³⁰⁰ 1 John 5:11-12

³⁰¹ Romans 6:9; Revelation 2:8. Resurrected life is associated with miraculous power: Mark 6:14; John 2:22

³⁰² Greek: *krateo*, Strong's # 2902

³⁰³ Colossians 2:19

Prepared for Who?

“A People Prepared for the Lord” Luke 1:17

This is A People Prepared for the coming of the Lord on the Day of the Lord. The Jews were definitely not prepared for the Lord’s first coming. In tears, Jesus told the Jews, *“you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”*³⁰⁴

But what does it mean to be prepared to meet the Lord? Does our preparation involve doing something? Or being something? Most “end-time” movements are about doing rather than being – for example, prepared to “do church”, or prepared to “establish the kingdom”.³⁰⁵ This “preparing to do” is the essence of the spirit of religion.

Why do I make such a statement?

Let’s consider the example of the Rich Young Ruler³⁰⁶: His frame of reference was clearly doing. He asked Jesus: *“What must I do?”* Of course, this was the frame of reference of Old Covenant Judaism. However, Jesus had come to introduce the New Covenant “Law of Christ” – *“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”*³⁰⁷ – *“not according to the letter, but according to the Spirit”*³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ Cf. Luke 19:41-44

³⁰⁵ These types of End-Time movements have various labels: In past generations – *The Latter Rain Movement* with subsequent movements identifying *The Man Child* or *The Manifested Sons of God*, along with certain aspects of some *Restoration Movements*; and in our generation – *The New Apostolic Restoration*, et. al. For suggested reading: <https://www.hollypivec.com/books>

³⁰⁶ Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 18:18-30

³⁰⁷ Romans 8:2

³⁰⁸ 2 Corinthians 3:6

who gives birth to “a new creature”³⁰⁹ “to walk in newness of life”³¹⁰. This is the frame of reference of New Covenant Christianity. And this has to do with being.

In contrast to a spirit of religion, “preparing to **be**” is the essence of a “spirit of relationship”. What must we **be** in that relationship with Christ? His army? No. Those saints, now in heaven who will accompany the Lord’s return to earth, are His army. They are already with the Lord. The Lord is returning for a people being prepared now here on this earth. What must that people **be**?

The Church

*“Christ also loved **the church** and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself **the church** in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless³¹¹.”*

Ephesians 5:25-27

That Church, according to Jesus’ designation³¹², to be an Ecclesia – a body of citizens whose citizenship is in heaven, who gather to discuss the affairs of the Kingdom of Heaven, whose commission of this earth is to **be** a witness to that heavenly Kingdom.

But ultimately, the Ecclesia Jesus is coming back for is **a Bride**:

³⁰⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:17

³¹⁰ Romans 6:4

³¹¹ Greek: *amomos*, Strong’s # 299: unblemished, spotless, without blame

³¹² Matthew 16:18

⁷ "Let's rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and **His bride has prepared herself.**" ⁸ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

Revelation 19:7-8

One might ask: "But isn't the Bride 'preparing herself' doing?" Well firstly, this "doing" has more to do with "**the righteousness of God which comes by faith**"³¹³ rather than by acts of righteousness. "By what kind of law? Of works (doing)? No, but by a law of faith."³¹⁴ This is a relationship based in being – that is, being what Christ has already accomplished by His work on the cross, and what Holy Spirit now imparts³¹⁵ - rather than doing something for God, like "doing church" or "establishing the kingdom".

Secondly, three times in the New Testament scriptures³¹⁶ the Bride is said to be "presented" to Christ.³¹⁷ In each of the three cases, **the purity, holiness, and sanctity of the Bride** is referred to – namely, references to her being, not her doing – **her righteous standing in Christ, not her "righteous deeds"**. So, it seems to me that the phrase, "*the righteous acts³¹⁸ of the saints*" is merely an interpretation on the part of the translators. The Greek word there is *dikaionomata*. It appears in the New Testament nine times. For some reason, it is translated "righteous acts" twice in the Book of Revelation. But seven other times in other books the translation

³¹³ Romans 1:17

³¹⁴ Romans 3:27

³¹⁵ Cf. Romans 3:21-27; 4:1-15; 10:5-8

³¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:27; Colossians 1:22

³¹⁷ Greek: *parestemi*, Strong's # 3936, stand beside, exhibit

³¹⁸ Or, in some translations, "deeds"

has to do with righteous judgments or decisions. The word refers to **the principle of righteousness**, rather than “righteous acts”. In this case, it specifically has to do with the “*Bride making herself ready*” by “*clothing herself in fine linen, bright and clean*” – namely, “*putting on the Lord Jesus Christ*”³¹⁹ - clothing herself with the righteousness of Christ that is hers by faith.³²⁰

So, “righteous acts” is not the best translation. But if we focus on the idea of righteous judgments or righteous decisions, that fits perfectly with the calling of the Ecclesia.³²¹ Of course the fruit of these righteous judgments and decisions may result in righteous deeds. But I maintain that these righteous judgments and decisions are sourced in the faith of being who God has re-created us to be, rather than what we are doing for God.³²² Since the Church (Ecclesia) is to BE A WITNESS to the Kingdom of Heaven, and is NOT the kingdom per se, and is NOT the governing body of the kingdom on this earth, and is NOT the army establishing the kingdom on this earth – therefore, **being a Bride** is an image better suited to **A People Prepared**. According to the New Testament, that bride is to be holy, righteous, blameless, pure, and singularly devoted (to Christ).

³¹⁹ Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27; Cf. Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10

³²⁰ Romans 1:17, 3:27

³²¹ W.E. Vine defines Ecclesia as: “A body of citizens called out and gathered to discuss the affairs of state.” He further explains it as “a gathering for a definite purpose, a gathering regarded as representative of the whole nation”. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*

³²² While in this particular article I have not dealt with the people of God as a Body (Ephesians 4:13-15) or as sons of God (Romans 8:29), I believe those spiritual realities are also sourced in the faith of *being* who God has re-created us to *be*, rather than what we are *doing* for God.

Prepared for What?

So, we are not primarily being prepared to do something, but we are being prepared to be something - the Bride, which Christ will “present” to Himself when He returns to earth on the Day of the Lord. But what is God’s purpose for **A People Prepared BEFORE** the Day of the Lord. What are we to be here and now, on this earth?

“Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.” Isaiah 8:18

This passage describes the Remnant we have been discussing in this article, and also a Remnant church – the Ecclesia – BEFORE the Day of the Lord. This Remnant is **A People Prepared to be “for sings & wonders”**.

Signs and Symbols

It is popular to associate the words “*sings and wonders*” with the miraculous. This is a valid association, but the two words don’t always refer to the miraculous. Also, it must be understood that while people may be used by the Lord in the exercise of miraculous gifts, the people themselves are not miraculous. In any case, here in Isaiah 8:18, “*signs*³²³ *and wonders*³²⁴” do not refer to the miraculous, but rather to that which is **symbolic**. This is the footnote in the *NET Bible* regarding the “children” mentioned:

³²³ Hebrew: *oth*, Strong’s # 226. Greek (Septuagint): *semeion*, Strong’s # 4592 (indication).

³²⁴ Hebrew: *mopheth*, Strong’s # 4159. Greek (Septuagint): *teras*, Strong’s # 5059.

“Isaiah 8:18: Or “signs and portents” (NAB, NRSV). The names of all three individuals have **symbolic** value.... The word מֹפֶת (mofet, “portent”) can often refer to some miraculous event, but **in 20:3 it is used, along with its synonym אֵימָה (“sign”) of Isaiah’s walking around half-naked as an object lesson of what would soon happen to the Egyptians.”**

So, since the word “portents” is not very familiar to the modern ear, let’s rather use the phrase “**signs and symbols**”. That is how the phrase appears in the *Strong’s Lexicon*, the *New International Version*, and the *Berean Study Bible*. A study of both the Hebrew and the Greek meanings will show that the two words have essentially the same meaning – a sign or a signal in the form of **an object lesson**. “An object lesson is a teaching method that consists of using a physical object or visual aid as a discussion piece for a lesson. Object lesson teaching assumes that material things have the potential to convey information.”³²⁵ Isaiah’s “children” were to be a sign, conveying something in Israel. Likewise, **the Remnant is to be a sign, conveying something in and through the Church (Ecclesia).**³²⁶ Isaiah’s “children” were to be a symbol, representing something in Israel. And likewise, **the Remnant is to be a symbol, representing something in and through the Church (Ecclesia).**

Also contained in the footnote of the *NET Bible* regarding the Isaiah and his “children” is this:

³²⁵ Sarah Anne Carter, “*On an Object Lesson, or Don’t Eat the Evidence*”, 2010

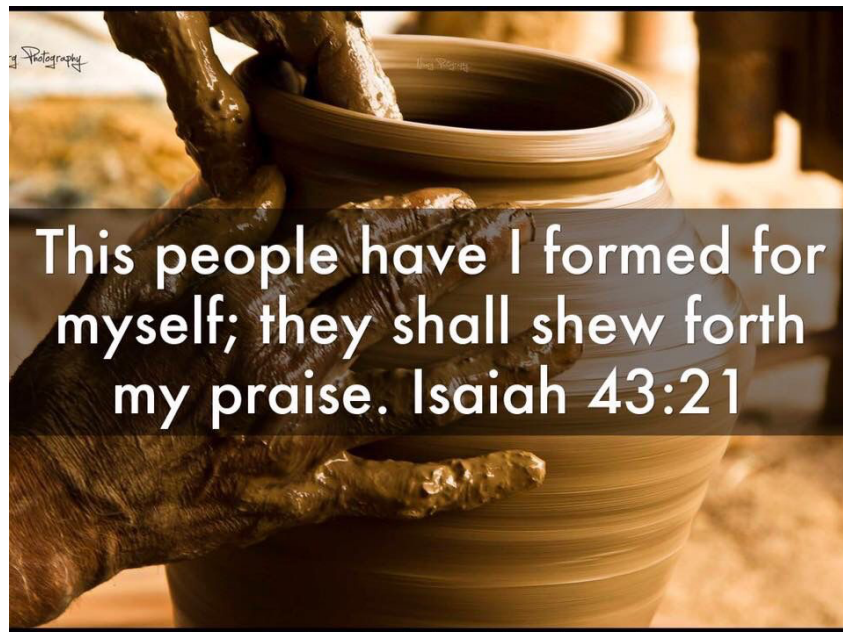
³²⁶ The change in prepositions – i.e., from “in Israel” to “in and through the Church” – points to an essential difference the Old and New Covenants. It is not within the scope of this article to fully exposit this spiritual truth, but some of this is discussed in my article, “*The Cross & The Powers of Darkness*”: <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/ecards/ACT011.html>

“Isaiah’s name (which meant “the Lord delivers”) was a reminder that the Lord was the nation’s only source of protection; Shear Jashub’s name was meant, at least originally, to encourage Ahaz (see the note at 7:3), and Maher Shalal Hash Baz’s name was a guarantee that God would defeat Israel and Syria (see the note at 8:4).”

So, we see that the Lord ordained these “children” in the flesh to be **object lessons** of something to the rest of God’s people.

Likewise, **“The Glorious Church”, “Assembly of the First-Born”, and “The Remnant” – are scripture-based names ordained to be “fleshed-out” in order to be object lessons to God’s people.** So, what object lesson does the Lord desire to communicate to His people through The Remnant?

The Glory of God



A People Formed by God to show forth the Praise of God –
Here the prophecy does not say to “praise God”, but to show

forth the praise of God. “Showing forth praise” is not thanksgiving. (But it accompanies thanksgiving.) Neither is “showing forth praise” celebration. (Yet it gives rise to celebration.) To understand “showing forth praise” is to understand the nature of God’s intention for The Remnant. The phrase is made up of two Hebrew words: *saphar*, meaning to recount, relate, declare, or show forth, and *tehillah*, meaning to verbally speak “praise” - a word which we haven’t yet discussed. So, this phrase found in Isaiah 43:21 most certainly can mean *to proclaim or declare praise*, as some translations have it.³²⁷ But other translations have words like “**show forth**” or “**set forth**”.³²⁸ Why is that? In the *Apostolic Bible Polyglot* translation³²⁹, the Greek words, *diegeomai*³³⁰ and *arete*³³¹, are used, adding more dimension to the thought. It translates the phrase in this way: “**describe My virtues**”. The people whom God has formed will “show forth” – by “describing” – God’s “praise”, namely **His “virtues”**.

In Peter’s first epistle, we find a corresponding New Testament verse to Isaiah’s Old Testament verse:

“But you are a chosen race, a priesthood of kingly lineage, a holy nation, a people belonging specially to God, that you may make known the perfections of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9 (Weymouth New Testament)

³²⁷ e.g., NIV, ESV NKJV, NASB, CSB, and NRSV

³²⁸ e.g., AMP, ASV, ERV, Literal Standard Version, Legacy Standard Bible, Webster’s Bible Translation

³²⁹ This translation by Charles Vander Pool published in 2003 contains a Greek to English translation (Septuagint) of the Old Testament and a Greek to English translation of the New Testament, with both linked to the Strong’s Concordance.

<https://biblehub.com/interlinear/apostolic/genesis/1.htm>

³³⁰ Strong’s # 1334

³³¹ Strong’s 703

I think the Weymouth translation – *“to make know the perfections of Him”* - sheds more light on the phrase, and points to a difference between the Old Covenant Remnant and the New Covenant Remnant. That “difference” has to do what Jesus was indicating in His *Sermon on the Mount* – namely, the difference between Old Covenant externalism of the Mosaic Law and New Covenant internalization of the Law of Christ³³². To put it a different way: That which the New Covenant Remnant will proclaim or declare will come from God, through them, and then be “shown forth” to the world – including “the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places”!

*“So that the multifaceted wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.”*³³³ Ephesians 3:10

So, in the context of this Ephesians 3 passage, we can ask: What is that “multifaceted wisdom”? What are those “perfections”? What is that “praise”? **God’s “virtues” – His attributes – which can be “made known” and “shown forth” in His people because they have been formed in His people.**

Another term for those virtues and attributes is: **“the glory of God”**. This is Greek scholar, M.R. Vincent’s definition: “Glory is the expression of the divine attributes collectively. It is the

³³² A phrase of which we need to seek revelation and understanding in the context of 2 Corinthians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 2:6; Mark 12:28-31; 2 John 9; 1 John 4:7-8, 5;13; Cf. Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:23-25; Ephesians 2:15.

³³³ For a more full treatment on this idea, see my article, “The Cross & The Powers of Darkness” – Read: <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/ecards/ACT011.html> Listen: <https://www.spreaker.com/show/the-cross-the-powers-of-darkness>

unfolded fullness of the divine perfections.³³⁴ Christ alone is the “the effulgence (or “out-raying”³³⁵) of His glory and the exact representation of His nature”.³³⁶ While Christ alone is the exact representation of God, **the Body of Christ should also be a radiance of that glory – a reflection of “the divine perfections” – the virtues and attributes of God.**³³⁷

The attributes of God are many³³⁸, but what is the nature of the glory – “**the multi-faceted wisdom**” - Paul was referring to in his letter to the Ephesians? In two of his other epistles, Paul referred to **the Cross – self-denying, self-dying love,**³³⁹ **as being this glory.**³⁴⁰ Jesus Himself as well as God the Father both referred to **the Cross - self-denying, self-dying love – as the glory.**³⁴¹ **The Remnant are “A People Prepared” to carry their own cross, deny self, and follow Jesus in the Cause of Christ for the glory of God.**³⁴²

For a more complete treatment of **the Cross** as the wisdom and the power of God to be manifested through the Church, I refer you to the following articles:

³³⁴ M.R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, Hebrews 1:3

³³⁵ Greek: *apaugasma*, Strong’s # 541, from *apaugazō*, to emit brightness, or effulgence - ray from an original light body. (*Robertson’s Word Pictures*). Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:6

³³⁶ Hebrews 1:3

³³⁷ For a more full treatment of “the glory of God”, see my article, “Some Thoughts on the Glory of God”

Read: <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/ecards/ACT035.html>

Listen: https://www.spreaker.com/show/some-thoughts-on-the-glory-of-god_1

³³⁸ Cf. <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/attributes-of-god>

³³⁹ Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34

³⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23-24; Colossians 2:15 (Cf. AMP, NET, NIV, and Weymouth translations)

³⁴¹ Cf. John 12:28-33

³⁴² Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23, 14:27; Cf. Galatians 6:14.

Seeing the Kingdom Through the Cross

Read: <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/ecards/ACT033.html>

Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSOszNrsImc>

Who is this King of Glory?

Read: <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/ecards/ACT043.html>

Listen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHUzM8K8zy4>

The Cross & The Powers of Darkness

Read: <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/ecards/ACT011.html>

Listen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRDcD_WH9_0

The Weakness of God

Read: <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/ecards/ACT042.html>

Listen: <https://www.spreaker.com/show/the-weakness-of-god>

Some Thoughts on the Glory of God

Read: <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/ecards/ACT035.html>

Listen: https://www.spreaker.com/show/some-thoughts-on-the-glory-of-god_1

Bill & Frances Furioso
~ At Christ's Table ~



Bill and Frances have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done formal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years helping to establish churches and train church leaders. Their Bible teaching ministry has taken them throughout the United States, as well as to other countries like Brazil, England, and Zimbabwe. They have pastored several churches, and as an itinerant Bible teacher, Bill has ministered in hundreds of churches on four continents. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed to church leaders worldwide. Bill and Frances have ministered together speaking in churches, leading spiritual formation seminars, personal mentoring, and administering an international partnership of church leaders. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now primarily via the Internet... www.AtChristsTable.org

ACTpublications

“... explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.” 1 Corinthians 2:13

A teaching ministry from Bill and Frances Furioso

At Christ's Table

Disciples of the King and His Kingdom eating and drinking of Jesus

THE HEAD

THE CENTER

THE FOUNDATION

of Biblical Christianity

with a view to

REVELATION of Christ

RELATIONSHIP with Christ

REFLECTION of Christ

FREE ONLINE MINISTRY RESOURCES

OUR WEBSITE: www.AtChristsTable.org

WRITTEN MESSAGES

Restoration Library: <https://usr.helps7.com/AtChristsTable/indexA.html>

Academia.edu: <https://independent.academia.edu/WDFurioso>

WordPress: <https://atchriststable.wordpress.com/>

RECORDED MESSAGES

YouTube: www.YouTube.com/user/BillFurioso

Academia.edu: <https://independent.academia.edu/WDFurioso>

SoundCloud: <https://soundcloud.com/user-648428572>

Spreaker: <https://www.spreaker.com/user/14502151>

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: www.facebook.com/atchriststable

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/at-christ-s-table-ministries-254b5320/>

Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/atchriststable1>