

The Glory to Follow

“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

—II Corinthians 4:17,18

THE APOSTLE PAUL SAID

that he rejoiced in the privilege of suffering with Christ. “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.”—Col.

1:23,24

While every faithful follower of the Master experiences joys far deeper and more satisfying than anything known to the unbelieving world, it is also true that the Christian life is one of suffering and

sacrifice. Jesus told his disciples that this would be their experience. He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."—John 16:33

The Apostle Peter wrote concerning the afflictions of the Lord's people, and said that the Spirit of God moved the prophets of old to testify concerning the sufferings of Christ. "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."—I Pet. 1:11

Jesus had this basic truth of the divine plan well in mind when, after his resurrection, he preached that wonderful sermon to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. He began with Moses and from all the prophets pointed out to them that it was necessary for Christ to suffer before entering into his glory.—Luke 24:13-27

At the time Jesus was crucified, the disciples did not understand this aspect of the divine plan of salvation. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, and they expected him to shortly manifest the power and glory of that office as it had been foretold by the prophets. When he was crucified they were bewildered, but their hearts burned within them when they realized that the death of their Master was not a defeat of God's plan by their enemies. It was something which had been foreknown and foretold as an integral part of the divine plan.

One of the prophecies of the suffering and death of Jesus is recorded in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of

sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . . . Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. . . . He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”—Isa. 53:3,4,7

In the last verse of Isaiah 53, the suffering and death of Jesus are foretold; however, Isaiah also foretold the glory to follow. We are informed that he would be given a portion with the “great,” and to this is added that he would divide the reward with the “strong.” “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.” (vs. 12) The ‘great’ referred to here is evidently the great Creator of the universe—our Heavenly Father. Jesus was given a ‘portion’ with his Heavenly Father. Those who are “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” are Jesus’ faithful followers. (Eph. 6:10) While being “sown in weakness” according to the flesh (I Cor. 15:43), they are indeed ‘strong in the Lord’ through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is this strength that helps them to endure and to struggle as they fight “the good fight of faith.” (I Tim. 6:12) In Revelation 3:21, we find the Lord saying, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

COMPLETE TRUST

Jesus knew of his Father’s arrangement for him to suffer and die as the world’s Redeemer. The

many promises of God, concerning the glory that would follow the suffering, helped to sustain him. Paul refers to the joy that was set before Jesus by these promises. It was this joy that enabled him to endure the cross and to despise the shame. Because he endured faithfully, he is now “set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”—Heb. 12:2

In a prophecy setting forth Jesus’ confidence in his Heavenly Father, recorded in the 16th Psalm, we read, “I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”—Ps. 16:8-11

Jesus knew that he was to die, but he also knew that he would not be left in death. He would be restored to life. He had confidence that God would show him the path of life. In his case, that path of life led through suffering to death. He knew this when he explained to his disciples that those who lose their lives in sacrifice—in the divine cause as he expected to do—would ultimately save their lives.

SUFFERING WITH CHRIST

It is clear that the prophetic testimony concerning the suffering of Christ and the glory that should follow applies also to the suffering and sacrificial death of his true followers. The Apostle Peter makes this plain. He wrote, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try

you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."—I Pet. 4:12,13

Our theme text refers to Christian suffering as 'light affliction' compared with the 'eternal weight of glory.' The sufferings, or afflictions, of Christ are light in comparison with the weight of glory to follow, although from the human standpoint these afflictions are often severe and crushing. Think of what they involved in the case of Jesus. He was harassed by his enemies, most of whom were the religious leaders of his day, and, finally, put to death upon the cross. Think of the glory into which he entered as a result of his faithfulness. He received the divine nature and was given a position with the Heavenly Father.

The followers of Jesus from then until now have also suffered. In the days of the Early Church and throughout the Dark Ages particularly, they were almost continuously persecuted. Some were crucified, others thrown to the lions, while still others were burned at the stake or subjected to other cruelties. All of the Lord's faithful people throughout this present Gospel Age have suffered trials and persecutions of one sort or another, either their own or as the "companions of them who were so used."—Heb. 10:33,34

Regardless of the severity of the afflictions, they have been light and temporary compared with the eternal weight of glory to follow. With the followers of Jesus, even as with Jesus himself, this glory that follows the suffering consists of exaltation to the

divine nature. They are also promised to share the throne with Jesus. (Rev. 3:21) Paul speaks of our “hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:2) This goes beyond the ability of the human mind to comprehend. This glory to follow will not be ‘but for a moment,’ but, instead, it will be eternal.

ILLUSTRATIONS

While we cannot comprehend the glory for which we are encouraged to hope, the Bible helps us to grasp some of its aspects, at least partially, by the various titles it ascribes to Jesus and to his body members. Jesus, for example, is a king, indeed the “KING OF KINGS.” (Rev. 19:16) A king is one who reigns over subjects, and the promise to the true church is that she “shall reign with him a thousand years.”—chap. 20:6

We might refer to this as the kingly glory to follow the afflictions. Paul set forth this thought clearly when he said that if we suffer with Christ we shall also reign with him. (II Tim. 2:11,12) This means that if we do not suffer with Christ we will not reign with him. It means that if, after entering into a covenant with the Lord to lay down our lives as Jesus did, we then hold back, sidestepping our privileges of service and sacrifice, we will not be found worthy to share the throne of his glory. These are sobering thoughts and should stimulate us to greater zeal and increasing diligence in devoting our lives to the service of the Lord by a daily laying down and giving up of our all in doing the divine will.

SERVANTS OF THE COVENANT

The Bible informs us that Jesus will be the Mediator of the New Covenant in his future kingdom.

The Apostle Paul explains that we have also been made “able ministers” of that covenant. (II Cor. 3:6; Heb. 12:24) The New Covenant is foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34. When that covenant is made with all the people, the law of God will be written in their hearts and they will be restored to perfection. This perfection is that which they lost through the sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden.

The Prophet Isaiah refers to this glorious work of restoration, and pictures the church as helping to bring it about, in a prophecy from which Paul quoted and applied to the disciples of Christ. “In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners [of death], Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves.”—Isa. 49:8,9; II Cor. 6:2

PRIESTS OF GOD

Another title which the Bible ascribes both to Jesus and his church is that of priests. This title applies to Jesus and to his church in the flesh, for it pertains first to the work of sacrifice. In the Jewish Age, the offering of typical sacrifices was one of the chief functions of the priesthood. Peter wrote to the followers of Jesus, saying, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up . . . sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”—I Pet. 2:5

In verse 9 of this chapter, Peter speaks of the church as being a “royal priesthood.” It is to become royal priests that the present sacrificial work is

leading for all those who are faithful unto death. The 'royal priesthood' is a kingly priesthood, typified by Melchisedec, who was a priest upon his throne. (Gen. 14:18) Melchisedec was a type of Jesus exalted to kingship, and ruling to bless the people during the thousand years of his kingdom.

The faithful followers of Jesus will share this priestly glory with him. Revelation 20:6 reads, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." In this promise, we do not have priests offering sacrifice, but priests who are reigning upon the throne, even as was Melchisedec. What a prospect this is, and how it enhances our hope of glory, the glory to follow, and the light afflictions of the present time.

THE GLORY OF JUDGESHIP

In his sermon on Mars' hill, the Apostle Paul said that God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:31) Jesus will be the great judge of the people during the thousand-year judgment day promised in the Bible. He will have associate judges working with him. Here again, these will be his faithful followers of the present age.

We read, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (I Cor. 6:2) This is a well-known text to many students of the Word of God, but it is

by no means the only assurance the Bible gives us that the faithful saints of the Gospel Age will share the glory of judgeship with Jesus. The Master himself spoke of this time, saying, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."—Matt. 25:31,32

It will be recognized that this is Jesus' parable of the judgment day. He speaks of himself as then being seated upon the 'throne of his glory' with all his 'holy angels,' or messengers, with him. These holy messengers are his faithful followers who, having been brought forth in the first resurrection, are represented as sharing with Jesus in the glory of judging the peoples of all nations.

This is in harmony with Jesus' promise to his disciples as recorded in Matthew 19:28. In the context, Jesus said to the rich young ruler that if he would give up all he had and take up his cross and follow him he would have treasures in heaven. The disciples did not understand this, so Peter reminded Jesus that they had given up all they had and had become his followers. He asked what they would receive in return. It was to this question that Jesus replied, "Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

In this passage and in the parable in Matthew 25, the saints are shown to share the judgeship with Jesus. Here Jesus speaks of sitting on the

‘throne of his glory’ and promises his disciples that they also shall sit upon ‘thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ Thus Jesus indicates that all peoples are to be judged, including the twelve tribes of Israel. Here again is a part of the glory that follows our light afflictions.

THRONES

In his teachings, Jesus drew heavily upon the prophecies of the Old Testament. In his promise to his disciples concerning their sitting upon thrones (plural), he perhaps based his lesson on the prophecy of Daniel 7:9,10,18,22. Here we have foretold the kingdom and judgment work. The *Rotherham Translation* of Daniel 7:9 reads, “I continued looking until that thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days took his seat.”

This is a picture of the setting in order of the kingdom arrangement. Verse 10, speaking of the ‘Ancient of days,’ says, “Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” This compares well with Revelation 20:11,12: “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened.”

Verse 18 of Daniel 7 reads, “The saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.” Then verse 22 adds: “And judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” Thus, in this

prophecy of Daniel we have mention of ‘thrones’ which are placed in the kingdom, and also that ‘judgment’ is given to the saints of the most High—these possess the kingdom. What a firm foundation this gives for our hope of judgeship glory with Jesus.

REVELATION

Many of the important prophecies and promises of the Old Testament are reiterated in the New Testament, oftentimes in the Book of Revelation. This seems to be the case with Daniel’s prophecy concerning thrones, and the fact that judgment is given to the saints of the Most High at the time when the saints possess the kingdom.

“I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:4) The *Rotherham Translation* reads, “I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and ‘sentence of judgment was given unto them.’” It is clear from this translation that those John saw on thrones had been given a commission to judge. Rotherham’s statement ‘sentence of judgment’ suggests that to those who sat on the thrones were given the authority to pass sentence on others, resulting from the judgment process. Thus we find a beautiful harmony between Daniel 7:9,18,22 and Revelation 20:4, substantiating further the promise that the saints of this Gospel Age, following their suffering and death—their light

afflictions—will become co-judges with Jesus and thus share in the judgeship aspect of the glory to follow.

FAITHFULNESS REQUIRED

It is well to remind ourselves that, if we expect to share with Jesus in the glory that follows the light afflictions, we must be faithful to the terms of our covenant by sacrifice. Paul explains that while we are enduring the momentary light afflictions of the present we are looking for inspiration to “the things which are not seen.” He reminds us that “the things which are not seen are eternal.”—II Cor. 4:18

Are we able by the eye of faith to see the things which cannot be seen with the natural eye? If our vision of faith is keen, we will be able to see to some extent the glory that will follow the present time of trial. We are not able to see clearly all it will mean to be joint-rulers with Jesus in his kingdom. It is impossible to grasp the full thought of what is involved in being ‘able ministers of the new covenant,’ members of the Melchisedec priesthood, or to be seated on thrones as judges. The assurances of the Bible that a participation with Jesus in all these official positions in his Millennial Kingdom help us to realize how great that glory will be.

There is also the great glory of the divine nature. Paul speaks of this in his lesson on the resurrection, as recorded in the 15th chapter of I Corinthians. Speaking of our sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection, Paul writes, “It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is

raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.”—I Cor. 15:43,44

How true it is that we are ‘sown in weakness.’ Every faithful follower of the Master should realize his own weakness and his inability to do the Lord’s will as completely as he would like. There is frequently the tendency to become discouraged. This should cause us to turn to the Lord for strength and for guidance. How often do we experience the fulfillment of God’s promises to give us strength.

In no small way, the hope of glory is itself a source of strength and courage. May this hope remain ever bright as day by day we face the light afflictions which are but for a moment, knowing that shortly, if faithful, we will enter into the promised eternal weight of glory.

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