

Milk & Honey

Vol. XXIX August, 2015 No. 8

Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

Behold He Cometh with Clouds

William Kelly

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.” (Revelation 1:7.)

In Colossians we have the association of the saints with Christ very fully wrought out. (Col. 1 and Col. 2.) He is my life, and I am one with Him. Thus, the moment I find Christ my Saviour is dead to the world, I become dead to the world also. I find not only my treasure there, but the very religion of the world judged, because Christ was cast out by the world’s religion. When He comes with clouds, every eye shall see Him. But this will not be the case when He comes to fetch His Church. God is gathering the friends of Christ around the Name of Christ now. The Church is a body which is called while Christ is not seen, and the Christian having his portion in Him now, is hidden with Him. “Your life is hid with Christ in God.”

In this verse, then, it is not the Lord coming to meet His own and gather them to Himself in the air; but, “every eye shall see him . . . and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” When the Lord comes to meet His Church, it will be far different. God has joined us to the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, according to all the efficacy of His death and resurrection. As far as the spirit is concerned this is true now, and will be true of the body itself when Christ comes. The resurrection of Christ calls me to live thoroughly unto God, as the death of Christ makes me as much dead in principle to the world as if I were already dead. In practice, alas! we have to own sad falling short. Still, says the apostle, “Your life is hid.” It is the life of Christ you have in you. As long as Christ is hidden, you are hidden also.

But the time is coming when that will no longer be the case. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” (Colossians 3:4.) When Christ comes to receive the Church, no eye will see Him but those whom Christ comes for. When the world sees Christ, it will be when He comes in glory, bringing His saints with Him — revealed from heaven with the angels of His power,

in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God (the Gentiles), and on them that obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (the Jews). If the world were to see Christ coming alone in glory before the Church is caught up to Him, it would not be true that, “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” When Christ is hidden, you are hidden; when Christ appears, you will appear.

The world will never see Christ without the Church. It will not see Christ coming to receive the Church, because then they would have seen Him without the Church; whereas, the very first moment of His appearing is to be the moment of our appearing with Him. And this does not merely rest upon a word; it is the doctrine of the whole passage; and the same thing is shown and confirmed by other proofs throughout the New Testament. No person can ever go contrary to truth without getting into the very trouble he is seeking to escape.

In Christ’s death we are dead to the world; in His resurrection we are risen, and are therefore to have our hearts set upon heavenly things before we see them. And more than that. Christ is not always to be hidden: He is about to be manifested; and when He is manifested, we shall be manifested also, along with Him. Christ and the Church must have been together before they are manifested to the world, if they are to appear together. In Revelation 19, we have this manifestation, where we are told (verse 11 -14), “I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and He that sat on him was called Faithful and True . . . and the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”

The horse is the emblem of power; the white horse of prosperous, victorious power. It is the Lord Jesus Christ coming in judgment, which will be the time when He comes in the clouds of heaven. These armies that are seen following Him out of heaven, clothed in fine linen, are not angels. This

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For men of all ages

“This grace wherein we stand.”

F. B. Hole

When God gave His holy law through Moses at Sinai, Israel could not stand before Him. Moses himself said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” Many centuries after, the Apostle Paul found it brought him under the death sentence for he said, “When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Rom. 7:9). In contrast to this he wrote of, “This grace wherein we stand” (Rom. 5:2). On a legal basis no one ever stands before God: all collapse and fall down.

So we all rejoice in Paul’s emphatic statement, “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14), and it is helpful to observe ‘that though the Apostle Peter was not led to expound the matter as Paul did, yet he corroborated this fact in an inferential way. This we see if we compare 1 Peter 2:9, with Exodus 19:5, 6. We notice a strong similarity, for the “royal priesthood,” the “holy nation,” the peculiar people, of Peter, occur in the Exodus passage, in slightly different words.

But on the other hand there is a profound difference. In Exodus God started with an “IF.” “If ye will obey My voice indeed;” but they never did obey His voice and so never were what was proposed. In Peter the “IF” is absent and instead we read, “But ye are a chosen generation.” The Christians to whom Peter wrote were these very things that Israelites as a nation were not. What was never reached on a legal basis was reached on the basis of grace. And how? His first chapter shows us how they were “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,” “redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ;” “born again . . . by the word of God,” and that through the operation of the Spirit of God. This was, “the true grace of God” in which they stood, as Peter told them in his last chapter.

So here is a very striking contrast between law and grace. The nation to whom the law was given were not a chosen generation but rather, as Moses had to admit, “a perverse and crooked generation,” and again, “a very forward generation, children in whom is no faith” (Deut 32:5 and 20). The law was given as a test and it manifested the evil that was in them. It could not give the life that was needed, as we learn in Galatians. Grace does give the life, and then calls upon us to live out the life in a way that will be pleasing to God and glorify Him.

Standing in grace, we are brought into liberty, and in that liberty we are to “stand fast,” and not be “entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1). But let us take care that we do not turn that liberty into license. In a letter

recently to hand there was reference to some who were saying, **“I am a Christian, therefore I am under no law, and can do what I like,” and they proceed to do things which did not honour their Lord nor bring credit to their faith. That statement is not correct.**

It is true we are not under the law of Moses; neither as the means of our justification nor as the rule of our lives, but it is not true that we are under no law at all, for here are two scriptures that plainly refute that idea. In both the Apostle Paul tells us what governed his own life. He wrote that he was, “not without law to God, but under the law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21) and again, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). This illustrates what he wrote in Romans 7:4. The Christian is now united to the risen Christ by the Holy Spirit, and the law, or control, thus established is of a far higher order than anything established by the law of Moses.

So in many New Testament scriptures, and specially in the writings of the Apostle John, we get the commandments of our Lord plainly stated. They are not given in order that by keeping them we may establish a standing for ourselves in righteousness before God. We have that righteous standing as the result of the work of Christ on our behalf, and the commands reach us to give us clear direction as to His will for us. The way we obey them — or disobey — does not determine our spiritual standing before God, but it does determine the state of our spiritual health and our spiritual power.

Most of us have known what it is to have had at some time a season of spiritual lethargy or distress or despondency. Should we not on such an occasion ask ourselves, Have I been flying in the face of some commandment of my Lord? Matters arise and questions confront us as to which we cannot find in the Scriptures any clear command of our Lord, and it then becomes a matter of spiritual exercise, of searching the Scriptures that we may be able to deduce and discern what His mind for us may be. But on the other hand as to many things we do have clear commands, which are simply to be obeyed, since we are “under law to Christ.” To disobey them is to court spiritual trouble and even spiritual disaster.

We are indeed delivered from the law, as the Apostle has told us, but this is because we are “married to Another,” who rules us, not by force or by penalty, but by love, and the true heart finds its peace and its joy in being happily subject to Him.

There is a remarkable incident recorded about C. T. Studd of missionary fame. In his early years, after he had

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What is Grace?

C. Stanley

I remember a person once saying, "he did not like the word Grace; he thought the word Love meant the same and was much better." This is a mistake; grace goes a great deal further than love. Man loves that which he thinks is in some way worthy of love, and he thinks God is the same as himself, and therefore says he, "I must turn to God some day and try to be worthy of His love; and then He will love me." Now the grace of God is the very opposite of this human thought. I don't know anything like it in the whole world. "What is grace?" said I, the other day. "Mercy" was the reply. Well, it is true the love of God and the mercy of God are both very, very wonderful. "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins;" and both the mercy and love of God are thus in grace; that is in pure unmerited favour. Yet this grace of God goes further, yea, far beyond the reach of all human thought.

Let us suppose a criminal, guilty of such crimes as to make him an object of the deepest abhorrence, standing condemned before the judge. Mercy would be a great thing shewn to such an one, but if it were possible in the heart of a human judge to love such an one, so utterly worthless and undeserving; that would indeed be a wonder. But what would he thought if the judge so loved the poor guilty one, as to put himself really in the place of the prisoner; bear the full penalty of all his crimes, and then take him into his own house, make him partner with himself; and say "as long as I live, all that I have is yours"? Ah! tell me where amongst the cold-hearted sons of men, where was ever grace shewn like this? No! No! The glory of this grace belongeth alone to my God. Oh, how shall I tell of His wondrous grace!

My reader, you may have heard of it by the hearing of the ear, but has this grace ever reached your heart by the power of the spirit of God? That God should thus love and pity, and shew mercy to the guilty; yes, the ungodly! the guilty! the lost! as to send His own dear Son in sweetest grace, to take the very place of the lost and guilty, in purest grace to bear all their sins in His own body on the tree! Oh look at the cross! God in grace meeting man's utmost need. Ah! Do you in your very heart believe it? Then you may cast yourself before such a God, confessing all your sins, your wretchedness, your misery; spread it all before Him. Don't try to make yourself a bit better than you are before Him. He will pardon the confessing sinner in faithfulness to the blood of Jesus. Jesus died for the purpose; that God might be just, not only in pardoning but in justifying every sinner that believeth. But oh, this is not all; God in pure

grace takes the utterly unworthy sinner, pardoned and justified, into perfect partnership or oneness with Himself in the ever blessed Lord Jesus. In this grace He met the murderer Saul; from that moment Paul became the partner or joint-heir of Christ. What a change! From that day he could say, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." Right well did he know that nothing could ever separate him from such love as this. Yes, and God by this very little paper can in the wonders of His grace, meet a murderer, a drunkard, a harlot, or worse than all, a deceived Pharisee. Yes, and from this moment the days of my partnership with Satan may be ended. Oh, God grant it. May this be thy happy portion; pardoned, justified, for ever one with Christ. This was grace, not only to take the sinner's place, but to give the guilty worm an everlasting place with Himself in resurrection glory. This salvation is wholly of God. *

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left Cambridge University and before he went out to China, his host in Leicester was attracted by a light under his bedroom door at an abnormally early morning hour. Knocking and enquiring, he found him poring over his Bible. In answer, he said, "Oh, I have been reading that the Lord said, 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.' Now I do love Him, and I am trying to search out all His commandments to see if I am keeping them." Most of us have heard of the extraordinary life of devotion which he pursued as the result.

Well it would be if the younger Christians of this our day faced up to the commandments of the Lord in the spirit in which he did it. Well also it would be if we older Christians did likewise. *

Milk & Honey Information

There is no charge for Milk & Honey. It, like all ministries of Spread The Word, is supported entirely by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people. All gifts are tax deductible.

Publisher: **Spread The Word, Inc.**
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Dover, PA 17315

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Spread The Word, Inc., 2400 Admire Springs Dr.
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U.S. Postage
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August 2015

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very chapter says that the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And the remarkable thing is this: that when angels are described in Rev. 15 as being “clothed in pure and white linen,” a different word is used. It is the heavenly saints who are thus spoken of in Rev. 19 as the armies of heaven. They were in heaven, therefore, before the way was opened for Christ to come out in judgment; and they follow Him from heaven when He comes. I doubt not that angels are in His train also, as appears from other texts; but they do not seem spoken of here.

There are two most important and different stages of the Lord’s second coming. There is the coming of Christ to receive His people to Himself, and that is what the Church ought always to be waiting for; and there is Christ’s coming to judge the world, when He has already taken up the heavenly saints, and wickedness thereafter comes to its head. Then, suddenly, the heavens will open, and the Lord Jesus Christ will come and the Church with Him, appearing together in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Is it asked, how? Israel was not told how they were to be delivered out of Egypt. The Lord was going to deliver them, but He did not explain it before it came to pass.

And the Lord is going to bring the church to heaven by the coming of Christ. After that, the Lord Jesus Christ will come and judge the wickedness of the world, and then the Church will come with Him. *

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Peace

J. G. Bellett

At the birth of the Lord, the earth was saluted with words of peace. “Peace on earth,” the angels proclaimed in the fields of Bethlehem.

This, however, was but salutation. It was not the authoritative pronouncement of peace. It was like the word which the Lord afterwards put into the lips of His Twelve, or rather of the Seventy, in Luke 10, when sending them out, for He then told them, into whatsoever house they entered, first to say, “Peace be to this house.” This was a salutation, a wishing well, the proclamation of a good-will towards the house, not an authoritative pronouncement of peace: that would rather follow on its being found, that the son of peace was there.

Upon the resurrection of the Lord, however, we have the other thing. “Peace be unto you,” the risen Saviour said to His disciples, thus returned to them — and when He said that, He showed them His hands and His side. He gave them to read their title to peace. Peace was now, not merely wished, but authoritatively pronounced, conveyed to them on the warrant of the Cross. Jesus now gave peace to them, because He had already made it for them. And this is the peace that we, who are in it, may testify to our fellow-sinners. We do not merely, like the commissioned Seventy, say, “Peace be to this house,” as saluting it, or wishing it well, but we proclaim to it the sure, settled, purchased peace, which sinners have title to, in the blood of the Cross. *