

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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God's Glory Shines in Grace

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:22–27, KJV 1900)

As John develops the details of what he saw in his closing vision of Revelation, we see the vast distinction between that world and the world in which we presently live. In the many Old Testament prophecies of the New Testament era and church, God's arrangement and temple are central. In this vision, God Himself "and the Lamb" are the temple of that holy city; there is no other temple. In the present world, the Lord's church is His "House," the "pillars and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15). In our present world, the number of various denominations, beliefs, and "Churches" abound, each group or subset holding to different ideas, and often multiple "Loose cannon" folks within each group who associate with the group, but think themselves the beneficiaries of deeper light and more perfect revelations of truth than anyone else in their group. They lean more on their own understanding than on Scripture itself, and they choose to ignore the Biblical mandate to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:3).

Folks of this mindset appear to think themselves far superior even to the most faithful of believers in Scripture. Consider just one example from Scripture. Jesus chose Peter to be one of His twelve apostles. In Matthew 16:13-19, Jesus highly commends Peter, telling Peter that his view of Jesus was the result of a revelation from the Father, not the reasoned conclusion of "flesh and blood." Excellent. However, in the very next lesson that appears in the chapter, Jesus tells the apostles that He must go to Jerusalem where He would suffer many things of the Jews, be killed by them, and—the most important truth of Scripture—rise again. This idea of Jesus being humiliated and killed did not sit well with Peter. He contradicted Jesus' words, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." In Matthew 16:23, Jesus spoke the familiar words to Peter.

Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

How could Peter so quickly go from being the voice of a revelation from God to savoring not the things of God and, in fact, giving more voice to Satan than to God? Obviously Peter leaned heavily on his own understanding, and it did not at all serve him well. The believer who relies more on his private interpretation and understanding than on Scripture and Scripture's description of the Lord's "pillar and ground of the truth" shall eventually—likely quite soon with such a flawed mindset—slip from revelation to voicing Satan's ideas and all the while think himself infallibly enlightened. Peter's smug and prideful confidence that he knew better than Jesus blinded him to the same truth that he had confessed just moments before, the central problem of those who lean more on their own understanding than on the Lord.

Such is the twisted and flawed landscape of believers in this world. Ah, but John reminds us that a better day awaits in glory to come. In that world of glory, the Lord shall personally enlighten every mind. Not a single believer in glory shall rely foolishly on his own flawed understanding or at all in any point embrace error. There shall not be an endless and confusing array of contradictory "Churches," each believing something different from the other, and each walking in blindness to their own errant ideas and beliefs. I was once criticized for observing that there is no perfect "Church" in this world. I gladly took the criticism, for I believe I stated the truth. The model of the Lord's church that we see in Scripture is indeed without flaw of any kind or degree. However, when flawed believers lean more on their own understanding than on the Lord and His Scriptures, they invariably impose their flaws onto their church, and the outcome is a flawed church. Instead of walking in the Lord's light, too many professing and sincere believers prefer to walk in the light and to warm themselves by the flames of their own fire. (Isaiah 50:11)

And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. Some of the old Puritan writers almost obsessed at times because

they feared that unregenerate sinners would or could invade the Lord's church. I suppose should a problem is possible. However, given Scripture's description of the wicked, I suspect that such occurrences are rare. In that world of glory to come, no such fear is necessary. The saved, and only the saved, shall dwell there. At times in this world, the very people who are supposed to be representatives of the Lord's church act and talk more like citizens of this world than citizens of the world to come. They bring sad dishonor onto the Lord's house and name. However, in that world of glory to come, the greatest nobility of humanity shall bow before the glory of the Lord. All of heaven's citizens shall give their honor to Him alone.

Often believers who rely on their own works for eternal salvation embrace the mindset of rewards in the sense of carnal recognition and self-magnification in heaven. As John describes heaven's glory, this whole "Stars in my crown" mindset shall be absent, wholly so. Only the honor of God and the Lamb shall be regarded there.

...*there shall be no night there.* Scripture often uses light and darkness as indicators of the Lord's blessings and judgments. When we walk by faith and faithfully stand beside our Lord, Scripture describes us in terms of light, the city set on a hill. When we turn from the Lord and lean to our own understanding or pursue our own ways instead of the Lord's, Scripture describes us as walking in darkness. What a precious thought. In that world of glory to come, there shall be no night. No child of grace in that world shall ever lean to his own understanding or walk in the light of his own fire. All shall be so purified from this world's vain self-seeking, self-aggrandizing pride that any thought of gain or glory to self shall be wholly absent. The redeemed there do not sing "There shall be stars in my crown." They sing a "Different song."

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. (Revelation 5:9).

Heaven's theme shall be one, praise to the Lord for His redeeming love and grace. Not a single redeemed saint shall have any desire or interest whatever in checking the number of stars in his crown or singing with pride, "I made it my way." All shall joyfully sing their praises to the Lord.

And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. This place cannot slip into decay or corruption. It is not a second version of the Garden of Eden with a mysterious tree whose fruit we shall be forbidden to eat or face judgment. It shall be a secure place of permanent glory to God for redeeming grace and love. God

shall prevent anything from entering this glorious place that might defile, anything abominable, or anything that is founded on a lie.

...*but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.* Only one class of people shall appear there, and they shall appear in their glorified and redeemed bodies, no longer in bodies compromised and stained by sin or seasons of doubt or unbelief.

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. (The 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

Heaven shall not be a place where schismatic segments of the Lord's family shall enjoy themselves apart from other believers. All the Lord's people in that day shall believe. Period. They shall all believe the truth of what the Lord did for them and how He redeemed them from their sins. In this life, believers at times struggle with seasons of doubt and unbelief. Heaven shall know no such moments of doubt or unbelief. It shall not know an endless confusion of multiple ideas and beliefs. All the redeemed shall see and know clearly the joys of their Savior and Redeemer.

...*but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.* The white throne judgment is past. The wicked are no longer present. They now occupy the lake of fire. Only one class of people appear in this holy place, those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. Martyrs no longer wait or ask the Lord how long He shall delay His judgment against their murderers. There is only God and His children. Even though Paul mentions the Lord's righteous and fiery judgment against the wicked, what does he remind us to do? Fear that we might face such judgment? Fear that we shall not measure up and be banished to eternal fire? No! "...*rest with us.*" When you see the Lord in glory, fear and dread shall not make up any part of your reaction. You shall rest in the joy of knowing more about your Lord and Redeemer than you ever imagined while here. You shall realize yourself wholly and glorious enveloped in His warm and loving grace, peacefully and joyfully ready to praise Him with all the redeemed of all ages. What a day that will be!

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church
16434 Woodruff
Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.
Pastor