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...to know the love of Christ
which passeth knowledge
that ye might be filled with
all the fulness of God Eph 3:19

Esther's Courage And Its Consequences #2

The Search For A New Queen

In part one, we took a brief look at the times in which Esther lived, and talked about the divorce of Vashti, the Persian queen.

The first thing done in searching for a new queen was that a decree and commandment to find beautiful young women and to send them to the palace at Shushan went out to all the provinces. Ahaserus ruled over 127 of these provinces. Once in the palace, they were given over to the custody of Hege, the king's chamberlain. Note that Hege was called the "keeper of the women". He was in charge of the king's intended concubines. The practice of keeping concubines was part of the way of Persian life. However, think for a moment about the consequences. Firstly, once a woman was inducted into this house of concubines, she could not leave unless the king gave specific orders to allow this to happen. Secondly, she was separated from her own family, and might never be allowed to go back and stay with them again. Thirdly, she would have to abide by the rules of the "house" she was in, and listen to the orders given by Hege or whoever was put in charge.

This is the situation into which Esther was brought. Note that the name "Esther" may mean "*star*", but it also may mean "*hidden*"(*) to reflect the fact that no one (except Mordecai, and possibly, her guardians) knew that she was Mordecai's cousin (uncle's daughter: 2:7) and a Jew. The fact that this stayed hidden for a while probably means that her guardians were not Jews. No one ever questioned Esther about this, and as we find out later in the book, Haman hadn't a clue! Mordecai gave

her strict instructions not to reveal who she really was. So, she was there under false pretenses and at considerable risk to herself and anyone associated with her. As Jews were captives, she might even have been considered extremely presumptuous if she had been exposed at this stage of events.

Hege probably had a very large number of young women sent to him from all over the kingdom. However, he took an immediate liking to Esther. This speeded up the process a little. The impression we get from 2:9 is that he put her before other maidens, and even gave her preferential treatment in allotting Esther and her maidens the best part of the "house". He "speedily gave her her things for purification". It was very important that the things for purification be given to her as early as possible. Why? It took twelve months for a woman to go through the "purification" process and she would not even be allowed to go near the king unless this was done correctly. (See vs 2:12)

When a woman was considered "purified" and ready to go to the king, she was allowed to take with her whatever she "desired". This probably meant that she could, at her own judgment, decide what would benefit her to take along, or how to dress, etc. At this point, Esther, knowing that the king's chamberlain would have the experience, allowed him to make this decision (2:15). She also knew that he preferred her above all the women there and so trusted his judgment.

This was an extremely critical point in Esther's career. She was at the point where she could become queen or become a concubine in Ahaserus' palace

for the rest of her life. Each night a woman would be selected to go to Ahaserus. After spending a night with the king, she could be selected as queen or remanded to the custody of Shaashgaz, the chamberlain in charge of appointed concubines. It was possible that she would then remain there for the rest of her days without being allowed to leave or to marry. Look at 2:14: "**she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name**". Not a very inspiring fate! And what a risk for Esther to take. She must have been fearful in her heart, even if she didn't show it, and even given the faith she must have had that it would turn out as God wanted it to turn out.

Even after Esther had spent her night with the king, we do not know how long she had to wait to find out that she would be queen. It says that Esther, "**...obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins**". So, maybe she had to wait a while until he decided. But he did, and he "made her queen instead of Vashti" (2:17). The first part of God's plan in Esther was completed. Esther was now queen, but she was still not established. She needed time to prove to Ahaserus that not only was she beautiful, but that he could trust her. Until he could trust her and demonstrate that he did, she could not reveal her nationality.

L. Ayers

* *Editor's note!* The fact that no Devine name or title can be found in the book of Esther supports this idea. The name of Jehova and "I am" are *hidden* in acrostics in five locations. See App. #60 in the Companion Bible for further information.

Resurrection #17, A Reader's Enquiry

Christ	Church	Faithful (of Abraham's seed)	The Rest
1	2	3	4

A reader has written the following: "In your recent article -Resurrection No. 17- I find that Enoch and Noah will have no part in the "first" resurrection (indicated at point 3). Does this not at least on the surface seem to fly in the face of Hebrews 11 where we find that these two (vs 5, 7) as well as others were strangers and pilgrims, sought a better country, and that God hath prepared for them a city?"

The writer is referring to Hebrews 11 where Enoch and Noah are mentioned in a list of heroes of faith. But does this say that Enoch and Noah were "strangers and pilgrims"? Does it say that they "sought a better country"? And, does it say that God "has prepared a city" for them?

After telling how Abel, Enoch, and Noah proved their faith, each in his own particular sort of test, then Hebrews 11:8-16 tells of Abraham's test and that of his seed line. **"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."**

It was Abraham who left his home in the Chaldees in obedience to God's call to come out. It was Abraham and his seed that sojourned as strangers and pilgrims, living in tents, even though God had promised them the Land.

It was Abraham that looked for a city that God prepared. **"Therefore sprang there even of one (Abraham), and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, ...and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."**

It was Abraham and his seed that

confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. It was they who died while waiting to receive God's promises to them. It is Abraham, his seed, and those who became Abraham's seed by faith during the years of Acts, who will see the start of God's promises being fulfilled. Those of Abraham's seed who were judged faithful will be raised to see God's promises start to be realized. This is at point 3 above when the Christ/Messiah returns to earth.

"And truly, if they (Abraham's seed) had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned"

It was Abraham's seed who "came out" from the Chaldees and who could have returned.

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

We conclude that Hebrews 11:8 to the end of the chapter, speaks of Abraham and his seed. The things spoken of *them* are not said of Enoch or Noah. We do not find that Enoch or Noah were strangers and pilgrims, that they sought a better country, or that they looked for a city.

While the lives of Abel, Enoch, and Noah showed great faith, they did not have the promises made to Abraham and his seed. Therefore, we suggest that they will be raised and rewarded at the last resurrection, point 4 above. There, at the great white throne, works will be judged and their faith rewarded. They will enter Christ's kingdom for the ages ahead, when the heavens are clean and righteousness fills the earth and all who are in it. They will see the ultimate goal of God, the completion of His plan for redemption of earth, heaven and man; all of this possible because of the work of the Son.

"Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." (Eph 3:21)

J. Heltzinger

The Sure Foundation

In his last letter to Timothy, Paul encourages him to be an unashamed workman, to rightly divide the word and warns of those whose teaching "eats as doth a canker" and who have erred concerning the truth. He then gives him this assurance, **"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His..."** (2 Ti 2:19)

At a time when so many had left the truth and were being lead away, at a time of much opposition and when one could have been easily discouraged, Paul reminds Timothy of this blessed truth, **"The Lord knoweth them that are His."**

Moses was confronted with a similar situation. Korah and others rose up against Moses and Aaron and challenged their authority. It was not enough that they had been separated to do the ministry of the tabernacle. They desired to do the work of the priesthood. They were not merely opposing Moses, they were opposing God and His instructions to Moses concerning the ministry of the priesthood. In Numbers 16:5, we read these words of Moses, **"And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, 'Even tomorrow the LORD will shew who are His, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto Him: even him whom He hath chosen will He cause to come near unto Him.'" When we read the rest of the chapter, we see how serious it is to be chosen by God for a task and then to oppose His word. They were consumed! He was specific in laying out the law of worship and the serious nature of holiness contained in the building of the tabernacle, its vessels and the way that the various offerings were to be handled.**

It was just as serious when Paul wrote to Timothy. For many had put away "the faith" and had made it "shipwreck" (1 Ti 1:19). It appeared to be a lonely time for those few who stood for the truth. But they, as is true for His chosen body today, had this sure word, **"The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him."** (Nah 1:7)

B Bagby

Resurrection #18

Mortals Changed To Immortals: A Hope, Past And Future

Resurrection is the blessed hope of all those who receive eternal life that is through Jesus Christ by faith. Some will be raised to immortality at the appointed time and to the realm that God has appointed for them. However, some saints will not die, but while still alive, they will be changed instantly and will put on immortality. Some will enter God's Kingdom on earth, and some will enter His Kingdom that is above the heavens. In this paper we will consider some examples of times *in the past* when changes to immortality were possible but did not occur, and then consider changes to immortality *in the future* that are certain to occur.

Although no human has yet been raised or changed to immortality, there were times *in the past* when those changes were a possibility. While Jesus, the Christ, Israel's Messiah, was on earth, and after His resurrection and ascension, some might have escaped death. They could have been changed to enter God's Kingdom on earth that was promised to Israel. However, that Kingdom was conditional upon Israel receiving its King, and Scripture shows that though some individuals received the Christ, nationally they rejected Him, both while He was in flesh and after He ascended.

While He was on earth, Jesus spoke of some escaping death and putting on immortality. He said, **"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."** (Jn. 11:25,26) And, on another occasion He said, **"...there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."** (Mark. 9:1) However, those all died and did not see the Kingdom, because the nation did not accept their King and therefore the

Kingdom was not established.

After Christ's ascension, while saints still hoped for Christ's return to set up the kingdom on earth, the Apostle Paul revealed a secret from God. He told them in what state living believers might enter the coming kingdom. He said, **"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, (die) but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."** (1 Cor. 15:51-53)

Paul told saints that those who are alive at the Lord's return would not meet Him before those resurrected would meet Him. Rather, at the last trump, **"...we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."** (1 Thes. 4:17) In bodies changed and able to ascend, the living, together with those raised, would meet Christ in the air. They would accompany Him on His way to the Mount of Olives and the Kingdom. (Ac. 1:11,12)

We gather from Scripture and its inferences that there will be three times *in the future* when living believers may be changed to immortality. They are:

1. At the end of this present age when Christ appears in His kingdom above the heavens.
2. When Christ returns to earth to restore Israel's kingdom, subdue the nations, and reign for 1000 years.
3. At the end of the 1000 year kingdom, when God is all and in all.

Paul's last letter to Timothy speaks of the *first* of those future changes to immortality at the end of this present age. Knowing his death was eminent, he gave warnings and instructions to Timothy, who afterwards would assume leadership in the church which is Christ's body. Because perilous times

lay ahead, Paul admonished Timothy saying, **"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom."** (2Tim. 4:1)

Here it is revealed that the "quick", as well as the dead, will be present for judgment at Christ's appearing and kingdom. "Quick" is the translation of a Greek word for living. And, since this epistle concerns members of the body of Christ, then some members will be quick or alive and present for judgment at Christ's kingdom.

This kingdom is not the kingdom to come on earth (Mt. 6:10) but it is the kingdom that is far above all heavens, in "heavenly places." It is the kingdom of God's dear Son, where Christ is now seated and hidden. (Eph. 1:20; Col. 1:13) Paul told members of the Church, Christ's body, **"When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."** (Col. 3:4) They will appear with Him in that realm called "the Light" and "glory".

We understand that members of the body of Christ who have died, must be raised with spiritual bodies, fitted for the presence of God. But in what state will the living members appear there? The answer is found in Paul's letter to those at Philippi. He explained, **"For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body..."** (Phi. 3:20,21) He assured those living that their earthly bodies would be changed (transformed) and they would have bodies of glory like Christ's.

Therefore, in this *first* of those changes, it is evident that members of the body of Christ, who are alive at the time of His appearing above the heavens, must have bodies instantly changed. They must be fitted to join those resur-

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Resurrection # 18 ...cont'd.

rected for appearing there. Christ's body will appear in glory, whole and complete, as the Father planned. It will be, **"To the praise of the glory of His grace..."** (Eph.1:6)

The second time of change, at the beginning of the 1000 years, was foretold by Jesus to His disciples. He told them that after a great tribulation upon Israel, those believers still alive would see Him come in power and great glory. He added, **"And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."** (Mt.24:31)

The hope of being gathered, "at the sound of the trump," to enter Christ's kingdom on earth, continued to be that of believers until God set aside His purpose for Israel and sent the Christ to the nations. (1Thes.4:16,17; Ac.28:28) In the future, when God resumes His purpose for Israel, He will fulfill this promise and gather His elect for the kingdom on earth. Those alive at that time, and worthy of that kingdom, must be changed, for **"...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."** (1 Cor.15:50)

Among those who may be changed

to enter the kingdom when Christ returns are:

(a) The 144,000 witnesses out of the 12 tribes who will be preserved through the great tribulation. (Rev. 7:3-8; 14:1-5)

(b) Any of the great multitude who will believe during the tribulation and who are still alive at Christ's return. (Rev.7:9-14)

The third time that living believers may be changed to immortals is at the end of the millennial kingdom, after sin and death are eradicated. Any who have believed during that 1000 years, and who are still alive at its end, must be transformed. For the time will have come when all things are put under the feet of the Son, and when holiness will fill the earth. **"...then shall the Son also Himself be subject into Him That put all things under Him, that God may be all and in all"** (1 Cor. 15:28)

J. Heltzinger

Acts Bible Study Course

The Acts Study Course is now available in Booklet form and can be purchased for \$5.50 from the Arizona Book Outlet, 1156 E. Kings Ave., Phoenix, AZ, 85022

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William Frizzell

On November 8, 1999, Bill Frizzell fell asleep in the Lord. He had worked for many years for the Berean Tape Recording Ministry. For the past ten years he was its sole representative in the USA. Working out of his home in Tempe Arizona, Bill made innumerable copies of tapes and distributed them. We have been greatly helped by his faithful service. Our sympathy and prayers are for his wife, Del, and their children.

Daughters Joy and Linda have assumed Bill's work. The address for tapes now is, Berean Tape Recording Ministry
1319 West 9th ST
Tempe, AZ 85281 USA

Phoenix Spring Bible Conference

The Spring Bible Conference in Phoenix is scheduled for April 14th-16th, 2000. Meetings will be held at Glencroft Retirement Center, Glendale, AZ. Featured guest speaker is Dan Haley from Hilton, NY. Look for additional information in next issue.

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