

BIBLE EXPLORATIONS

Mar 2004

Volume 18, No.1

Bible Explorations Online:

email: info@bibleexplorations.org www.bibleexplorations.org

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

The Hopes Of God's People # 14

PARADISE

The Paradise that God prepared for man was lost, but it will be restored in the future. It will be a dwelling place for some of God's People who will rise from the grave. The question is, "When will it be restored, and who will dwell there?"

Isaiah spoke of the Land of Israel becoming *like* Paradise in the future, when the Lord comes to deliver Israel and reign over the nations. However, that kingdom is not Paradise, for sin and death will continue, and nations outside the Land will writhe in secret rebellion against the rule of Christ. We read that they will openly revolt after 1000 years and will be destroyed by fire from heaven. (Rev.20:9) It is then, at the end of Christ's millennial reign, that Satan is finally defeated, sin and death are eradicated, and the earth and its heaven are cleansed. Then the holy city, the New Jerusalem, descends out of heaven and the tabernacle (dwelling place) of God is with men.

When Paradise was lost God cursed the ground, but we read that, "**there shall be no more curse**" after the millennium. (Rev.22:3) Man had been barred from the tree of life when Adam sinned, but in the future earth there will be a pure river of life giving water, and man will have access to the tree of life. The Paradise that Adam knew will have been restored and Christ's post-millennial reign will have begun. In the ages that follow, Christ will reign in a Kingdom of perfect peace and righteousness and among ones that love and honor Him.

It may be new to some Christians that a post-millennial kingdom follows the millennium, and this is understandable. There is much written about what precedes Christ's return and the conditions during the millennium, but we find little written exclusively about what follows the millennium. In addition, since there are blessings for God's Land and His People, both during the 1000 years and also after that, it is difficult to sort out what is spoken exclusively regarding conditions in the post-millennial period. However, we can be certain that a post-millennial Kingdom will exist and be glorious beyond words because Scripture speaks of "ages to come" and of God dwelling with men in Paradise.

Turning now to those who will dwell with God in Paradise we ask, "Who are those whose hope is to be in Paradise? Who still sleeps in the grave at the end of the millennium awaiting their resurrection?" Not members of the Church which is Christ's Body, for they will have risen beforehand to be with Christ at His appearance above all heavens and before His return to earth. Not the Bride company, for they will have risen before to meet Christ when He descended to earth and to be with them during His 1000-year reign. Who then that worshipped the Lord still remains to rise?

One such group may be identified from Revelation 20 where we read of the "rest of the dead" who lived again after the millennial Kingdom. In the context of Revelation 20, the subjects are those of Israel, and, therefore, the "rest" would be those believers of Is-

rael who had not been raised for the millennial Kingdom. It would be those of Israel who worshipped God, but who were unjust, who were not overcomers, and were, therefore, unworthy of reward into the millennial Kingdom.

In addition, at the end of the 1000 years, there is a vast company of saints whose time of resurrection has not yet been mentioned in Scripture. Up to this point we read nothing about the resurrection of "Children" of God, that is of believers from Adam onward who were not part of the nation of Israel or members of the Church which is Christ's Body. Therefore, we deduce that they must be included in the rest of the dead who are raised at the end of the 1000 years when the earth is cleansed and the grave is no more.

Among those believers outside the nation of Israel and outside the Body of Christ, ones whose hope may be Paradise would be:

- 1) The malefactor to whom Christ promised a place in Paradise. (Lk. 23:43)
- 2) Naaman, the Syrian, who worshipped the God of Israel. (2 Kgs. 5:15)
- 3) The Queen of the South, who acknowledged the God of Israel and who will rise. (2 Chron.9:8; Lk.11:31)
- 4) Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, who said, "**Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all Whose works are truth, and His ways judgment.**" (Dan. 4:37)
- 5) The widow of Sarepta who was

...cont'd on backpage

The Good Confession # 2

When the Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to fight the good fight of *the* faith and to lay hold on eternal life, he charged him **“in the sight of God, Who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;”** (1Ti 6:12, 13). The good confession that Pilate witnessed speaks of the faithfulness, the witness and the testimony of the last hours of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth.

The word “witness” is the Greek word *“martureo”* from which we also get the English word “martyr”. In Revelation, this word is so translated: 2:13 speaks of the faithful “martyr” Antipas and Rev 17:6, the blood of the “martyrs” of Jesus. In Heb 12:1, we read **“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses...”**. The witnesses here are not spectators hovering overhead in the clouds watching our every move as some would have us believe. Rather, they are the faithful “martyrs” of chapter eleven, who gave their lives for their Lord. To give up one’s life does not always imply a physical death for a cause. It can also mean that one has chosen a life of service to Christ instead of being tied to the things of this world. In Rev 1:5, we read, **“...Jesus Christ, Who is the faithful witness (martyr), ...”**. Here, Christ is called the faithful martyr. He is the faithful martyr that stood before Pilate of Whom Paul cited as an example for Timothy.

The word “confession” is the Greek word *“homologia”*. The verb *“homologea”* is primarily used as confessing audibly as in Rom 10:9, **“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth...”** and Heb 13:15, **“the fruit of our lips giving thanks (confessing) to His name.”** It is interesting to note that it was not the words that the Lord spoke before Pilate that caught his attention, but rather the words He did not speak.

The account of Christ before Pontius Pilate is recorded in each of the gospels as follows: Mat 27:11-66, Mk 15:1-

47, Lu 23:1-56 and John 18:28-42. Pilate not only witnessed the good confession of Christ while in the judgment hall before the He made His way to Calvary, but he also witnessed His good confession on the cross and when he received word of the empty tomb.

A close look at these four testimonies will help us appreciate how the Father and the Son had complete control of the events in those last hours and how precisely the Scriptures were fulfilled. In awe, we can understand the words of Christ, **“Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.”** (John 10:17,18)

The only words that Matthew, Mark and Luke record spoken by Christ before Pilate are found in Mat 27:11, Mk 15:2 and Lu 23:3 **“...And Pilate asked Him, saying, ‘Art Thou the King of the Jews?’ And He answered him and said, ‘Thou sayest’”**. With this reply, the Lord confirmed his question. (The Companion Bible points out that this is a Hebraism and a strong affirmation.) The chief priests and elders continued to bring more accusations. And to those accusations we read, **“...He answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto Him, ‘Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee?’ And He answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.”** (Mat 27:12-14)

Pilate had never been confronted with a trial of this manner. Here was a man that he knew had been wrongly delivered because of envy. **“For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him.”** (Mat 27:18). He could find no fault in Him. The Lord could have easily opened His mouth and spoken in His own defense. He would have surely been released immediately by Pilate. Yet, He answered not a word. Had He

done so, the whole plan of salvation would have been thwarted then and there. The timing was critical. It was the Passover. The lamb without spot and blemish was to be offered for the sins of the people. Well said the prophet Isaiah, **“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 53:7)

Furthermore, we read in Luke 23:5-7, **“And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.”** The hidden wisdom of God is once again revealed. Had Herod not been at Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus would have been sent off to Galilee. This too would have delayed His death and spoiled the plan of salvation. But all things remained on schedule, and when the Lord was brought before Herod we read also, **“Then he (Herod) questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing.”** (Lu 23:9) Again the Lord’s silence reminds us of His faithfulness and that He had complete control of the situation.

His silence was part of the good confession witnessed by Pilate. It was this example that Paul called to Timothy’s attention, the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus in the last moments of His life. The details that were necessary for Him to fulfill His ministry and purpose for which He came. This is the testimony we are to recognize in our own lives and ministries, the faithfulness and power of Christ to help us to **“... walk worthy of the vocation (calling) wherewith ye are called.”** (Eph 4:1)

B. Bagby

“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” Matthew 11:11

I wonder if we have considered the magnitude of Jesus' commendation of John the Baptist. He said there was *none* greater than John. That includes all the faithful before John, such as Enoch, Abraham, Moses and David. Enoch is said to have walked with God. Abraham believed God and was willing to sacrifice his son. Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness to the Promised Land, and God said David was a man after His own heart. Yet the Lord said none was greater among men than John.

What qualified John to receive such a tribute from the Lord? What did he do to merit such praise from God our Savior? John lived in poverty by the world's standards. He dressed in plain rough clothing and ate simple things he found in nature. Did this neglecting of the flesh earn him such praise? He spoke to people who came out of the cities into the desert, away from the Temple and traditional worship. Many who heard him scorned him as a heretic and said he was religiously unclean. His career was short, lasting only about three and a half years. Does this sound like a “blessed” ministry?

John was imprisoned for speaking the truth against the ruler's wife. He was beheaded at the request of a dancer, and his corpse was buried without ceremony. Yet, the Lord said there was none greater among men than he.

What qualified John to gain so great honor from his Lord? We find a clue to the answer in the words Christ spoke to the multitudes that questioned Him concerning John and his peculiar look and ministry. Jesus said, **“But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A**

None Greater Among Men prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee.” (Mt. 11:8-10)

About 600 years earlier one of Israel's prophets had written that God would send His messenger to prepare the way of the Lord when He, their King, would come to restore their kingdom. We read of, **“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.'”** (Isa. 40:3-5) Jesus said this spoke of John, who was God's voice and messenger, chosen to prepare the way of Christ their King, in the same way messengers in that day prepared the way of any king who was to come to a city. John himself said, **“I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord', as said the prophet Esaias (Isaiah).”** (Jn. 1:23)

John called to the People of Israel to repent for their king had come and the kingdom God promised them was ready and at hand. John faithfully proclaimed that message to the Jews and baptized those who believed it and were identified with Jesus, the King. To the Jews who came out from Jerusalem he cried, **“Behold the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of Whom I said, After me cometh a Man Which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.”** (Jn. 1:29-31) **“Repent ye:**

for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Mt. 3:2)

What qualified John the Baptist for the honor the Lord has given him? We see that John was not successful as men count success, but he was faithful to the task and the message God gave him. John believed God had called him to be the forerunner of Christ and to proclaim the message He gave him. In spite of the seeming futility of his task, John continued, a faithful steward of the message he had received. He endured true to the end of his life, true to the message with which God entrusted him. This is the requirement of God for those who desire the approval and praise of the Lord. The Apostle Paul stated this plainly saying, **“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”** (1 Cor. 4:2)*

What general truth can we glean from the account of John the Baptist? Can we see that it is not the length of time we serve the Lord, not the splendor of our “pulpit”, not the number in our audience, or our approval in the eyes of other Christians that matters to our Lord. What He values is our faithfulness to the task He has called us, and our steadfast proclaiming of the message He has given us. There may be one or two alone, speaking or writing of the “mystery” as they have opportunity. Their pulpit may be in the home, school, or in the working world outside, but if they endure in their place and they are faithful to the message revealed to them, then they may, like John, receive the Lord's commendation..

J. Heltzinger

*For more on this subject we suggest the pamphlet, “Usefulness at the Expense of Faithfulness”, by CH Welch. Write for a free copy at,

“Bible Explorations”

PO Box 6606

Phoenix AZ 85068-6608

Hopes # 14 ...cont'd

obedient to the Lord. (1 Kgs. 17:9-15; Lk. 4:25,26)

6) The Syrophenician woman who acknowledged she had no claim to Israel's King, but who still worshipped Christ as Lord. (Mt. 15:25; Mr. 7:25-30)

7) The Roman centurion of great faith in Christ. (Mt. 8:5-10)

8) The Samaritan leper, an alien who "glorified God," after Jesus healed him. (Lk. 17:11-19)

9) Those saints from Adam to Abraham, those before the nation of Israel was created. (Job 19:23-27)

10) Those saints who are not members of the church which is Christ's body.

These are a sample of some whose hope, we conclude, is Paradise. Few are mentioned in Scripture because the majority of Scripture concerns those whom God called out and to whom He entrusted His Word. It concerns Israel and the Body of Christ. This does not mean that there is a small number outside those families, who came to know God, for the witness of Israel was spread throughout the nations and the witness of John's Gospel has also surely reached throughout the world. There is

a vast untold company of believers, Children of God, that only the Father knows. Not only does He love them, but they are often more pleasing to Him than those sons to whom He entrusted His Word. The Lord said of one, "**O woman, great is thy faith**" (Mt. 15:28). He marveled at a Roman centurion's faith and said, "... **I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.**" (Mt. 8:10) Christ found greater faith in a Roman "child" of God who had been without His Word than in the "sons" of God who were entrusted with His Word.

We wonder. What might the Father say today? Does He find greater faith in some of His "children" than in His "sons" who are members of the Church which is His Body? Do some of His "Children" trust Him more than those to whom He revealed the Mystery?

May we all, children and sons of God by adoption, continue to grow in faith and in the knowledge of Christ, giving thanks for our hopes, whether they be on the earth or above the heavens. May we all seek to be pleasing to Him.

J. Heltzinger

Bible Explorations is a joint effort by a group of believers. Articles submitted are not necessarily the view point of the group collectively. Free to anyone upon request.

Phoenix Spring Conference

The Annual Spring Bible Conference in Phoenix, AZ is soon approaching, Apr 2-4, 2004. All meetings will be held at the Glencroft Retirement Center, 8711 N 67th Ave., Glendale, AZ, Basement of Condos. Speakers include: Michael Mecikalski, Boscobel, WI; Ronnie McCurry, West Union, SC; Jim McWilliams, Prescott, AZ and Barnabas Bagby, Phoenix, AZ.

Speaker's Schedule

Friday, April 2:

7:00 pm - Barnabas Bagby

8:00 pm - Ronnie McCurry

Saturday, April 3:

9:30 am - Michael Mecikalski

10:30 am - Michael Mecikalski

11:45 am - *Lunch break*

1:00 pm - Jim McWilliams

2:00 pm - Jim McWilliams

Sunday, April 4:

9:30 am - Michael Mecikalski

10:30 am - Michael Mecikalski

3-2004

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 48
SUN CITY, AZ

BIBLE EXPLORATIONS
P.O. BOX 26608
Phoenix, AZ 85068-6608