

Introduction

It can be established through a faithful examination of passages of Scriptures that God always brings the attention of His people to fundamental issues of the faith, whenever He wants to recover them from a period of spiritual declension.

The book of Malachi and the gospel according to John also highlight the fact that at the close of every age, God emphasizes the importance of covenant goals set out at the beginning. The writings of the prophet Malachi and those of Apostle John close the Old and New Testament Scriptures respectively. These observations carry more than an ordinary signification and should be noted carefully.

The word of the LORD came to us some years ago “...Go back to your archives”. It continued, “*I will breathe upon those things I taught you and by them quicken you. I will cause your foundation to be strengthened; I will heal that which is deficient that you may be entirely whole, able to press onward in your journey to fullness of life*”.

The LORD was referring to the six foundational doctrines of Christ and the living streams of gospel truth flowing therefrom. These doctrines and their life applications to our daily walk with CHRIST are, by the HOLY SPIRIT, here portrayed as the church’s vehicle of travel to the fullness of life in GOD. Not long after this, the LORD commanded us saying “*prepare my people to the battle; prepare them for the days ahead*”.

Four Gospel Themes

Now, let it be remembered that truth, in all its constituent parts, is never denominated. What instructions regarding ministry to the body of CHRIST any servant of His has received, have also by God been communicated to several hundreds of His servants. Every servant of truth will always draw inspiration from the word that God gives indicating what He is doing at any particular time.

In 2007, the church has come near enough to the close of this age and may soon enter the most eventful period of human history. It is unwise for any not to give serious attention to issues bound up with finding rest (inclusive of physical preservation from hurt; moral and spiritual victory) in the coming day of intense trouble that will without doubt engulf the entire world. We commend this book to you in this regard.

From a certain standpoint, the theme of *Justification*, a life-giving stream flowing from the first two doctrines listed in Hebrews 6:1, may be seen as the most vital subject respecting our Christian walk. It imparts confidence and strength just as much as it releases into us moral and spiritual stability.

Yet, from another perspective, the doctrines and practice of *consecration* are the key issues when the offers of the kingdom of heaven and its demands are properly understood. Purpose and lifestyle are proven to be united in the pursuit of honours in the kingdom of grace. Consecration derives from the import of the other four doctrines (Hebrews 6:2).

Again, with equal propriety, one may identify the knowledge of the content of the High Calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS, as being most needed in this hour. Such knowledge inspires godly zeal; provides unabating spiritual enthusiasm; turns the duty of love of consecration to devotions of worship and grateful service, and has proven to deliver from all forms of distractions.

Thus, the themes of *Justification*, *Consecration*, and the *High Calling of God* are discussed in brief in this book.

Spiritual environments certainly exist of the Lord's making in which are to be found persons living in the good of these gospel realities. The Lord will lead His own to "where He makes His flock to rest at noon" (Songs of Solomon 1:7). There He empowers His ministries with respect to the work of making ready a people preparing themselves for the return of our Heavenly Bridegroom.

In this connection, being under the sounding forth of the gospel trumpet directing our preparations and giving us the meat due for the present hour is very beneficial.

"Aspects of the Last Trumpet", the chapter with which the book closes, read and considered together with the three chapters preceding it, will assist the reader to possess a working understanding of what overcoming grace entails and enjoins.

May the great GOD of the heavens, the SHEPHERD of the sheep, our glorious KING exceedingly prosper this book to its readers. Join us in saying a loud AMEN.

Justification

Leading Texts: Romans 3:24; 4:25; 5:1; 5:18

*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus **Romans 3:24***

*Who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification **Romans 4:25***

*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ **Romans 5:1***

*Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men unto condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. **Romans 5:18***

Introduction

From a certain standpoint, justification may be seen as the most beneficial subject in the work of redemption that the Lord Jesus Christ is accomplishing.

The dynamics of a believer's walk with God is rooted in the experience of justification and the blessings that flow therefrom. It is a foundational teaching included in the principles of the doctrine of Christ. It properly belongs to the spheres of the twin doctrines of *Repentance from dead works and faith towards God, doctrinally*. However, *experientially*, as we shall see, justification is facilitated by the Indwelling Spirit of the Glorified Christ and the light streaming from the four other doctrines listed in Hebrews 6:2.

What may be rightly inferred from the foregoing is that justification is a living experience that deepens with growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

When we consider the truth that the right to the God kind of life (John 1:12, 13; 3:16), the rights to life blessings (Romans 1:16, 17) and the qualifying grounds for throne rulership in the coming age (Romans 8:30; John 17:22, 23; I Corinthians 6:11) are embedded in justification, it is to be appreciated why it is crucial to have a thorough working understanding of this biblical subject.

Four Gospel Themes

THE NECESSITY FOR JUSTIFICATION

Genesis, the book of the beginnings, makes us know that Adam and Eve, our first parents, were created perfect. Perfection is implied in their being described as very good (Genesis 1:31; Psalm 8:4-5). Adam is called the son of God in Luke 3:38. Being of the earth, earthy, of flesh and blood and not a spirit being, we know his sonship was in the human plane. (Angels, who are spirit beings, are also called sons of God. See Job 38:7, for example).

In Genesis 1:26a GOD said “*let us make man in our image, after our likeness...*” “*Image*” is for representation, but “*likeness*” is for manifestation. Adam, as an image of God in his created estate (verse 27), was from the beginning possessed of a moral beauty that attracted to him divine favours. He stood in no need of justification. Just like Jesus. Neither in life nor in service considerations did Jesus Christ ever stand in need of justification all through the days of his flesh. He was without sin, perfect in all his ways. Justification is needed by an imperfect person to be able to merit acceptance with GOD.

Jesus, the second man (I Corinthians 15: 47) kept His covenant with God. But not so the first man, Adam. Adam failed to maintain integrity before God. He did not keep His covenant with God (I Timothy 2:13-14; Hosea 6:7; Romans 5:12-19). It was only after Adam’s fall and the revelation of the love and wisdom of God to save his posterity (Genesis 3:15) did the necessity for justification come to the fore.

Adam's fall ruined him and brought sin and death to his posterity (Genesis 3:16-19; Romans 5:12). Adam in his fall became spiritually unclothed, and lost the moral estate that opened him to communion with God in the ease and "*near*" environment of the Garden of Eden. He became naked. So was his wife. The serpent henceforth could sup on him, waste him (John 10:10; Genesis 3:14; 3:19).

Adam made desperate efforts to reposition himself. His new found wisdom that he earned through disobedience to God taught him to make clothing for himself out of leaves! Dead works! He could not now stand looking towards the approach of God's presence. His feeble feet ran away from the presence of the omnipresent God, hiding away in fear of justice. What a tragedy!

If Adam was to be admitted to God's presence, he must be lifted up in some way from his destitute condition. The promise of Genesis 3:15 (received by all of God's discerning people as the gospel in a nutshell) meant that God will relate to Adam. God's move to qualify Adam in some way to have access to Him illustrates the necessity for justification in the offer of redemption to lost humanity.

Genesis 3:21 sets forth what God did to admit Adam into some form of fellowship. Almost all the elements seen in the New Testament teaching on the subject of justification are present, at least implicitly, in that verse. *God takes the initiative; Some animal of adequate stature is slain; blood is shed; Coat of skin drawn from the sacrifice are divinely crafted; and finally, God presents the garments to Adam and Eve and upon their*

Four Gospel Themes

acceptance of these, He clothed them. Five elements in all.

Thereafter, He sends them, nay, drove them out of the Garden of Eden to “*labour*” and become “*heavy laden*”, needing rest. However, they may worship God from “*afar*”, or perish in their lost condition. To complete the redemption picture, the ministry of the flaming sword is introduced. This has the capacity to “*burn*” off fleshly ways and direct the obedient, justified ones to the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Garden of Eden.

To sum up what we have seen in the foregoing, here are a few facts that should be properly understood.

- (a) Justification is an indispensable requirement for the imperfect if he must receive any form of attention from God.
- (b) Justification is graciously provided by God of His own free will; unconditionally offered to sin - blighted humanity. However, the enjoyment of it is conditioned upon the acceptance of the offer. This acceptance is an act of faith: faith in God and His word.
- (c) With justification comes the return of the full favours of God. God offers these unconditionally. However, the practical enjoyment of God’s favours and blessings are conditioned upon the obedience of faith. This includes embracing the demands of the kingdom of grace. In the Word received is enlightenment gained and strength found to journey on to fullness of life in Him. This latter

element describes the object end of the purpose of justification.

The Old Testament presents the testimony of several persons who earned a good report in the sight of God (Hebrews 11:2) both by their acceptance of the offer of justification and by a diligent use of the means of moral transformation attached to this. From the seed of Adam came such notable just men as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Job, Daniel, to mention but a few. They reckoned on the blessing of Justification and made proper use of their access to God.

Of Abraham, it is clearly stated that he believed God's word addressed to him concerning the promised seed that should bruise the head of the serpent and bless all humanity (Genesis 3:15; 12:3; 15:6). In the third bible reference, Genesis 15:6, we are told that Abraham's faith *was counted to him for righteousness*.

There are much more lessons to draw from Abraham in coming to a fuller understanding of the instrumentality of justification in our walk with God. We will consider some of these later in this write-up.

THE BASIS OF JUSTIFICATION

The New Testament scriptures give us a clear picture of the basis on which justification is made available. To allow a bit of a recap in the story of the fall of man; man was condemned to death in Adam's fall. He relinquished all rights and favours bestowed on him by God and there was no hope of recovery therefrom. It

Four Gospel Themes

was the fruit of a willing disobedience to God (I Timothy 2:13-14).

Then comes the display of the excellent attributes of the Lord God Almighty: Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power. He executes His promised judgment. But thereafter He sets out to work for the redemption of humanity.

God's justice roundly condemned Adam and his posterity to death and dying conditions while physically alive. His wisdom however knew the fall will happen and reasoned out a way to accommodate that and still realize the ultimate purpose for creation. His love looked on fallen humanity and consulted with the power of the Almighty to embark on salvaging the situation. Divine wisdom and justice set up the conditions which must be satisfied and provided resources to meet this challenge.

In the man Christ Jesus, the four attributes acting individually and collectively dealt decisively with the issue of sin and brought reconciliation through atonement. *Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God* (I Corinthians 1:24).

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

God declared *“Jesus to be the son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1:4; Matthew 3:16. 17; I Peter 1:19).

“For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things on bringing many sons to glory,

to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10).

These sufferings were unto death; the sinless One tasting death for every man, the just for the unjust, that he might both free us from death and bring us to God (Hebrews 2: 9, 14-15; I Peter 3:18). These several aspects of the redemption procured for man are crucial to securing justification and leading man to full enjoyment of it. The scriptures cited help us to know that God’s righteousness is upheld in the character of the redemption He has provided, on which also justification is mounted.

Let us now examine the word environment of the subject of justification. We will discuss the relevant terms one after the other.

EXPLANATION OF RELEVANT TERMS

1. Justification

In Biblical terms, Justification has to do with assigning to *fallen* man a *standing* with God. Enmity is destroyed and a friendly spiritual position assumed. The recipient is admitted into divine fellowship and purpose. Even though at the outstart the justified believer is still imperfect, the merits of the Justifier are credited to him. In this way both justice and wisdom are not compromised.

Justice is not compromised for forgiveness is granted from the penalty of sin on the ground that another, Jesus Christ, went through death and has become man’s RANSOM and RANSOMER. Sin was rightly

Four Gospel Themes

visited with the full wrath of God. But Jesus, being not deserving of the penalty, since He proved sinless, passes His righteousness to the justified.

Wisdom is not compromised, for though justification spiritually elevates an imperfect man rightly considered unfit for favours and divine service, Jesus Christ the RANSOMER is alive to administer the benefits of the RANSOM, and to lead the justified in the service of God (I Peter 2:4, 5). The risen Lord is entrusted with the responsibility of bringing about both moral and spiritual transformations that reflect in the life and service of the recipient of the blessing of justification.

2. The Act of Justification

The beginning of justification is an act of definite event in which God accepts into pardon and fellowship, an individual who exercises saving faith in Jesus Christ as His RANSOMER.

From the perspective of the justified, faith is the critical element being rewarded with justification. But from God's end, the worthy LAMB sacrificed in man's interest roots out the enmity. Consequently, acceptance with God is in the RANSOMER, Jesus Christ. This credits the ransomed with the forgiveness of sin and the right to now enjoy the favours of God.

3. The process of Justification

The elevated spiritual position into which justified man is admitted is the estate of Jesus Christ, who is

morally, mentally and bodily perfect. Our justification makes us *the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus* (II Corinthians 5:21). We are received by GOD just the same way as our Saviour.

The justified man, being imperfect, enjoys this exalted estate only through the reckoning to him of the full merits of Jesus atoning sacrifice. This reckoning is on the basis of saving faith in the blood of the ransom and in the RANSOMER. Moral considerations come in later but only as a product of the work of the indwelling Christ in the justified.

Reckoned Justification has a grand design to it. On it rests the divine arrangement that makes possible to bring the justified man to the fullness of life through the High Priestly ministry of Jesus Christ.

When man is perfected, his life guarantees unlimited enjoyment of the goodness of God. But until then, man is reckoned (regarded) by God as perfect because of JESUS. This is what is meant by saying man's justification is a reckoned one, that is, a justification by grace through faith. By contrast, justification of life is the term employed for persons who have entered into full oneness with God in all things, not lacking in any moral or spiritual qualities.

4. Righteousness and Justification contrasted

A careful study of the epistles reveal a close connection between righteousness and justification being two distinct estates the kingdom of grace grants to a believer in Jesus Christ.

Four Gospel Themes

The two terms tend to be used interchangeably. The book of Romans records about 38 occurrences of either one or the other of righteousness and justification. Yet, the Greek words translating into these terms, although showing them to be of the same order, nevertheless, point to some differences.

Dikaiosis, the Greek word for justification lays stress on the act which establishes an individual as a just person without reference to his moral character. HE is allowed access to God; accepted of Him in spite of his imperfections. The essence of justice is not here in view. The beneficiary has faults (guiltiness) but is discharged and acquitted in the court of the Almighty God. This qualifies him to enjoy the benefits of divine favours and blessing.

Dikaiosune, the Greek word translated righteousness on the other hand, emphasizes conformity with the demands of justice, a satisfaction of the moral requirements of God. The said requirements, which when satisfied leads to the conferment of ***Dikaiosis***, (righteousness) on the individual, is in the Greek called ***Dike***. ***Dike*** is the full measure of God's righteousness. As a moral standard, it is what alone satisfies God and wins His approval. Thus, we see clearly that justification is founded on righteousness.

The Word made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ submitted fully to the claims of ***Dike*** and perfectly fulfilled them in all respects. Jesus, called to be the High Priest of God, by the power of his incorruptible, indissoluble (endless) life is committed to working

this same righteousness in those who through faith receive Him as Saviour and Lord. He is able to save unto the uttermost those who come to God through Him (Hebrews 7:25).

The believer is now the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (a gift of grace). Understanding divine purpose, he submits himself to receiving those moral transformations that make ***Dike*** his actual state of being (perfected in life, righteous through and through). At the commencement of justification righteousness is conferred. But the goal of justification is the attainment of full moral excellence in the process of time.

Justification and righteousness are thus complementary. In justification, one is seen as standing right with God all the time. In the righteousness of God given through faith, a power is released into a man's life that is continually changing him until he is actually morally perfect (Romans 1:16, 17).

Justification is *judicial rightness*. Righteousness is a cleansed condition that is brought into *moral rightness* in the process of time. The first secures the heart against all the fears accusing conscience breeds. The second realized, vindicates the wisdom of God in receiving and treating the justified as though he has *never sinned*.

5. The privileges of Justification

The benefits which the justified believer is privileged to enjoy on account of his upgrade (standing) are

Four Gospel Themes

numerous. The restoration to him of all that Adam lost through the fall is promised and offered at the point of justification: the blessing of well being in body, soul and spirit along with undisturbed welfare and of satisfying life circumstances.

The promise and offer of this restoration guarantees that anyone believing and receiving the blessing will enjoy life free from the diverse effects of the fall. Romans 1:16, 17 read and considered in the light of Romans 5:17 set forth the condition attached to the enjoyment of these blessings.

Romans 1:16, 17

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.

Romans 5:17

¹⁷For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

The one condition is faith exercised in the medium of thorough enlightenment of the mind coupled with heart engagement to the glorious truths of Christ's redemption work. Faith is a grateful response to the offer of God's love and reveals itself in corresponding action.

Christ's death and resurrection has brought to man the blessings of deliverance from sin, healing and cure for the mind and body, freedom from satanic control, escape from the yoke of poverty and the tyranny of death. These all may be enjoyed now and always.

He who through faith receives justification will by the same faith enjoy all of those blessed experiences. All by faith; from faith to faith. Once justified, Edenic pleasures are ours from the start. The journey is begun, the throne is in view; goodness and mercy leads the way. We walk in this glorious way by faith, ever looking unto Jesus for continuous replenishment. What a privilege! Kingdom honours and rewards are set before the justified as worthy of earnest pursuits.

6. The Goal of justification

When an individual accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, he receives forgiveness of sins and comes to peace with God. Through faith in the blood of the ransom, he finds access onto the presence of God for fellowship. He is treated as though he has never sinned. We have already identified this grace as what the bible calls justification.

This standing granted the individual has an object end, a divine goal. The recipient of this favour in the course of time is introduced to the central goal which may be simply defined as attaining to fully developed holiness of life through moral transformation.

Four Gospel Themes

Included in the goal set for the justified believer is the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But this is not quite understood, nor fully appreciated by the great many of the Lord's people. It is therefore something we must lay to heart and make the subject of an earnest longing.

The human nature is more prone to the issues associated with the diverse woes that befell mankind through the fall of Adam. Man is more concerned about how to get free from this predicament. Justification benefits address this challenge. Since Adam's fall led to his being driven from God's presence and denied favours and blessings, through justification the enmity resulting therefrom is terminated. What is lost is restored and the power to enter onto the experience is implanted at the point of salvation.

The Holy Spirit indwelling the justified believer helps him through faith to enjoy the restored right to life's blessing. This much is the earnest of the believer's inheritance. Good health, prosperity of soul, successful living, peace of mind and home are available to faith now!

The ministry of the indwelling Spirit of the glorified Christ is not however limited to this. The further work of the Holy Spirit to cause the believer to understand that the full inheritance of being crowned with divinity and of associating with Christ as a ruler in the Kingdom of Heaven is also available to the justified in Christ.

In the experience of the church since the day of Pentecost and witnessed to by the scriptures, the greater many of the believers do not make the prize of the High calling of God the matter of total heart pursuit. What this means is that not so many have risen who are motivated by the full import of justification. Rather, the hearts of many believers seem to be in a long battle to get past the hold of sin consciousness.

When this first hurdle is crossed, there is ease in partaking of the blessings of life, the restored favours that were lost. Next, the heart must be detached from the trap of living only for the now. The mind and will must be engaged in seeking the full inheritance that justification qualifies one for.

While the moral transformation taking place in the justified believer may be seen figuratively as a journey to perfection, it is not to be assumed that the experience of justification is static. The joy and inward peace accompanying justification grow with the progress being made in becoming more like Jesus.

It is true that from the standpoint of God, the standing of justification cannot be improved upon. However, from the human perspective, the degree of yieldedness of the believer to God's ultimate purpose reflects the extent to which justification has taken a hold of his being.

We should hold these two sides of the same matter in a healthy balance. Our constant acceptance with God

Four Gospel Themes

on the ground of justification is one part. The other is the necessity to evidence in our lives, as proof before men, that saving grace is full of power to adorn a justified believer with moral beauty.

In summing up, let us take note of the following. Rightly understood, the journey to perfection requires reckoned justification at every point of time. Justification is forfeited if saving faith is abandoned. Since the ultimate goal is life, Christ's life formed and fully crystallized, justification is a process-driven experience, which grows and grows under the right conditions.

Though moral transformation continues all through the process, until man is fully perfected, he is only acceptable in the sight of God on the basis of the faith-reckoned justification.

7. Nominal Justification; Vitalized Justification

In harmony with what is stated above, it is important to properly appreciate the truth that the journey to that which the justified man is enlisted for is conditioned upon his faith, obedience and loyalty to the RANSOMER.

We all realize that these conditions are met in differing and widely varied degrees by the justified class. These important virtues themselves spring from hearts given to appreciative responses to Christ (See Ephesians 2:8-10). The tenor of New Testament teaching on this subject warrants us to identify two categories of the justified class, namely, Nominal justification and Vitalized (or Realized) justification.

When justified man walks in sanctification, he progressively receives a sealing of his heart, mind, and will unto life and against falling. As soon as the sealing process is handsomely underway, what is evidenced in an individual is vitalized (or realized) justification. In another respect, pointing to virtually the same situation, the apostle Paul refers to this as the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14).

When a man is fully sealed, it is that the justification process, in as far as man is concerned, is completed. One who has attained to this is guaranteed a ruling function in the age to come; He will sit as it were with Christ in His Throne. This is the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.

Nominal justification is the situation with an individual whose walk with God falls short of what is noted for vitalized justification. In practical terms, it is sobering to note that an individual may be born again, Spirit-filled; a servant of God and yet has not gone beyond nominal justification.

For the nominally justified who only gives attention to natural goals, there is a measure of loss. If saving faith is maintained all through life, the preciousness of that faith guarantees such an individual a place in the kingdom that shall be revealed. He will with joy serve the king of kings too, but certainly will not share in the ruling functions. The needed graces and training required for ruling functions are acquired in this age and opened fully to those who make a

Four Gospel Themes

serious business out of following the RANSOMER-LAMB *withersoever He goeth* (Revelation 14:4).

HOW JUSTIFICATION IS SECURED, OBTAINED AND MAINTAINED

There are five vital components, which together constitute the ground on which justification is divinely secured, humanly obtained and maintained, God's grace helping along. The role each component plays is worthy of careful and thorough examination. A working understanding of them is crucial to living a purposeful, overcoming life.

Good notice should be taken of the fifth component, namely, *Justification by works*. This is because it is the growing edge in the experience of justification. True friendship with God develops rapidly when works derived from faith and are in harmony with the Lord's current redemptive interests occupy the believer.

1. Justification is by Grace

God is the source. His love and mercy acting in harmony with His justice conceived the design. His Wisdom laid out the plan even before man was created. His foreknowledge had seen the fall of man ahead of the event. His Wisdom, power love and justice working together in concert, set out to accomplish the great design to lift up again fallen humanity.

Yes, we are justified **FREELY** by His grace; by His grace alone. In fact, the first three of the five components forming the basis of justification are

exclusively of God's making. The two, which involve man's response, are also by divine enabling. This we shall see to be the case.

2. Justification is by the Blood of Christ

God's justice, full of wisdom, love and power, assigned to Adam this covenant arrangement under which he was to enjoy divine favour and fellowship. Accordingly, justice had to be satisfied in man's reclamation.

Romans 5:9 and 3:24 convey the truth that justification was secured by the blood of Jesus Christ, whose death on the cross of Calvary was both vicarious and substitutory. Justification is by the blood of Christ whose atoning merits destroyed the enmity between God and ransomed man (Romans 5:9; Ephesians 2:16).

3. Resurrection of Christ for our Justification

The Living, Resurrected Jesus Christ our Lord, is the One ordained to bring us into justification and administer the benefits thereof fully until perfection is attained. (Romans 4:24, 25). He is alive to bring us to life and to return us in our perfected estate to the eternal joy and satisfaction of our heavenly father.

His death took away the offences. That alone will only have secured us reckoned justification. Man would have remained imperfect, just forgiven and cared for. But now, Jesus Christ is RISEN and saves us by His life (Romans 5:10). He will save us to the

Four Gospel Themes

uttermost (Hebrews 7:25). When we are perfected, justification would no longer be needed.

Glory be to God on high! Christ has triumphed over sin and death and for us opened the door to immortality and life.

4. Justification is through Faith

Faith is a creation of God revealed in the medium of the Word of God. It is the instrumental agency through which man lays hold on the blessings of the gospel.

By its' very nature, the witness of the Word of God runs contrary to the mentality of the natural man. In a world that scorns the testimony of Christ and is blighted by sin and wickedness, faith is a very precious possession (I Peter 1:7). God puts a high premium on it. It is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that man comes to peace with God and enjoys justification.

But justification itself is the foundation for all other experiences marked out for the follower of Christ. Thus, faith is the key to experiencing all the riches of redemption. From faith to faith leads the way from glory to glory.

5. Justification by Works (Romans 2:23-25)

Faith is spiritual understanding. Faith understands that in the kingdom of grace, works are required to reveal trust in and obedience to the Saviour. But the works must derive from a clear understanding of

what God requires and is involved in doing at any given season.

Faith with works is an aliveness to God's plan and purposes and justifies a soul (James 2:17). Rahab is cited in James 2:25 as justified by her works which at the time consisted in hiding the spies because she believed their testimony and was ready to risk her all.

Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness which strengthened his friendship with God. But Abraham's trust in his friend was manifested as uncommon when he had offered up his son Isaac upon the altar. This unique work deriving from Abraham's faith in God justified him (James 2:21). The works fulfilled the goal in God's mind when He rewarded Abraham's faith in Him with friendship and right moral standing. Genesis 15:6 was realized in Genesis 22:1-12; Note particularly, verse 12.

What began as a call in Genesis 12 developed into justification by faith in Genesis 15:6. This justification was confirmed to Abraham's heart, mind and will in Genesis 15:8-18. This emboldened Abraham's walk with God. What might appear to be a charge unto sanctification in Genesis 17 was a further strengthening of the promise that God had made to him earlier on.

The call and the justification soon grew into full blown guarantee. By an oath, God pledged Himself and His all to Abraham and His seed. This 40 year - long history (from Genesis 12 to Genesis 22) is a type

Four Gospel Themes

of our justification unto life in the gospel age. It illustrates the truth of justification being a process but with a very definite point of entry.

The church world is a theatre of divers confusing and conflicting spiritual interests. This is why working along with God in what He is doing at any given season must be seen as evidencing being under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. There is today a whole lot of deviation from God's purpose, even among what is generally referred to as Pentecostal assemblies.

There is, on the one hand, the craze for the building of human empires in which Christ is named but are actually man-ruled. In essence, these are rival kingdoms whose pursuits are at variance with and are antagonistic to the kingdom of Christ.

In symbolic language, these rival kingdoms appear more like leprous houses with deep red patches (Leviticus 14:37). Structurally, they are becoming the exact images of dead Orthodox Church institutions.

This situation has thrown up a new dispensation for these spiritually dead churches. Now animated by the daughters of their harlotry, the ancient institutions just referred to (that is the Orthodox Church institutions) are calling them (the Pentecostal assemblies) to ecumenical fusion. They will, of course, have their way with only a little difficulty coming from their daughters.

Then, there are some others who set up a mission for themselves and labour, sometimes tirelessly, at what amounts to truncating the purpose of God in Christ Jesus. These are often characterized by stunted spiritual growth across their rank and file; shortened ministry goals and the importation of human ideas and methods into the labours for the kingdom of Christ. They confuse numerical growth with divine approval. The end seems to justify the means.

For many denominational kingdoms, the course charted by the apostles of the Lamb is unwittingly set aside. In their place, the preferences of the leading lights (overseers and trustees) are embraced by the congregations. Human rules and bylaws are substituted for the principles of God's Word and dependence on the Holy Spirit. Looking more and more like spiritual NGOs, their operational laws are mere adaptations of what obtains in the secular world. In these circumstances, the ministry of the Word is at best shallow and void of sanctifying power. Babel of voices you would say, when you consider how conflicting their messages are.

All these result from unfaithfulness, moral carelessness and lack of true submission to the captain of our Salvation. Such errors throw the door open to the adversary of our souls.

In the midst of this falling away are to be found some who refuse to party with unfaithfulness. God has not left us without a witness. He is at work in the general house of professed believers. This is attested to by the emerging new order of things through which God

Four Gospel Themes

is showing “*the house to the house*” (Ezekiel 43:10). This little book in your hand is a witness in that direction. Stay your heart upon the Lord and hear His voice bid you come to Him. Arm yourself with the resolve to follow the leading of the Lord despite human opposition.

The present day ministry of Jesus Christ towards His church in raising up and preparing a bridal class from among the broad spectrum of professed believers provide an opportunity for justifying works. All who align with what He is doing in this last hour will surely be drawn into more and more unfolding of Himself. This will facilitate the experience of vitalized justification.

The treasure house of God’s redemptive truth is opened to the use of those who eagerly long for the government of the Holy Spirit over them. Glory to God in the Highest who alone is worthy of all praise and adoration.

Four Gospel Themes

Consecration

Leading Texts: *Matthew 16:24-27; Luke 9:23-26; Matthew 7:13, 14; Philippians 3:7-16; I Peter 2:20-33; Isaiah 50:5*

Introduction

There is a prize associated with the Christian race or calling (I Corinthians 9:24). Paul calls this *the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 3:14). There is also *a mark that wins the prize*. This mark, viewed from the human perspective, answers to a life of consecration.

The concept and demands of consecration are not fully appreciated or embraced because the glories opened to one through it are assumed to be attainable in any other way. Clarity on these issues is of paramount importance and we beseech God earnestly to help us fully see and set them forth in as simple a manner as possible.

BASIC MEANING OF CONSECRATION

Consecration comes from the root word which means “*to be full*”, “*to have one’s hands full*” etc. The word also means “*to be set apart for a holy use*” (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance 4390, 4394, 5144, 5145).

Thus in biblical terms, consecration is to so “fill the hands” of the justified believer in Christ Jesus with the duties of love and service unto God as not to be able to excuse any of them for the pursuit of any personal interests not divinely allowed for in the Word of God.

Furthermore, in “complete consecration”, such as is befitting of the aspirations for the promised honours of the kingdom, love and service to God must be chosen and submitted to, whenever legitimate interests conflict

Four Gospel Themes

in any degree with these. That is, when what we are divinely allowed to pursue; of personal or family or national interests at any given point, conflict with the demands of the kingdom, preferences must be given to God's interests over and above ours. Under the Old Testament, those called to the priesthood were to so have their hands filled with the demands of the temple worship that they could not excuse themselves for any other thing.

The words of Jesus Christ in two separate incidents (Luke 14:25-35; Matthew 24:24-27) capture the essence of the demand of consecration. We reproduce the first below for our mutual profit.

Luke 14:25-35

²⁵And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, ²⁶If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? ²⁹Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, ³⁰Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. ³¹Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. ³³So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he

hath, he cannot be my disciple. ³⁴Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? ³⁵It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears, to hear let him ear.

It is important to say that God plants the love for the nuclei family and the commitment to their care in the hearts of every true child of God. This must be properly understood. It amounts to a denial of the faith to abandon our duty to loved ones. However, supreme love for God will make all other love secondary. The more faithful a man is to his family, the easier it is for the test of true loyalty to Christ to be administered and superior love for God above all else acknowledge and rewarded. No one ultimately loses what he gives up in the interest of God.

UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF CONSECRATION

Think through the following truth statements about our faith that have direct bearing on our subject:

- Our spiritual rebirth, anchored on Christ's death and resurrection confers on us the full status with God that Adam had before the fall. In particular, our justification by faith takes us into the Garden of Eden, with all of the privileges of fellowship with God and the enjoyment of all of His favours.
- But the call of consecration implies there is a journey beyond Eden. Were Eden to be the end of all the blessings of salvation, consecration would not be needed. Our highest pleasures and happiest estate in

Four Gospel Themes

this mundane world would be the only issues God's purpose would concern itself with. And as long as we do not live in sin, but submit to such moral transformations that leads to perfect humanity, these blessings will always be guaranteed.

- However, there is a further call in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the upward call to realms exceedingly above Adam's estate before the fall, even far above the spheres of the highest ranks of angels. It is this additional call that necessitates the demands of consecration. In other words, the call to a life of consecration is bound up with the High calling of God in Christ Jesus.
- The High calling of God implies that the called in Christ would experience a change of nature, from humanity to divinity. *...As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly* (I Corinthians 15:47-50).
- In consecration, the justified in Christ is called upon to yield up his humanity in order to gain His (Christ's) divinity. Thus the demand of consecration relates to our justified humanity: our human bodies and the use to which it is employed, our human interests and aspirations, our possessions in this present world (Romans 12:1; Ephesians 4:24).
- Natural interests, human ambitions, overt pursuit of the legitimate demands of life, love of self and desire for others' esteem for us etc. are in consonance with human nature, and as such are no hindrances to the believer who will not look beyond Eden. If the hope

of the believer in Christ in this age is merely to attain to the highest possible estate in the earth, it will be most appropriate for these things to be his/her preoccupation.

However, because the believer in this age has a higher and upward calling, these human interests constitute what must be traded for a change to the estate of divine life (Mathew 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 12:33; 18:22).

- Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven (I Corinthians 15:50)! We cannot gain humanity and divinity at the same time. One must give way for the other. And if for the hope that is set before us, we give up our humanity in sacrifice unto Him, we will gain His divinity. He who will lose his human life for the sake of Jesus will find it in the highest plane of existence (Matthew 16:25).
- The offering of our humanity in total and living sacrifice to God and the cause of the gospel is the price to pay to prove worthy of the exalted estate of seeing and associating with Christ in all relations as joint inheritors of the riches and wealth of the everlasting kingdom of God (Mathew 20:22). This price is demanded by God from all who are to associate with Him and His Son in His throne glory (Psalm 50:5).
- Thus, rightly understood, consecration, also called the covenant of sacrifice, is a *one-sided covenant, counseled by God, taken up by the willing-hearted among the justified, and is rewarded by Him if*

Four Gospel Themes

faithfully used. It is the believer's way of saying that he appreciates the high calling of God in Christ and has faith and confidence in the power of God to realize the promise in his/her life.

The higher one's perception of what is to be attained, the greater the discipline into realizing the purpose for which he has been called. We are all very familiar with the notion of disciplined living when involved in any pursuit of great importance (education, learning a trade, canvassing for honours in athletics and other sports).

- Consecration presupposes that one is a priest (Leviticus 8:1, Revelation 5:10). Yes, we are *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that we should show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light* (I Peter 2:9). But sacrificing priests are priests in training, not yet priests upon the throne.
- Priests upon the throne only rule, bless, and administer the Father's estate of nations. They have no need of consecration. We have not yet attained this estate. As priests in training, we must whole - heartedly concentrate our attention on the calling we have been admitted into, neither given to "*civilian pursuits*" nor to pleasurable living.
- Consecration walks a man in the narrow path that leads to the highest and best in God's purpose (Mathew 7:14). It is also the only acceptable entrance into reasonable service (Romans 12:2).

WHAT CONSECRATION CONSISTS OF

Devotion to God's purpose and an earnest longing to fully partake in the blessings of the heavenly kingdom will motivate an individual to see the choice of a life of consecration as the only wise thing to settle for. Let us examine in practical terms, this price the believer is expected to pay in order to receive the reward of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We are to distinguish between the essential character of the grace covenant, a one-sided covenant that is entirely resting upon God for its performance, and the response required of the recipients of this grace. God has bound himself with the word of oath to save to the uttermost, the seed of Christ. This is how we are to understand Genesis 22:15-18

¹⁵ And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, ¹⁶ And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and has not withheld thy son, thy only son: ¹⁷ That in blessing I will bless thee and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand, which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. ¹⁸ And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Paul, commenting on this in Hebrews 6:13ff says

¹³ For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ Saying, surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. ¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Four Gospel Themes

¹⁶For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. ¹⁷Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: ¹⁸That by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: ¹⁹which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; ²⁰Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made and high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

It pleases the Almighty God to fully commit himself and all resources at his disposal to fulfil the promise He made to Abraham and his seed. Redemption is unconditionally provided and unconditionally guaranteed to the SEED. All must on account of this be strengthened in the inner man with much assurance.

On the other hand, we find numerous scriptures that counsel on the spiritual condition in which grace may be enjoyed to the fullest. The Kingdom of grace crowns those who treasure its riches enough to heed divine counsel.

For example, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches on the necessity of self-denial and aliveness to God as required of those who will be worthy of a place on His throne (Matthew 16:24ff). In the same vein, the prophetic finger in psalm 50:5 seems to indicate that God is committed to acknowledging and blessing those who make covenant with Him by “*sacrifice*”. In between

these two passages of scriptures are to be found the main elements of the challenge of consecration.

The believer's call to consecration is taught in all scriptures, but the words of our Lord in Luke 9:23-26 (see also Matthew 16:22-28) bring out very clearly the main elements involved. The passage reads:

²³And he said to them all, if any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. ²⁴For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. ²⁵For what is a man advantaged, if he gains the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

“If any man will come after me”; that is if any man will be my disciple indeed, if he will come into the same office, the same sphere of glory, the same honour I am in, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For what is a man advantaged if he gains the whole world and at the end be a *cast away*?

That reminds us of the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:27. He says, *“Lest by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself will be a cast away”*. So, it is possible to be a preacher, a servant of God and still miss out on the high calling (i.e. be a *reject*). The Lord himself says in Matthew 7:21-23 ...²¹*Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father, which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them,*

Four Gospel Themes

I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Notice that in verse 23 of Luke 9, the Lord puts this matter of our call to consecration in three particulars. First, we are to deny ourselves. Secondly, we are to take up our cross, and thirdly we are to follow him. In order to sponsor a more practical understanding of this subject, we will examine seven elements that together constitute our call to consecration. These are:

- *Self denial*
- *The devotions of prayers, praise and worship*
- *The study of God's word*
- *The practice of (habitual obedience to) God's word*
- *The practice of self judgement*
- *Sharing in the labours of love*
- *Developing the Spirit of the Lamb*

We shall discuss each of these elements in turn.

Self Denial

A life of consecration unto God begins with *SELF DENIAL* in the interest of making a business out of following the Lord Jesus all the way, wherever He leads.

We can look at this in two ways. First it involves a turning away from things which the word of God generally counsel against. Second, it has to do with a voluntary and deliberate denial of oneself of things which, though legitimate, are not expedient (1 Corinthians 6:10; 10:17).

The first part of self-denial has to do with the denial of the world. We are required to deny the world and its lusts. This is the first proof that a man has received the knowledge of God. *The grace of God that has appeared to us teaches us to deny ungodly and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world* (Titus 2:12). Grace teaches and enables!

World denial requires the justified to flee from every appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22), and to separate himself from the world's commercial, political and religious systems. We are not of this world even though we are in the world (John 17:16, I John 3:1).

The union of a believer called into bridal relationship with the Lord with this present world's systems is rightly viewed as fornication and adultery in the sight of God (James 4:4). To seat with Him in His throne, we must be virgins in His sight, pure in our heart, love and devotions to Him (Revelations 14:4).

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. (2 Timothy 2:4). The power to deaden oneself to the allurements of the world comes from meditating upon the cross of Calvary and the purpose of Him who died on it (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15; Galatians 6:14).

The second aspect of self-denial involves denying oneself of things that are allowed of God (things that are legitimate), the misuse of which nonetheless could be inimical to attaining to the highest and best in the Kingdom. In using the things of this world, we are not

Four Gospel Themes

to abuse it, or worse still, abuse ourselves (1 Corinthians 7:31; 6:9). Since we desire a better country, that is a heavenly, we are to live as pilgrims upon the earth (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Paul says in I Corinthians 9:25 *...And everyman that striveth for mastery is temperate in all things.* If they do this to obtain a corruptible crown; then we should expect that a much more level of self-discipline will be required of those that seek the crown of life (1 Corinthians 9:25-27). II Timothy 2:5 assures us that a man cannot be crowned except he strives lawfully!

Self denial assists the believer to take up his cross daily. On this, he voluntarily dies to self- life. All that he is or hopes to be are offered to God and His cause. All that he has or hopes to have, he willingly sacrifices, putting these at the Father's disposal, to be used as He deems fit.

He who willingly sacrifices his all will have no conflict in refusing to be men pleasers. Family, social and national claims on him are submitted to only as they do not conflict in any material respect with Gospel demands.

The Devotions of Prayers, Praise and Worship

The next point in our list is the devotions of prayers, praise and worship. The Lord Jesus Christ said...*When ye pray* (Mathew 5:5-7). We cannot become what God wants us to be in Christ Jesus without attending daily at the altar of devotional prayers, praise and worship. We must be daily supplicants before the Throne of grace from which we obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

The Lord commanded us to pray lest we fall into temptation (Luke 2:40, 46). Paul says that one of the greatest resources in our lives as believers is a life of prayers. We are to *pray always with all prayers and supplications in the spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplications for all saints* (Ephesians 6:18).

A believer that does not intimately know the prayer altar cannot overcome the influences of the mystery of iniquity or amount to anything of great worth in the Kingdom. The anointing flows from a broken life, from the altar of agonising prayers, from a life offered to do the will of God alone. This is the meaning of Gethsemane. In the place of prayer and supplications, we receive, in increasing manner, the supply of the Spirit of Christ (Philippians 1:19).

Associated with prayers, intercession and supplications, is thanksgiving, praise and worship. These, as incense, must always be mingled with our prayers. (Revelations 8:3). A soul that lives in agonising prayers and does not know the joy of spirit-borne praise and worship may have a short lifespan. In the same vein, true worship

Four Gospel Themes

can only spring from a heart that has known prayers, intercession and supplications.

In worship, we tell God that we love Him, we believe in Him and we give glory to Him. There, we assert our confidence and faith in Him and His ability to accomplish what He has shown us to be His will.

It is a mystery, but the Bible shows that God depends on the prayers, praise and worship of the saints He waits eagerly for it (Revelation 8:2-6). Also the spiritual blessing that comes to a soul as rain is dependent on the measure of grace he has known in the place of prayers and worship (Job 36:27). The same is true for a local congregation of God's people.

Included in the call to prayers is fasting (Matthew 6:16). This is a necessary element in effective praying. Through properly-used fasting schedules, we can know great leaps in our prayer life.

Fasting is a means to an end, an instrument intended to serve a spiritual purpose. It helps to bring our flesh under, to sharpen our spiritual senses to be able to relate with God more effectively on issues we have brought before him, and to wait on Him in our spirits. Isaiah 58 shows the benefits a properly used fast brings upon the believer. The believer may assign to himself regular days of fasting; times separated to commune with and wait upon the Lord.

The Study of God's Word

Creating time daily for earnest study of the Word with an eye on discovering in growing degrees, our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, His person, power, purpose, and programme of activities in this end time are worthy of the highest attention.

We cannot love Him if we do not know Him. To have the confession of Paul in Philippians 3:7,8 requires one to see, taste, touch and feel the tremendous privilege of possessing Christ in His fullness (I John 1:1,2). Matthew 13:35, 45 also refers to the same passion of the one whom by dint of hard work, persistently follows and finds something of inestimable worth.

God counsels us in Proverbs 4:20-22 ...²⁰*My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.* ²¹*Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.* ²²*For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.*

For us to know the plans and purposes of God for us, His will for our lives and for His church, we must study the word of God. We must also be acquainted with the things He has freely given to us, if we must enjoy them. There is no other way to find life.

God will not have us to be ignorant concerning things that belong to our redemption (1 Corinthians 10:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:13). Neither can the believer afford to be willingly ignorant (2 Peter 3:5); for to be devoid of knowledge is to perish! (Hosea 4:6). We must be enriched in God's word if we must have a fruitful prayer life and live successful Christian lives (Colossians 3:16).

Four Gospel Themes

Also if we do not know His plans and purposes, we cannot serve Him aright. If we do not know His will and mind about a matter, we cannot obey him, neither can we pray, for we will be praying amiss (James 4:3). Paul admonishes us to study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). Peter also says we should be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15).

The word of God has the power to instruct, guide and change us if there is a hunger for it, and a thirst for righteousness. Each believer must daily long for the bread that proceeds from the mouth of God. He must daily ask for the heavenly manna that quickeneth. He must create time to know Him!

In this regard, there are two environments the believer must regularly place himself in order to hear God's word. The first is personal fellowship; the second is the fellowship of the body of Christ.

Personal fellowship with God in His word is vital to the Christian life. It is the believer's birthright. But there are many things the believer cannot hear from God and know about Him except as he receives ministry from other members of the body of Christ.

Thus, it is folly on the part of the believer to habitually absent himself from the fellowship of like-minded. We are counselled not to forsake the assembling of

ourselves together, as is the manner of some (Hebrews 10:25).

The Practice of Obedience

The believer in Christ must not only put himself in a position where he can hear God's word, he must daily practise it. James 1:22 says, *but be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.* We are called unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:2).

The Bible teaches that the believer has power to obey God's word (John 1:12). Sin cannot, and should not have dominion over him (Romans 6:14). For him, the lordship and tyranny of sin has been broken and he is commanded to live in righteousness. *...As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation* (I Peter 1:14). An unsanctified life professing faith in Christ betrays one who is receiving the grace of God in vain.

To hear the word of God and not seek to obey it (put it into practice) is to be courting divine displeasure; *for the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing...* (Hebrews 6:7, 8).

No matter what a man may claim to be doing or have done for God, if in his own life, he has not learnt to

Four Gospel Themes

practise obedience to God's word; he will come to a great loss at the end of the day (I Corinthians 3:10-15). Such would have built his house upon a sinking sand (Matthew 7:21-27).

We are to practise obedience to God's word in all things, both in little and great things (2 Corinthians 2:9). They come into the same glory with Him indeed who have learnt to follow the lamb whithersoever He goeth (Revelations 14:4). Whatsoever God reveals to us in His will we must do if we are to be found approved in His sight. This touches on all aspects of our lives.

It is in learning to walk in the light of God that we have, that we are able to sustain real fellowship with Him and to continually hear His voice (1 John 1:7). God will not be speaking to us if He sees we have a habit of disobedience. Obedience to His word is also the only proof that we love Him (John 14:15). It is as we cultivate habitual obedience to His voice that He builds His life into us.

God exercises a lot of patience towards His people in this regard, giving the necessary assistance and help (rain) for us to bear fruits. We also are called to be patient with ourselves (James 5:7). We need not be discouraged, but rather to lean on Him with a true heart when we find ourselves falling short of divine expectation in any matter. It is by patient continuance that we inherit the promises.

The Practice of Self-Judgement

Associated with the practice of obedience is the practice of self-judgment: daily and periodic application of the principle of divine testing to one's life knowing that all who are truly prospecting for a place on the throne are now before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

The scriptures enjoins us to *judge ourselves that we may not be judged* (1 Corinthians 11:13). We are to examine ourselves daily in relation to our calling and how we are faring on the path that God has called us unto (2 Corinthians 13:5). This enables us to make self-adjustments that attract divine attention and support.

At the end of the day's activities (at least) a believer should be able to sit before God in the quietness of his spirit and look through the day, how it has been. He should be able to ask himself such questions as: "have I lived in the consciousness of God's presence today? Have I brought any profit to the Kingdom? Are things beginning to spring up in my life that is injurious to my spiritual aspirations?"

Where the believer finds shortcomings, as there is most likely to be, he is to cry out unto God and receive grace from the throne to live a better life. In addition, he is to make the necessary self-adjustments that the light of God's word and wisdom would indicate. This habit of daily self-judgement can be reinforced by regular periods of self-examination.

Self-judgement is a vital element in consecration. It helps to keep a soul focused on the heavenly calling,

Four Gospel Themes

looking unto Jesus. Through self-examination, a man is able to see failings in his life, and deal with them long before they take root and become an embarrassment both to him and to the Lord.

The journey to failure and apostasy (such as make a believer unfit for the Kingdom) is a very long one. A man does not fall in a day. It takes a long time of wilful disobedience and rebellion for a soul to come to that point.

God often speaks, corrects, strives and seeks to intervene in a man's life long before he becomes a reprobate (2 Corinthians 13:5). And when a man has learnt to judge himself, examining himself daily, with a heart ready to make any necessary self-adjustment, failure is almost certainly impossible (1 Thessalonians 5:9). May the Lord help us to appreciate this.

The practice of self-judgement is closely linked with watching. The porter is commanded to watch (Mark 13:34). The Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to both watch and pray, lest we fall into temptation. We are to watch over our lives, our homes, our ministries, and over the church (the local expression of the body of Christ with which we are associated). We are also to watch events around us with a view to hearing the voice of the Lord unto us in any of these.

May the Lord enable us to be faithful in this aspect of our call to consecration.

Sharing In the Labour Of Love

Not all that Christ owns in the church world and in the world of mankind in this age, has come to Him or has been brought under His full control. The labours of love concern services that are carried out with a view to bringing an increase of God's rule, and redemptive blessings to others.

Involvement in such labour is mandatory to all who consecrate themselves to Him. Our lives are to be laid down for the blessing of our brethren. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (John 15:13).

Our participation in the labours of love should stem from the understanding of Christ's love for us. He loved us and gave himself for us. In appreciation of that love, we give ourselves to serve the purpose for which he died. *The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them* (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15).

We can daily and increasingly involve ourselves in the spread of God's word through one or more of the following ways.

- Praying for the prosperity of the gospel of the Kingdom in the lives of men and women in the local assembly to which we belong and also in other fields of Kingdom work.
- Labouring in the midst of the local church by means of the measure of the gift of Christ that has been

Four Gospel Themes

given unto us, i.e., witnessing to fellow consecrated believers, arousing them to more love for Christ and His kingdom (Romans 12:3; Ephesians 4:7).

Each believer is expected to be a blessing in the local church in which God has placed him or her. This is God's promise to the SEED of Abraham (Genesis 22:15-18). Through a faithful and dedicated use of the gift of grace, the believer may grow into a steady ministry within the local church. And if he continues in faithfulness, he may be raised up to serve in one or the other of the five-fold ministry listed in Ephesians 4:11.

- Ministering the present truth of the call to full union with Christ to others of the Lord's people who may not have come to the understanding and are in spiritual environments that God counsels against.
- Witnessing to the unsaved with a view to bringing such into the Kingdom.
- Providing financial and spiritual support for the kingdom work.

In relation to the labours of love, we are not to love our lives unto the death (Revelations 12:11). Even if a *divinely-instructed* participation in the labours of the Kingdom will cost a believer his/her life, he must be ready to give it up if he/she is to be accounted worthy of Christ.

Whosoever therefore shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven...

He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it (Matthew 10:32, 33 and 39). The Lord spoke these words on the occasion of the sending forth of the disciples to share the good news of the Kingdom with their brethren (the lost sheep of the house of Israel).

Developing the Spirit of the Lamb In The Face Of Oppositions and Persecutions

The general environment in which all the called-out ones are to be tested is unfavourable to righteousness. The present world lieth in wickedness. The world is opposed to God and to His rule. Thus, every effort at righteousness, every advance of the Kingdom, is strongly contested by the world.

The implication of this is that in our participation in the labours of the Kingdom, we are bound to meet with opposition. This is why the Lord says in Matthew 10:16-18, *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues* (many times, scourging is done with the tongues of men); *and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the gentiles.*

Enduring in a loving disposition persecutions, contradictions, and oppositions that come one's way in the course of doing the Father's will is an integral part of the calling of the believer. It is one of the ways by which the life of Christ is worked into us. The Passover

Four Gospel Themes

(Christ) must be eaten with bitter herbs (Exodus 12:8). Paul says, *...and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* (2 Timothy 3:12)

We can only escape opposition of men when we are not faithful. If we are faithful in our consecration vows and do the things we ought to be doing, men will persecute us. They will call us odd names; they will mock and spite us. We will be seen as infectious disease and many will shut doors of opportunities against us, just for His sake. *The disciple is not above his master, or the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciples that he is as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?* (Matthew 10:24, 25).

We will definitely encounter pains as we seek to share the message of the Kingdom with others. And quite often, these will come from God's people who may not understand what He is doing at a particular time; men and women who claim to love the Lord Jesus Christ and to be serving Him. This has always been so in the history of the church, right from the days of the apostles and through the dark ages.

But we can take solace in the words of the Lord who had seen all things ahead of time, and therefore forewarned us (Matthew 10:21, 22 and in John 16:2) so that we may not lose heart or be offended in Him.

The persecutions, tribulations, trials and pains that come a believer's way in the course of serving truth may increase or diminish him. If the persecutions and

tribulations are taken in a wrong spirit, (that is he develops hatred towards his persecutors, and rather than praying for them, begins to curse or speak evil against them; or develop hatred or cold-heartedness towards God), then he has not learnt right the way of the LAMB of God. Unless that condition in him is corrected, he may lose what he could have gained on account of his faithfulness in following the Lord.

For sufferings for the gospel's sake to add credit to us, we must maintain a sweet and loving disposition in the face of opposition. We are not to lose our savour (Matthew 5:13). We must not return cursing for cursing or railing for railing. We must not develop hatred for our brethren or our fellow men or murmur against God. Rather, we must take everything in the spirit of Jesus and even increase in our labours for the Kingdom. *Blessed are ye when men revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted them falsely the prophets which were before you* (Matthew 5:11, 12).

Tribulations ought not to separate us from the love of Christ, nor distress, nor persecutions, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword (Romans 8:35), *for unto us it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake* (Philippians 1:29). When we have learnt to endure persecutions and afflictions for the gospel's sake, then are we truly walking in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then will we as lambs; be found with the principal Lamb on the height of mount Zion (Revelations 14:1). What a joy that will be.

The High Calling of God in Christ Jesus

Leading Texts: Philippians 3:13, 14; Hebrews 3:1

*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 3:13, 14***

*Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. **Hebrews 3:1***

Introduction

In Genesis 22:15-18 God promised to exceedingly bless the seed of Abraham. We are shown in the New Testament writings that the Seed to whom the promise was made is Jesus the Christ, and that the believers in Christ are part of that great Seed that is to be mightily blessed of God and to be the means of the blessing of humanity (Galatians 3:16, 29).

The implication of this is awesome: God has prepared a great inheritance for the believer in Christ! Our Lord Jesus said in John 14: 2 ... *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you...* Indeed, as the prophets said *eyes hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him* (1 Corinthians 2:9; Isaiah 64:4). But God is now revealing these things to us by His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10). We give glory and praise to his holy name.

Included in the blessings of the gospel that is offered to the believer in Christ Jesus, is the restoration of all that mankind lost in the fall through the disobedience of Adam (Romans 5:12). These include deliverance from sin, from sicknesses and diseases, from poverty and ruin, protection and preservation from all forms of danger, and deliverance from the power of the grave.

Yes! The blood of Jesus Christ has secured for the redeemed all that he may ever need in this life. Eden lost is restored with all the privileges of fellowship with

Four Gospel Themes

God and the enjoyment of His promises (Genesis 1:27-30; 2:7-15). Through faith, the justified in Christ can now live and obtain life's blessings (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

This blessed estate is not opened to all of mankind in this age, but only to those among men who exercise implicit faith in the saving works of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a glorious privilege we have in Him! We can live daily in Eden, reigning in life, because of what the Lord has done (Romans 5:17). This is our **present inheritance**. The *Edenic blessings* will always be ours now and are to be enjoyed by faith.

However, there is another aspect of the great blessings of the gospel that God has reserved for us. 2 Peter 1: 4 talks about "*exceeding great and precious promises*". These promises are associated with our **future inheritance** and constitute the hope of the believer in this age (Titus 2:13).

Yes! There is a call in Christ Jesus, a call to a glory that is beyond what Adam ever knew, a call beyond Eden. What is the nature of this calling? What is the glory associated with it? What are the implications of the calling for the believer? These questions constitute the burden of this meditation.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORD “CALLING”

The word “*calling*” derives from the Greek word *Kaleo* (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance 2564, 2861). Generally speaking, this word speaks of the divine invitation extended to man to participate in the blessings of redemption.

It requires that the invitee be made thoroughly aware of the objective for which he has received the call. It also implies that the Personage extending the call holds the invitee in kind regards, and has made all preparations necessary to execute to the fullest, the purpose of the invitation. Thus, properly understood, the call is a favour extended to the invitee.

Finally, *kaleo*, translated calling, in a tertiary sense, denotes a vocation, an employment, a career.

All of these three senses are expressed in the gospel call. The teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ and the writings of the apostles clearly brings out these elements. For emphasis, let us read and carefully consider Mathew 22:1-14 alongside Luke 14:16-24

Mathew 22:1-14

¹And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said. ²The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son. ³And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. ⁴Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that which are bidden, behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the

Four Gospel Themes

marriage. ⁵But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: ⁶And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. ⁷But when the King heard thereof, he was wrought: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. ⁸Then saith he to his servants, the wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. ⁹Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. ¹⁰So those servants went into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. ¹¹And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: ¹²And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. ¹³Then said the King to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.

Luke 14: 16-24

¹⁶ Then saith he unto him, a certain man made a great supper, and bade many: ¹⁷And sent his servants at supper time to say to them that were bidden, come; for all things are now ready. ¹⁸ And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. ¹⁹ And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. ²⁰ And another said, I have married a new wife, and therefore I cannot come. ²¹So that servant came and shewed his lord these things. Then the

master of the house being angry said to his servants, go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. ²²And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. ²³And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

It is not our intention to go into an expository teaching of the above scriptures. We will just draw out some observations that help to summarize what we have already noted concerning the word “*calling*” in the context of our present meditation.

1. The certain man, also called a certain King, is the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, the great King above all the earth.
2. All things are now ready. The Father has killed His oxen and fatted calf. He has prepared His dinner. He has prepared a great supper.
3. Partaking in the blessing of the gospel will involve eating the supper of God (John 6:53-58). As the believer eat of Him, they become more and more like Him.
4. The moral or physical limitations of the invitee at the point of being called to the supper do not disqualify him. The King has secured all that is required to realize the purpose of the call in the invitee. He enjoins all to come to the marriage.

Four Gospel Themes

5. The invitation is to a marriage with the king's Son. God seeks to raise up a bride for His Son Jesus Christ that will be united with Him in His glory and kingdom. The bride is to be chosen from among the invitees.
6. He sends His servants to call all that are invited. The High calling of God is to be declared to the saints through ministries that the Lord raises. They are to be made thoroughly aware of the purpose of their calling.
7. However, the call is not binding. The invitation could be rejected. Making light of the invitation or refusing to submit to the conditions attached to participation in the blessing amount to outright rejection of the call.
8. There are conditions required for participation in the blessing. These conditions are symbolized in the possession of a wedding garment. It is the wedding garment that qualifies the invitee for the union (marriage).

This garment has its various parts, but it is to be noted that none of the invitee came with a wedding garment. They all came in poor, maimed, halting and blind (1 Corinthians 1:26, 27). The various parts of the wedding garment are secured by the invitee as he opens the heart totally to the King and faithfully appropriate the riches of the supper.

Thus in a secondary sense, the word “calling” refers to the *conditions attached to the invitation*.

9. The invitees must prove worthy of the calling by faithfully submitting to the conditions attached. The value that each of the invitee places on the call is to be judged by the response given to the invitation.
10. There are seasons of divine inspection (testings) of the invitees. There is also a final inspection that is to determine the final placement of each of the invitee. Not all that are called ultimately receives the prize. Many are called, but few are chosen.

THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING

The Upward Calling, the Heavenly calling, the High Calling

The “*High calling of God in Christ*” is also called the “*Heavenly calling*” (Hebrews 3:1), the “*Upward calling*”. These three expressions of the call agree in one. They indicate that earth man, through the gospel call, is being invited to a heavenly inheritance, to a heavenly glory, to some honours in the heavenly kingdom.

We cannot appreciate in any significant measure what this means unless we are able to see that there is a distinction between the earthly and the heavenly sphere of existence.

The earth is created by God for the habitation of terrestrial creatures, of which man is King. Man is God’s

Four Gospel Themes

King over the earth, created to replenish and to rule it, to manifest the glory of God to the extent such glory can be revealed in human flesh (Genesis 1:26-30).

Thus man is basically an earthly being. 1 Corinthians 15:45 says *the first man is of the earth, earthy*. That is the glory and estate that God has prepared for mankind. That was the glory Adam had before he fell.

But there is also the heavenly sphere of existence, higher and more glorious than the earthly sphere. Spirit beings are heavenly creatures. The very nature of their being does not adapt them to live on the earth. They are not terrestrial (but celestial) beings.

These two natures and spheres of existence must be understood to be distinct. In fact, so distinct are they that the spirit realm is veiled away from the sight of man. The Almighty GOD, the Father of all, did not permit an intermingling! The one cannot cross to the other unless there is a change in nature.

Contrary to popular belief, death does not bring about a change of nature; it does not bring man into a spirit existence. It does not make a man more glorious than he was while he lived on earth. Otherwise it would not be a judgment upon man's sin. What death does is to terminate man's existence bringing the body to decay while the life essence returns back to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7; 9:10; Psalm 6:5). Death brings to a total end and only a resurrection can make alive again!

The point of note is that it is only a complete change of nature that can bring man to a heavenly existence.

1 Corinthians 15:50-51 says *...flesh and blood **cannot** inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.*

This change of nature is one of the opportunities offered in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The *High Calling of God in Christ Jesus* provides an opportunity for **some** among mankind to be elevated (upgraded) from the earthly sphere into a heavenly, to experience a change of nature from humans to becoming spirit beings.

What then constitute the heavenly inheritance contained in the gospel call? What are the elements in the prize of the High calling of God in Jesus Christ? These questions will be the focus of our meditation in the next subsection.

Elements in the Prize of the High Calling

The promised honours associated with the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus constitute the *prize of the High Calling*. From related scriptural passages, we can identify four elements that collectively make up this prize as:

- Becoming a life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:42-49)
- Becoming Incorruptible Persons (1 Corinthians 15:52-54)
- Becoming Immortal (2 Timothy 1:10, 11; Romans 2:6, 7)
- Royal Priests, ruling and reigning with Jesus on His throne (Revelation 3:21, 20:4).

These four elements are interrelated and each one is worthy of study and meditation. However, in this text, we shall only explain what each means.

Four Gospel Themes

Becoming a life-giving Spirit

Just as we have different levels of glory and splendour among terrestrial (earth-bound) creatures (1Corinthians 15:39), the spirit estate is highly stratified. God used the things that we can see to tell us this. We are told that *there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another of the stars, and one star differeth from another star in glory* (1 Corinthians 15:41).

Thus we are to understand that there are different orders or rankings even among spirit beings, and the glory, splendour, honour and life possessed by one angelic spirit may differ from that of another.

Far above the sphere of angelic existence, however, is the divine estate. This spirit estate is **infinitely** more glorious than the estates of angelic spirits. For example, angels are spirit beings, but they are not life-giving spirits. No angelic spirit has the capacity to create and sustain that which has been created. Only the divine Spirit has the capacity to do that.

God is the Father of spirits (Hebrews 12:9). He births and sustains in life all created things. He is *God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spreadeth forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.* (Isaiah 42:5). Concerning Adam it is said... *And God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul* (Genesis 2:7b).

The One that is a life-giving Spirit not only creates and sustains all things, He also has the ability to bring back to life that which was dead. Thus we read in John 5:21 *...The Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them.* The word “quickeneth” means He gives and keeps giving life to the ones that have been raised from the dead so that they continue to live. Glory to His name!

It has pleased the Father to make the Son as He is. The Lord Jesus Christ has been made (by resurrection) a life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45b). *As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will* (John 5:21).

And this same estate to which the Lord has been raised is one of the honours held out to all that are exercised under the High Calling of God in Christ... *And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterwards that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we **shall** also bear the image of the heavenly* (1 Corinthians 15:49).

We give all glory and praise to his name.

**Becoming Incorruptible Persons (1
Corinthians 15:52-54)**

Four Gospel Themes

The prize of the heavenly calling is described in 1Corinthians 9:25 as an “*incorruptible crown*”. “Corruption” is a term that is used to define the process by which a living being is gradually brought to physical death. We can call it the “death or ageing process”.

The disobedience of Adam and the righteous judgment of God upon him and his seed, has subjected the entire human race to the bondage of corruption (Romans 8:20, 21). Romans 5: 12-14 reads *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law). Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.*

Corruptibility is a bondage from which none of the seed of Adam has won the victory, not even those that have exercised saving faith in Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and for atonement with God. All through the church age, believers in Christ Jesus, irrespective of the level of dedication and faithfulness to God and the cause of the gospel, have had to go the way of the grave.

But there is a victory that is soon to come. Yes! There is a song that is soon to be sung in the midst of the redeemed, as it is written ...*So when this corruptible must have **put on** incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* (1 Corinthians 15:54).

Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that this shall be. He says in John 11:25, 26 *...I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And **whosoever liveth and believeth** in me shall never die. Believest thou this?* Oh that we might believe and submit to the conditions for participation. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:51 *...Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed!*

Angelic spirits in the service of God are not subject to corruption. They do not die or age, they are kept in eternal youthfulness. And this same incorruptibility, agelessness as a fixed estate, total liberty and victory over death and the grave while yet living upon the earth, is one of the elements in the gospel call.

Paul believed the words of the Master. And so the desire to break free from the bondage of corruption while yet in human flesh became a continuous cry in his heart (2 Corinthians 5:2-4; Philippians 3:10, 11). We believe this was true for many others who heard with profit these words of the Saviour. But these ones never attained to that estate, not because they were not worthy, but because the time for its fulfillment was not yet due.

But the time is now! We are in the time when the fullness of our redemption is to be made known unto us. Yes! We can lift up our heads, for our redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21:28).

Now Paul says he was not just wishing this, it was not just a product of his own imagination. He says *He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also*

Four Gospel Themes

hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:5). What assurance, what confidence, what zeal and longing, ought this to provoke in us. Associated with the experience of incorruptibility is total deliverance from the power and presence of sin and its associated effects.

Becoming Immortal (2 Timothy 1:10, 11; Romans 2:6, 7)

Immortality is different from incorruptibility. Incorruptibility implies that life is held intact so that there is no decay. But the life so possessed by the one that is incorruptible is not inherent in him. In other words, he is neither the source of the life nor is the life sustained by his own power. Thus, it is possible for the one that is incorruptible to experience death and decay if the source of life is detached from him.

In contrast “immortality” means inherent life, inexhaustible life. It is described in scriptures as the ***crown of life*** (the crowning piece of life) (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10). This is eternal life, life in its highest expression (I John 1:2).

Immortality makes a being to be absolutely independent, depending on no one and nothing for existence. It also confers on him the ability to give out life to others without experiencing any loss whatsoever. Out of the inexhaustible reservoir of life in him, the immortal one pours out life to creation.

Up until the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ into human history, this realm of life has been the exclusive preserve

of the Almighty God. *Only God hath immortality* (1 Timothy 6:16). Like humans, spirit angels in all of their various rankings, though incorruptible, are mortal. They do not have life in themselves. They are sustained in life and maintained in an incorruptible state by the life that flows from the very presence of the Almighty God. In Him is the fountain of life, in His light we see light (Psalm 36:9). He is the fountain of living waters. To forsake him is to die (Jeremiah 2:13).

God does not depend on anything or anyone for existence. He does not eat food or breathe in oxygen to live. He breathes in the praises and worship of his creations and breathes out life to them in return. He sustains all things by the breath of His life, yet He does not faint nor get weary (Isaiah 40:28, 29).

Associated with immortality is omni-presence and omni-potency. The Almighty God is everywhere present at the same time, with the same undiminished glory and excellence. And in that presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forever more (Psalm 16:11). There is also no impossibility with Him.

Yes, only God hath immortality. But the door into immortality is now opened to man through the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 1:10; Romans 2:7). Verses 9-10 of 2 Timothy says *He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath*

Four Gospel Themes

brought life and immortality to light through the gospel

Royal Priests, ruling and reigning with Jesus on His throne (Revelation 3:21; 20:4)

The final element in the High calling of God in Christ that we have set out to consider is the call to a royal priesthood. The Almighty God is raising up a royal priesthood.

The scriptures teach that God found fault with the Old covenant and its priesthood (Hebrews 8:7, 8). That priesthood was made up of human beings who were of the earth earthy and who in themselves were subject to corruption. This structural deformity was in part responsible for its failure (Hebrews 7:23-25). But the priesthood that is to serve under the New Testament is to be an heavenly, constituted after the power of an endless life, consisting of persons who were previously humans but have been lifted up from that estate of limitation and made life-giving spirits (Hebrews 5:10; 7:1-27).

These royal priests of God are the ones to administer the affairs of His eternal kingdom. They are to be His sons, begotten into the divine nature (Hebrews 1:5). Through this body of sons, God is to fulfill His eternal purposes in the ages to come (Ephesians 2:7).

At His resurrection and exaltation to the divine glory, the Lord Jesus Christ was made the High priest of the *New Covenant*. He is the progenitor and Head of a new priesthood, the author of eternal salvation to all of

mankind (Hebrews 5:9-10). Under him, sharing in the same office and glory, bearing the same image, is to be a body of priest.

Yes!, Jesus was to be the first among equals, the King over many kings who are to administer with him, the Lord over many lords who are to rule with Him, the Saviour over many saviours who are to share with him in the task of redemption. And so it is written *...And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's* (Obadiah 21). Jesus is to be crowned King of kings, Lord of lords, Saviour of saviours (Revelation 19:16).

The royal (kingly) priests constitute the core *new heaven* full of righteousness that is to be set up in the age to come. They are the *holy city*, the *New Jerusalem*, the City-Government of the great King of kings and Lord of lords, coming down from God out of heaven, given in marriage to the King's Son, prepared as *a bride adorned for her husband*. They are living exact copies of the Son of God to whom they have been thoroughly conformed (Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:10). They collectively bear His name as Mediator of the millennial covenant mankind will enter into with God in the age to come.

Under the covenant, the multitude of people of the earth dwelling within their natural boundaries will be gradually uplifted to the highest human estate such as Adam had before the fall. Yes! By the ministry of this *new heaven*, there is to be set up a *new earth* of perfected humans wherein righteousness dwells (Revelation 21:1-5). These Royal priests, ruling and reigning with Christ is what the earnest expectations of

Four Gospel Themes

these multitudes are waiting and groaning for (Romans 8:19).

Since God has purposed that the priesthood of the New Covenant will consist of persons that have been fully trained and perfected (Hebrews 5:9), it is pertinent that the graces and character of life required for the priesthood should be measurably worked into us in the time of preparation, while we are still upon the earth as humans.

It is for this reason we have been constituted priests and kings unto God (Revelation 5:10) to minister to Him in his sanctuary which we are, and to be trained in priestly services towards men and kingly rule over the earth. This is our vocation, a necessary training to fit us for priestly and kingly rule in the age to come.

The Lord Jesus Christ, our fore-runner went through the same process. Positionally, he was set apart as a high priest when he was baptized with the Holy Spirit at the river Jordan. But he was then only a priest in training. He did not enter into the full import of that office until he was resurrected from the dead.

Now are we **priests unto our God** (Revelation 5:10), but when we have been fully trained and have fully taken on the garments of character and graces required for the priesthood, we shall become **priests of God** (Hebrews 7:1). And *no man taketh this honour unto himself*, but only those that God shall find worthy.

It would not be possible to adequately describe in human words each of these four elements that make up

the prize of the High Calling. The riches of the glory thereof surpasses human understanding and are to be increasingly made manifest even in the ages to come (Ephesians 2:7).

Indeed, it is unimaginable, nay unthinkable, that the Almighty God, who makes darkness his covering so that there is no searching out of his Person, the One who dwelleth in light which no creature (human or spirit) can approach, should look unto man and chose to share His essence and glory with him.

What is man that your mind is so full of him?, the Psalmist asked, or the son of man that thou visitest him? (Psalm 8:4). For verily, He took not the nature of angels (to lift them up into a higher glory) but he took on (as apprentices to be trained and prepared for the divine glory) the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16).

May the Lord cause us to see in an increasing manner the purpose and the glory to which we have been called.

In Christ; together with Christ

The High Calling of God is said to be *in Christ Jesus*. This implies the following

- (i) The invitee is accepted into a relationship with God through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ
- (ii) Continuous enlightenment as to the full objective of the calling is only received through union with the personal Lord Jesus Christ in vital fellowship.

Four Gospel Themes

- (iii) The calling would require the invitee to share in the privilege of extending the same invitation to others. But these services are acceptable to God only on the ground of what the Lord Jesus has done (1 Peter 2:4, 5; Colossians 2:9, 10). The faults and disabilities of the invitee are compensated for by the perfection of Christ.

Meeting the conditions set and attaining the mark fixed for the prize is declared to be *together with Christ*. This implies that all blessings and spiritual attainments are enjoyed and made possible by the indwelling Christ. The Father has given to us the spirit of sonship whereby we cry, *Abba Father* (Romans 8:9-11). Verse 11a says, *But if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you ...* There is a power that is at work towards all of the called in Christ Jesus directed to fulfilling in them all of the father's promises. This is the power of the indwelling spirit. *Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:29).

In addition, the phrase *together with Christ* implies that it is only as we co-operate with Christ that we are assisted to go through all the testings associated with the calling. He alone knows the way, and if we submit fully to His rule, we shall experience the enabling strength to attain to the mark for the prize and to keep at it.

These considerations link us with the meditation in the next section.

THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE

Though the High Calling is secured by grace and freely offered, the term “prize” emphasizes the fact that, from a certain standpoint, these honours are bestowed only on those who prove themselves worthy through faithful and loyal compliance with the set conditions. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25 *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

Thus there is a mark for the prize of the High calling of God in Christ Jesus, a mark that wins the prize (Philippians 3:14).

Now recall that the High calling of God in Christ implies that those who are exercised thereby are to experience a change of nature. The process by which this change is to be effected is mainly executed on earth amidst unfavourable trial-some circumstances that will thoroughly test the value that the invitee places on the promised honours that are declared and held out through the gospel call.

God has arranged that all of the called in Christ are to be tried and tested before they are crowned. And it is only such among the invitee that prove worthy of the calling that ultimately receives the prize.

The human Jesus, the one that went ahead of us, was **thoroughly** tested of the Father.

For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame (Hebrews 12:2)

Four Gospel Themes

*...Who, being in the form of God, did not meditate upon a usurpation of God's rights but made himself of no reputation and took on the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, wherefore **God has also** highly exalted him (Philippians 2:6-9).*

*Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death (failure to apprehend the purpose for which God had apprehended him), and was heard in that he feared; though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. And being made perfect (in loyalty and yieldedness to the Father), **he became** the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 5:7-10).*

God did this as a pattern for us. He says in Isaiah 28:16 *Behold, I lay in Zion **for a foundation** a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation...* There is none of the called in Christ that will not be required by the Father to prove his worthiness to receive these highest honours of the kingdom. Mathew 20:23 show us that the Father is deeply interested and deals prudently in this matter of choosing them who are to sit with Christ in His throne.

Even the Lord Jesus Christ Himself told all that seek to be His disciples *If any man will come after me (coming into the same place I am), let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will*

save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it (Mathew 16: 24, 25).

What then are the things that constitute the mark for the prize? What are the things that the Father looks for in the called, which things qualify us for the promised honours? For the purpose of clarity, we shall list five elements that together constitute the mark trusting the Lord to help us explain each in turn.

- (i) A clean heart (Psalm 51:10)
- (ii) A right spirit (Psalm 51:10)
- (iii) Bridal fidelity (2 Corinthians 11:2)
- (iv) Faithfulness (1 Corinthians 4:2)
- (v) Loyalty (2 Chronicles 16:9)

Four Gospel Themes

A Clean heart

Cleanliness of heart (sanctification) is one of the elements that make up the mark for the prize. The Psalmist asked and answered the question:

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; he that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart, he that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour, in whose eyes a vile person is contemned. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation (Psalm 15:1-4; 24:3-5).

Paul says in 1Corinthians 6: 9-11 *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:3). To ignore character development and holiness and to presume to serve the Lord, abounding in religious activities, is great folly, and amounts to running in vain or beating the air (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27; Mathew 7:23). Our bodies

presented to God in sanctification, is the only entrance into reasonable service (Romans 12:1).

Unholy living and filthiness of heart typifies a horrible pit condition (Psalm 40:2). A believer in such condition cannot be said to be running the race set before him. For such a one, the crown is not in view. But the blood of Jesus Christ not only lifts out of the horrible pit condition, it delivers also from the miry clay of struggling with sin.

A Right Spirit

A “right spirit” refers to spiritual awakefulness, fervency in the spirit, being possessed of a deep yearning for God, a continuous longing to be like Him expressed in vital unbroken communion with him, and the possession of a positive attitude towards the Lord and towards His people, a disposition that is ready to follow the Lord all the way. This is that which makes the believer alive to God and in a position to receive more and more from Him.

The promised honours of the Kingdom are not given to casual comers. God will not give holy things to dogs or cast precious pearls before swines (Mathew 7:6). These aspects of the blessings of the gospel associated with the hope of our calling are not given to us because we have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for remission of sins. They are given only to those who earnestly seek the Lord for them and submit to all the conditions for their fulfillment.

Unto them (and only them) that look (passionately seek and long) for him shall he appear the second

Four Gospel Themes

time without sin unto salvation (Hebrews 9: 29b). Malachi 3: 1b says *the Lord, **whom ye seek**, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, **whom ye delight in**.*

Bridal Fidelity

Bridal fidelity speaks of singleness of affection for the Lord, spiritual virginity, turning away from the world and from all others in order to give all to the Lord, loving Him above all and ensuring that his place in our hearts is not shared by another.

Bridal fidelity implies that we submit to the Lord's rule in all things and allow His word only to direct all our activities (Luke 19:27). It requires us to be ready to give up anything that the Lord tell us is not in agreement with him in our personal lives, in our services for the kingdom (our ministries), in our relationship with our brethren and fellow men, and in His church.

Yes! Bridal fidelity requires deliverance from the spirit of the world that seek to husband our souls and the spirit of error that sets men up in opposition to the truth and to the purpose of God in His church (James 4:4; 2 Corinthians 11:2-4, Galatians 3:1). Only brides of Jesus ultimately become the sons of God.

Faithfulness

Faithfulness has to do with seeking to know the will of the Lord especially as it relates to the outworking of His plans and purposes and going ahead to do the same in the way He requires it to be done (Luke 12:47-48). It implies that we take time to know what the Lord's will is, and that having known what the Lord will have us do, we do it joyfully with all of our strength and abilities, **even at the cost of physical death** (Deuteronomy 28:47; Mathew 10: 39; Revelation 2: 10).

It is a requirement in stewardship that a man be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2). Yet, faithfulness in the kingdom is not counted by what we think we are doing for God, or by the multitude of our activities, or even by the measure of our suffering, but to what extent our services agree with the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11, 1 Corinthians 3:13-15). Ignorance of the Lord's will is also never an excuse (Luke 12:48; 2 Peter 3:5).

Loyalty to Christ

Loyalty has to do with possessing a meek spirit, always giving way for the Lord's glory, allowing ourselves to decrease in the sight of men so that He might increase (John 3:30).

Loyalty implies that we do not meditate upon a usurpation of God's rights among His creation, we do not attempt to take the place of control over people's lives, that we are careful to give all glory to the Lord even when He uses us to bring blessing to our fellow men. Loyalty requires that we do not sit upon the throne of God in the hearts of men (2 Thessalonians 2:4), even when we are in a position to do this.

Four Gospel Themes

A disloyal servant seeks to assume the rights and privileges reserved for his master alone. When loyalty is not possessed, a man sooner or later finds that he has set himself against the Lord.

A loyal heart will keep us from falling. It will put us in a place where mercy can always reach us. 2 Chronicles 16: 9 says... *For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect (loyal) toward him.*

All of these elements that together constitute the mark for the prize of the High calling are seen as possessed by the overcomers in Revelation 14:1-5. These qualities are not unattainable. They are also not dependent on how old we are in the Lord. The mark can be attained by a babe in Christ if he/she is properly disposed towards the Lord. Yet it may be absent in a believer who has been saved for so many years (see 1Corinthians 3 and Hebrews 5:12-14 for example).

It is also possible to be greatly involved in the service of the gospel, doing many great works in His name, conquering kingdoms as it were, and yet be destitute of the mark (Mathew 7: 22). This is sobering. May the Almighty God be gracious unto us.

Once the mark is possessed by a believer, a place is already reserved for him/her by Christ. Symbolically, a crown is allocated to that believer. But the mark can be lost if the believer does not continue to do things that enabled him to possess the mark in the first instance.

Revelation 3:2, 3, and 11 says *...Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent... Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

Thus once possessed, the believer is to strive to keep himself/herself in that overcoming state that pleases the Father. This is the thrust of Paul's confession when he said he *pressed towards the mark for the prize*. He said he does all of these for the gospel's sake, that he may be partaker thereof (Philippians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 9:23).

WHAT WILL YOUR RESPONSE BE?

It has taken God about two thousand years to raise up a bride for His son, to raise up a body of sons that will share with Him in his throne glory and kingdom. This work that the Holy Spirit began to do in the days of the Lord's first advent, He is now about to bring to a consummation. Yes! The fullness of the gentiles is about to come in (Romans 11: 25). We are at the end of the age and the Father is about to wind up His plans and purposes for the church.

God is calling all of His people at this time. He is calling us to break away from everything that has beclouded our vision and blinded our eyes, from the things that have made us far removed from Him. He says unto us

Return, return, O shulamite; return, return that we may look upon thee... Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past,

Four Gospel Themes

the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear upon the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away (Song of Solomon 6:13a; 2:10b-13).

We must come away! There is a supper He has prepared for us; the great time of the revelation of the Father's glory is here. It is the Father's good pleasure to give unto us the kingdom (Luke 12:32). If we be willing and obedient, we shall eat the good of the land (Isaiah 1:19).

Aspects of the Last Trumpet

Introduction

In 1 Corinthians 15:52, reference is made to the sounding forth of the last trumpet. This passage and other references, such as 1 Thessalonians 4:16, associates the occasion with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the blessed hope of full union with Him.

All over the world, among the Lord's people, there is awareness that the coming of the Lord is imminent. Things are happening on the earth in quick succession. The signs that are to characterize the end of the age are all around us. The birth pangs of a new age are already setting in upon the world.

In this book, we will be taking an introductory consideration of things revealed in scriptures associated with this glorious sound of the last trumpet.

THE TRUMPET AND ITS USES

The Old Testament Shadows

Numbers 10 gives us the origin of the use of trumpets under the Old Testament. Verses 1 through 10 reads

¹And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ²Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. ³And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. ⁴And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes,

which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. ⁵When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward. ⁶When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. ⁷But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm. ⁸And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations. ⁹And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. ¹⁰Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God.

From this reference, we can identify five important points concerning the construction and use of trumpets under the Old Testament economy.

- 1) There were two trumpets, made of silver, of a whole piece.
- 2) The blowing of the trumpet was used mainly for the *calling of the assembly* and for *the journeying of the children of Israel* as they moved through the wilderness to the land of promise.

Four Gospel Themes

- 3) Also the trumpets were blown in special times and seasons appointed by God for Israel ...*in the days of their gladness, in their solemn days, in the beginning of their months...* Thus the sound of the trumpet was associated with God's times and seasons.
- 4) In addition, the sound of the trumpet was associated with warfare.
- 5) It is the sons of Aaron, not Aaron, not Moses, that blow the trumpet.

Now, the Old Testament writings and all of God's dealings with Biblical characters in that era, foreshadow the New Testament and God's dealings with His people (the church) in this age (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1).

Thus, God is showing us in the great doctrines taught by Moses, Aaron and the Prophets, shadows of the themes of redemption. In other words, the elaborate rituals and ceremonies, the festal occasions are but types and images of real events in the New Testament age respecting the redemption that is in Christ.

We can look at the Old Testament therefore as the New Testament concealed in shadows and the New Testament as the Old Testament revealed. Therefore, when we take any subject matter in the New Testament writings, we will find there is an adequate discussion on that same subject in the Old. Both the Old and the New Testament writings together provide the full range of truth on any subject matter (Mathew 13:52).

For example, Paul wrote almost half of the New Testament scriptures. But he often makes reference to the Old Testament writings. He himself said in Acts 26:22 that the authority he had for all the things he wrote is that they agree with the principles of truth laid down in the Old Testament scriptures.

Again, in 1Corinthians 10:6, Paul tells us that the events that transpired during the wilderness experience of the children of Israel as they journeyed to their Promised Land answer to specific events taking place in and among God's people all through the gospel age.

From the above consideration, it is obvious that there must be a very definite New Testament application of the things we read in Numbers 10. Note that the children of Israel were to observe the memorial of the blowing of the trumpet throughout their generations. So throughout the approximately 1,500 years of the Old Testament history, the children of Israel observed this ordinance. This is to further show that the ordinance has important prophetic signification.

Yes. The physical trumpet under the Old Testament, and things associated with its uses, have New Testament application and so border on the testimony of Jesus Christ. They certainly have implications for us at this closing period of the church age.

What then do the trumpet and its sound symbolize under the New Testament?

Four Gospel Themes

THE NEW TESTAMENT REALITIES

The Voice of the Son of God

In the New Testament context, the sound of the trumpet answers to the sound of the voice of the Son of God coming to lift man out of the fallen condition into the redemptive blessings that are contained in the gospel. Silver, the essential metal with which the trumpet is made, is often used in scriptures to symbolize redemptive truths. The trumpets are of silver, they have to do with redemption.

The gospel is revealed to man in the writings of the Old and New Testaments. Now, there are two trumpets. But these two agree in one. They are of one whole piece; they carry the same redemptive message.

Let us look at some scriptures to establish the above thought.

In Isaiah 61:1-3 read alongside Luke 4:16-21, we find that the Lord Jesus Christ came in his first advent to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. The phrase “*acceptable year of the Lord*” relates to a special season (*the year of jubilee*) that was celebrated in Israel every fifty years. During this great festal occasion, the captives, the debtors etc were set free, and everyman returns to his inheritance (Leviticus 25). It was a time of great rejoicing and liberty in Israel.

But that great event that God commanded the children of Israel to observe was to be a token of the true redemption that was to come through Jesus Christ. It was a type of the deliverance from the yoke and heavy

burden of sin and the distributed effects of the fall that Jesus Christ was to secure for mankind (Mathew 11:28-29).

Under the Old Testament, the great jubilee is announced (proclaimed) by the blowing of the trumpet (Leviticus 25:9). And so here in Luke 4, we find the Lord Jesus Christ announcing his mission in his first advent. He came to proclaim *the acceptable year of the Lord... to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to sin's captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised* (Luke 4: 18).

So, what was accomplished in the Old by the blowing of a physical trumpet of jubilee, the Lord did by the proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 1:10-16 further confirms our observation that the sounding forth of the voice of the Son of God in the gospel is the antitypical fulfillment of the blowing of the trumpet. We read that the sound of the voice of the Son of God coming to the Apostle John was *a great voice, as of a trumpet saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last*. The voice gives life to all that hear with profit (John 5:25).

We find another witness in Hebrews 4 which also speaks concerning the wilderness journey of the children of Israel and applies it to the believer's pilgrimage and journey into the fullness of redemption in Christ.

Four Gospel Themes

In verse 9, we are shown that *there remaineth a rest to the people of God*. And in verse 11, we are admonished to *labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief*. Then in verses 12 and 13, there is an immediate reference to the power of the revealed word. It says *...For the word of God is quick (living), and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...*

For the church in the wilderness, it was the sound of a physical trumpet that announced to them the things that belong to entering into their rest. And they were required to co-operate with that sound. But for the church of the New Testament, it is the revealed word (the living word) and our co-operation with it that assist us to enter into the rest that the Lord has prepared for us.

The children of Israel were brought to a physical mountain, which burned with fire. They heard *the sound of the trumpet and the voice of words*. But *they could not endure that which was commanded*. But we are come to mount Zion! Halleluyah! ... *To the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things...* And we are admonished not to refuse the voice of *him that speaketh from heaven* (Hebrews 12:18-25). The Lord Jesus Christ is speaking from heaven today. The trumpet sound of the gospel is going forth and we must hear it with profit.

The Sons of Aaron, the Trumpet Bearers

The above observation connects us with the next point to note. Under the Old Testament, it is the Sons of Aaron that blow the trumpet. We must recall that Aaron, the High Priest of Israel, was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the same vein, the sons of Aaron typify persons within the church that have been raised up to be voice gifts. These ones are assisted to sound forth the word of God in the power of the Spirit and with distinctiveness. The Lord Jesus Christ sounds forth His voice today through His servants, the five-fold ministry. To see this, let us consider 1 Corinthians 14:5-12. We are shown here that when the word of God comes to His people from the mouth of one among them in a way that is clear and easily understood, whether *by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying or by doctrine*, such a ministration can be likened to the sound of a pipe, or a harp, or a trumpet.

However, it is not all Spirit-enabled ministration of the word of God that can be regarded as the sound of a trumpet in the strict usage. Two conditions must be fulfilled for a ministration of God's word to qualify as such.

First, it must be borne by one among God's people that has been raised up to the estate of the five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4:11). The five-fold ministry is the starting line in terms of God raising up servants that will represent His Son on the earth and be able to sound forth His voice, ministering His life to men. An individual must have been serving the Lord faithfully in the estate of the five-fold ministry before he can receive an additional commission as a voice gift.

Four Gospel Themes

Second, the ministry must be empowered to distinctively declare issues, principles of truth and its practice, bound up with God's final acts of redemption and the preparations of the world to receive the installation of the *kingdom of heaven* over the earth.

What this implies is that the ministries serving God as His voice gifts to the church would be essentially prophetic, able to foretell by a faithful exposition of the scriptures the times and seasons of redemptive activities. This will not necessarily include the "*day*" and "*hour*" which are only discernible when specific events they touch upon are already running their respective courses. It must relate to a major advancement of God's people in His purposes.

We find an example in John. He was said to be "*the voice of one crying in the wilderness*" (Luke 3:4). His commission was to *prepare the way of the Lord, to make a people ready* for something God was about to do in Israel. This served to herald the coming of Christ and set the stage for His first advent ministry.

John had a message from God to the nation of Israel. At no time did he carry a physical trumpet. But the words of the Lord in Mathew 11:7-19 make us to know that he did blow a trumpet to that nation, though the nation would not dance to the voice of the sound.

God never leaves Himself without a witness in the earth! He does not do anything but that He reveals His secrets to His servants "*the prophets*" (Amos 3:7). These servants are made to know the things that God wants to

do in the earth in each season. They are also enabled by God to declare these things unto His people with power and glory.

The Journey into the fullness of Christ

The trumpets were for the *calling of the assembly* and for *the journeying of the camps*. By the authority of 1 Corinthians 10 and Hebrews 4, we understand that there is a spiritual journey that is set before us individually, and collectively, as God's people. It is a journey into our Land of promise, and subsequently to the fullness of life in Christ.

Christ revealed in all of his fullness is our Land of promise! When we have been made thoroughly aware of the things associated with this fullness of our inheritance in Christ, and how we are to enter into it experientially, then we can be said to have been brought into the land of promise. We will then be able to view the length and breadth and beauty and glory of the Land. We are thus drawn to "*possess*" the Land.

Note the distinction carefully: the Land of promise is not the same as possessing the land. In the experience of the children of Israel, even though the soles of their feet had touched upon the land of promise, they had to fight battles, quite distinct from the wars that characterized their wilderness journey, before they could possess the land. And we are told that they did not really enter into their rest.

So also, it is only when we enter into perfection and fullness of life, power and glory in Christ, that it can be said that we have experientially entered into the land of

Four Gospel Themes

promise and fully come into our rest. Yes! There is a place of perfection and fullness in Christ that can be experienced while on earth. Revelation 12:10 says *...Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ...*

So, there is the Land of promise revelationally. There is also the land of promise experientially. And we are to enter into the reality of these two. In relation to this, there is a labour that must be entered into and a battle to be fought (Hebrews 4:11, Revelation 12:7).

In the typical journey of the children of Israel, the Lord went before them in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night to search out a resting place for them (Numbers 10:33). The final resting place was the land of promise, but there were other resting places they were to experience in the wilderness. Each stop the Lord led them into was a resting place, and was preparatory to their entering into the land of promise.

Associated with the movement to each of these resting places was the blowing of the trumpet. The blowing of the trumpet heralded each journey of the children of Israel. When the trumpet is blown, it indicated that there was to be a moving forward into a new experience of rest.

The foregoing is a pattern of God's dealing with the church. The journey of the church into the revelation and experience of all that God has prepared for her in Christ is progressive. The light of revelation is to shine more and more unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4:18).

Our experience of the inheritance is also to be from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Each advancement of the church in God's purpose is preceded by the blowing of the trumpet. The trumpet sound will always call for a higher experience in Christ (Revelation 4:1).

It declares the things the Lord is about to do unto His people with distinctiveness, clarity and great grace, so that all are able to hear and respond. *For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?* (1 Corinthians 14:8).

The Seven Church Types

The Lord used seven church types to depict the prophetic history of the church. His messages to these churches are contained in chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Revelation.

These churches were not the only congregation of God's people existing in the world then. But the Lord chose to speak concerning them for some reasons. First, they had characteristics that applied to all other congregations of His people. So, it was possible for the Lord to speak to His Church by speaking to these representative churches (Revelation 2:7).

Also, they did symbolize different epochs (or eras) within the church age.

The church age can be said to have its beginning at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost

Four Gospel Themes

(Acts 2). The age will end when the church is perfected and brought into fullness of life in Christ. In between this period, now spanning almost two thousand years, there are to be distinct phases in the experience of the church and the outworking of God's purposes in and through her.

And so the Lord used these seven church types to point to the several phases in the development of the church. So, we can say that the *Ephesians church* symbolize the early church, the first phase. The *Smyrna church* can also be thought of as representing the era that immediately followed, i.e., the period when the church witnessed untold persecution from the Roman Empire etc.

Thus, by an examination of the letter the Lord caused to be written to each church type, we can understand the defining characteristics of the church in each of these phases of her development.

The Angels of the Seven Churches

Next we observe that in communicating His messages and purposes to these church types, the Lord caused the letter to be written to the angels of the churches. *Unto the angel of the church in Ephesus write...* (Revelation 2:1).

Of course, since the message is to the churches, which are made up of human persons, we are not to suppose that these angels are spirit beings. This cannot be so, because the angels upon receiving the letters were required to minister the contents to the congregations. They were to ensure that the Lord's people thoroughly

understand the import of the messages. Only then would the congregations be able to respond intelligently to the Lord's words.

So, these angels must be human persons within the congregations of the Lord's people that have the responsibility of ministry and of providing leadership. Revelation 1:20 assures us that the angels are the stars in the right hand of the Lord. They are His servants or ministers.

The English word "*angel*" derives from the Greek word "*angelos*". The Greek concordance interprets it to mean "*a messenger; esp. an "angel": by impl, a pastor*". So the word can be used for both spirit and human messengers. However, human servants are the ones directly involved in the preaching of the gospel. So, the angels here, as well as in many other places in the Book of Revelation, are human persons.

Of course, Spirit angels are involved in the kingdom service. But this is in a secondary sense. Hebrews 1:14 says they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them that are to be heirs of salvation. In other words, they wait upon the Lord in the interest of the church to carry out her business. They also learn from her mouth the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10, 1Peter 1:12b).

The Lord Jesus Christ and the church together constitute God's instrumental agency in redemption. He (the Lord) is the Principal Witness, the servant above all servants, the Messenger of the covenant (Malachi 3:1). He, not some angelic spirits, not any other, is the One upon whom the Father has set the seal

Four Gospel Themes

and invested with the authority to execute the redemptive plan (John 5:22-23; 6:27; Hebrews 1). He is supremely above all!

Associated with Him and just immediately under Him in this service, is the church, especially the stars which He holds in His right hand. The church is said to be *his body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all* (Ephesians 1:23).

Again let us note that even though in Revelation 2 and 3, each letter is written to the *angel* of the church concerned, the Lord has always raised up a body of servants in each era in the church age. The “*angel*” of each church era has always been a many-membered body of servants, raised up and diversely anointed by the Lord to fulfill His purpose in the church for that period.

This was how it was in the first era of the church age. We had the twelve apostles chosen by the Lord in the days of his flesh. We also had others like Paul, Apollos, Barnabas and many more that the Lord raised up after His ascension.

We are also shown in the scriptures that this is how it will be at the closing era of the church age. Mathew 24:31 says ...*He shall send his **angels** (not angel) with a great sound of a trumpet.*

Also, when we look at the conditions of the seven churches to which the letter was addressed particularly, we find that each congregation had not just one servant but many servants of God labouring amongst them.

For example in Acts 20:17-37, we are told that Paul sent for the *elders* of the church at Ephesus, a body of people that had oversight functions in that church. The scriptures also show that that is how it was in all other assemblies of God's people. In Acts 13:1 for example, we read that *there was in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen which was brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul* (later turned Paul). So the angel of the church in each case could not have been a single individual.

God has exalted His Son Jesus Christ above all! He has also ordained that in every dispensation of the church age, His ministry will be fulfilled towards the church through a body of servants, each functioning according to the grace he has received of the Lord.

Yes! The voice of the Lord is as the sound of many waters (Revelation 1:15). Through a many-membered body, here a little and there a little, He reveals and accomplishes the fullness of His will. He does this for the safety of His people and so that all eyes will be on Him and not on man (Luke 21:8).

Four Gospel Themes

A New Testament Pattern

Revelation 8 provides a general pattern of the outworking of God's saving purpose in and through the church. Let us read verses 1-6.

¹And when he hath opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour, ²And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets, ³And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴And the smoke of the incense, which came from the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. ⁵And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake. ⁶And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

Take particular note of the relationship between the opening of the seal by the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:2, 7; 6:1) and the giving out of the seven trumpets. God's servants receive the trumpets only after the Lord has opened the book and loosen the seals thereof. Later we are going to see that this is also the case with the sounding forth of the last trumpet.

Also, note that the persons given the trumpets are said to be angels. In other words, they were servants of God even before they received an additional commission as voice gifts. They also have this characteristic mark that *they stand before God*.

To stand before God is to wait for His instruction, to wait to hear what He has to say, to wait upon Him as a servant ready to do His will, to habitually seek Him concerning the outworking of His purpose in the earth. Elijah was described as a man that stood before God (1 Kings 17:1).

Upon receiving the trumpets, the angels must also prepare themselves to sound. This is because the message of the trumpet is usually given to lead God's people into something in God's plan for them that is beyond that which they presently know and enjoy. So, expectedly, there would be opposition from the kingdom of darkness.

But more than that, there would be opposition even from among the Lord's people. Many will resist the light of the *present truth* (2 Peter 1:12). Many will strive to maintain the status quo rather than move unto the greater rest the Lord is leading.

Apart from these external forces, there will also be some demand upon the angels that are to blow the trumpets. The angels will have to stay upon God for greater clarity in relation to the message. They must also obtain confidence and boldness from the Lord. They must wait until their minds are fully enlightened and their wills totally captured to do the Lord's desire alone. They must wait until they are clothed with grace from on High!

This is the meaning of the question asked in Amos 3:3...*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* Yes! For there to be compatibility between the message

Four Gospel Themes

and the messenger, and for the message to produce the desired result, the angels must prepare themselves to sound.

But we want to emphasize also the role of this other angel that came to stand by the altar (verse 3).

Whenever God is about to move the church into something higher in their understanding of His redemptive purposes and in their experience of the same, because there would always be opposition, and also because *these things will not just be* except men lay hold upon God in prayers, God does raise up men and women that will be *particularly anointed* to fulfill the ministry of intercessory prayers.

In Isaiah 62:6, 7 He says *I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*

Revelation 4:8; and 6:1-17 strengthen this position. There are a people that *rest not day and night, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come.* Through the intercessory prayers of these living creatures, the things that are to be are called forth into existence. Glory to the name of the Lord our God!

These persons that labour in intercessory prayers will, quite often, be associates of the angels that are given the trumpets. However, some may never be public figures

(since their ministry will be mainly fulfilled in the closet, at the altar of prayers and worship).

This New Testament arrangement revealed by the Lord to the church through the apostle John is worthy of emphasis. The outworking of God's purpose in the church and in the earth moves forward upon the wings of the revelation and declaration of the due word, and the breath of prayers. This is how it has been throughout the church age, when God is to move the church forward into something definite in His redemptive plan. It is the combined activities of these two classes of angels (the angels that receive the trumpets and the angels that stand by the altar) that produce the effect we read in verses 7-12 of Revelation 8.

Numbers 10:33-36 reveal the same pattern. Every journeying forward of the children of Israel through the wilderness was fraught with danger and opposition. So when they are about to move forward, the Lord stirs up an intercessory prayer, "*Rise up Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered...*"

In addition, when the sound of the trumpet has been heard by the Lord's people, the Lord must work into them the purpose of that sound. They were to learn and fully enjoy the things that belong to that resting place. So, Moses was taught to say unto the Lord in prayers "*Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel*".

Four Gospel Themes

THE LAST TRUMPET

The Prophetic Time Element

The last trumpet is associated with the last epoch of the church age. It is the trumpet blown by the “seventh angel” at the closing period of the church age.

The sounding of this trumpet has time duration. It has a definite beginning and a definite end. Revelation 10:7 says *But in the **days** of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall **begin** to sound....*

The beginning of the sounding of the last trump is in connection with the descent of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16). The end of that sound is associated with the final and complete overthrow of the kingdoms of this world, causing them to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ (Revelation 11: 15).

In between these two events is a period of time. The length of this time period is not specified in the scriptures. But the events to be fulfilled during the period make us to know that it shall span many years.

**The “*Shout*”, the “*Voice of the Archangel*”,
And the “*Trump of God*”**

1 Thessalonians 4:16 says *For the Lord **himself** shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God... Revelation 10 reveals the connection between this descent of the Lord*

and the associated elements. Let us read verses 1 through 7.

¹And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: ²And he had in his hand a little book open: and he sets his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, ³And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. ⁴And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. ⁵And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hands to heaven, ⁶And sware by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven and the things therein, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: ⁷But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

The description of this angel does not leave us in doubt as to his identity. He is the Messenger of the covenant. He is the Sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2), whose feet is as fine brass, as if they burn in a furnace (Revelation 1:15). He is the One that is worthy to take the book and to open it, the Lion of the tribe of Judah that has prevailed to bring redemption to mankind (Revelation 5). He came in His first advent to lay down His human life as the Ransom and to offer Himself as the Ransomer of the human race. Thereafter, He was raised from the

Four Gospel Themes

dead and received up in glory, to be withheld in the heavens of God until the appointed time. At the time of the end, He is sent again by the Father to finish up the work of redemption, perfecting His church (Acts 3:20-21).

We are told He descends from heaven with a shout! This shout is the roaring of the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Amos 3:4 tells us that this roaring has a signification and is associated with battle. It says ...*Will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he hath taken nothing at all?* Thus, the shout relates to the destruction of everything that stands against the fulfilment of the divine purposes, first in the church (1 Peter 4:17), and then in the nations of the world.

Brethren! The days culminating in the Lord's second coming are very fearful days for all that set themselves against the realization of the divine purpose in his church and in the earth. Verse 5-6 of Amos 3 says ...*Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is set for him? Shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? Shall a trumpet be blown in a city and the people not be afraid? , shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?*

May we submit to the Lord in all things! May all have the wisdom to bow before Him! Psalm 2:10-12 says *Be wise now therefore, O ye Kings: be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye*

*perish from the way, when his wrath is but a little.
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!*

The roaring of the Lion of the tribe of Judah brings about a great shaking which shall lead to the eventual overthrow of the powers of the heavens (Luke 21:26, Revelation 12:7-10). And this shall produce many rumblings upon the earth! May the grace of the Almighty God keep and preserve us. Amen.

We find the same in the Old Testament type as the children of Israel moved through the wilderness into the land of promise (Numbers 23). The shout of the King amongst them (verse 21) was for the overthrow of that which was in any opposition. It was for their protection and victory in the raging battle.

Read also Psalm 47, particularly verses 1-5, and you will find that the “*crying with a loud voice*” has to do with the Lord bringing His people into the inheritance He has prepared for them. We obtain full victory by the grace of Him who works with and in us, using the word of our testimony and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Revelation 12:11).

The Lord descends not only with a shout, but also with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. The voice of the archangel consists of the ministrations of the Lord to His people from the invisible sphere. He ministers to enlighten us, to impart us with wisdom and life. He continues to work in His voice gifts until they are able to receive those final aspects of the blessings of full redemption.

Four Gospel Themes

The ministrations of the Lord are fulfilled towards His people through servants whom He raises up. So we are told He descends also in the trumpet of God. The trumpet is that which declares to the Lord's people the contents of the shout and the voice of the archangel. It is by means of the trumpet of God that these things are revealed and taught the Lord's people.

The servants of God hear in their spirits, the contents of the shout and the voice of the archangel, as the Lord unveil to them the things that belong to the fullness of our inheritance. Thereafter, they begin to declare these things to His people, as it were sounding the trumpet of God.

When the lion roars, the seven thunders (a prophetic description of the ministry proceeding from God's servants: Revelation 6:1) must utter their voices. When the Lord God has spoken, His servants must prophesy (Amos 3:8).

Events Linked with the Sound of the Last Trumpet

We have already seen that one of the events associated with the sounding forth of the last trumpet is that it is going to bring a final collapse to the kingdoms of this present world and pave way for the introduction of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ and His glorified church upon the earth (Revelation 11:15).

I Corinthians 15: 51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 show that it will also involve with the resurrection of the saints that slept in the Lord into incorruptibility and

life, and the total transformation of the “*alive and remaining*” ones from weaknesses, dishonour, and corruption into power, glory and incorruptibility (verses 42-43). The closing part of verse 17 of 1 Thessalonians 4 shows that it will also lead to our union with Christ in the fullness of his glory, so that we see Him as He is, and become eternally associated with Him (1 John 3:2).

However, it is important to note that these three things (the raising up of the church to fullness of power, glory and incorruptibility; the final overthrow of the kingdoms of this world; and our union with the Lord in the fullness of his Spirit essence and glory) are not the only events accompanying the sounding of the last trumpet. They are in fact, the last series of events that sets in after the sound of the last trumpet has been on for a while. They are thus associated with the concluding (not the beginning) aspects of the sounding forth of the last trumpet.

There are other events identified with the sounding forth of the last trumpet that precedes these. For example, we are told in Revelation 10: 7 that *in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*

A “*mystery*” in the context of the Bible is something in the plan of God previously held secret but now opened to the understanding of the Lord’s people. It is a mystery of God when it is a revealed matter, and when it answers to the plan of redemption.

Four Gospel Themes

So, all the prophecies in the scriptures relative to redemption constitute the mystery of God. The body of Christ itself is the “*mystery of mysteries*”, being the instrument through which God reveals Himself and bring about His redemptive purpose in the earth (Ephesians 3:3-7; Colossians 1:25-27; I Timothy 3:16).

So when the scriptures here says that the mystery of God will be finished, it means that all the prophecies in scriptures detailing God’s redemptive activities are to be fully unveiled and brought into full fulfillment in the days of the voice of the seventh angel. It will be a momentous period in the history of the church as God moves to complete and perfect the church for His purposes. We are told that in that period, *there shall be time no longer*; God will not entertain any delay or interruption.

Daniel 12 has much to tell us about the divine activities in this period. The whole chapter is instructive but we shall only reproduce below verse 9-12.

⁹And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed and sealed till the time of the end. ¹⁰Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. ¹¹And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. ¹²Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days...

There shall be a lot of cleansing work the Lord will carry out in his temple during the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when the mysteries of God that are sealed are being revealed. All these will be to prepare a people for moral perfection and for the glorious transformations that shall be associated with the final aspects of the sound of the last trumpet.

Many shall be purified and made white. But many among God's people shall also do wickedly! We are going to see an enthronement of false worship and the lack of the fear of God in our day. We will witness such abominations we never had thought could happen in the holy place of God's sanctuary (Ezekiel 8). At the time when the Lord is bringing to conclusion the mystery of God, we shall behold another mystery in the holy place!

The Lord Jesus Christ already forewarned us in Mathew 24:15 *...When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place...* And that we might know that the reference is not to some physical temple or some physical abomination, He adds *....whoso readeth, let him understand.* But while the wise who has developed the spirit of the fear of God by practicing obedience to God's word (Mathew 7:24) shall be made to understand all these, we are told that none of the wicked shall understand. May we be in a place where the Lord can reach us with mercy.

We should expect that with this emerging abomination shall be the severance of the faithful at heart from the unfaithful assemblies by the sound of the trumpet (Mathew 24:31; Luke 17:34-37; Mathew 24:16).

Four Gospel Themes

There is also be a time of waiting that shall test the desires and faithfulness of all that comes under the sound of the trumpet of the seventh angel (verse 12 of Daniel 12). And it is only those that endure to the end that will receive the fullness of the reward (Mathew 24: 12, 13; 25:5).

These Are Crucial Days!

In another volume, we will be able to show from the scriptures that the severance of the faithful from the unfaithful systems and their being gathered together unto the Lord has already begun. Mathew 24:31 says *...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...*

Yes! There is a trumpet sound that God has graciously released to the church in these last days. The intent is to assist the Lord's people unto the journey to meet with Him, our Bridegroom, in full union. This trumpet shall sound louder and louder!

In many nations of the earth, there are local assemblies of God's people that have been gathered out of the unfaithful denominational church systems of our day, brought under the sound of the trumpet announcing the soon installation of the Kingdom, and being assisted thereby to seek the Lord for the fullness of the inheritance.

This is in fulfillment of Mathew 25:1 *...Then* (at the time of the end, when the Lord's second coming is

imminent), *shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom* (Mathew 25:1).

These are very crucial days for the church! While the church world is yet deep in personality cults, and many assemblies of the Lord's people are saying with loud voices to Him in the words of Revelation 3:17a "*I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*", momentous events are transpiring in the heavens.

And whether any will be able to appreciate the things that belong to our day and to enter into the fullness of the Lord's purpose at this time will depend on his response to Him. He says *Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me* (Revelation 3:20).

A positive response to the voice of the trumpet that is sounding at this last hour confers grace and opens the way of profit in the kingdom of heaven. ...*See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain* (Hebrews 12:25-27).