

THE CROWN OF PRIDE

Our first reading will be taken from Revelation 19. It will be necessary for us to establish the link between this message and the things that have been shared in the previous editions, especially during the last six months. We read verses 1-3

“...And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God.

For true and righteous are his judgements: for he hath judge the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up forever and ever. ...”

The first verse of the passage says “*after these things...*”. We ask, after what things? From what we read in the second verse showing the judgement of the harlot, we know that the reference is to the last two chapters that precede Revelation 19, i.e. Revelation 17 and 18. In Chapter 17, the revelation of the judgement of Babylon is given, and in Chapter 18, the judgement itself is described. Here we find a people rejoicing in the overthrow of Babylon, and with all it, marks of unfaithfulness and we find in the visible church systems today.

Now, it would be recalled that in the message: “*The Language of Prophecy*”, we observed that the word “*heaven*”, in this context, refer to the heavenly-minded people. Thus, it was not just that there was rejoicing in the celestial glory... Of course, we know heaven rejoices to see God’s purpose advancing in the earth... but the reference here is to the faithful class, those heavenly-minded of the Lord’s people who follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ, who are influenced in everything they do by the principles of God’s word.

Whatever He sets out too do He fulfils first amongst His people, then He takes in the rest of the world. Straightaway, we come to a very basic principle in the dealings of God: Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:17 that judgement will begin in the house of the Lord. It will begin at us, using the

words of Peter. In God's plan and purpose, He uses the house to judge the house. That judgement will begin in the house of God is clear to all. But that the instrument of judgement will be drawn from within the house is what we want to emphasise.

Recall that the seven letters to the seven were the main focus in the immediate past meditation. We promised that in this new series, we should be looking at God's Pattern Church. This is because we know that ever before God's judgements are visited upon a people, He, in compassion, will sensitise them to things pertaining to judgement. He will always make clear before hand both things that pleases Him and the things that He disapproved. He does these through the ministry of the word. Those who have reverential fear of the Lord will in the circumstance break free from things God condemns. Others, who lack a proper disposition to the things of God will, quite often disregard warning signals. Wrist still, these take up an attitude of discrediting any word that challenges them to deep repentance. But quite definitely the hour of judgement is near to be revealed. It is a time all true seekers after God to give ears to what the Spirit of prophecy is declaring. In the next few editions we would be looking at issues God's judgement will concern itself with.

Please, come with me to Isaiah 28. We have as a subject "*The Crown of Pride*". We will discuss principles of divine judgement by appealing to a prophecy that relates to our day. Notice the certainty of God dealing decisively with all things that obscures His purpose and undermines His counsel. Isaiah 28:1-8;

“...Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!

Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.

The crown of pride, lie drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet:

And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as hasty fruit before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,

And for a spirit of judgement to him that sitteth in judgement, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision they stumble in judgement.

For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean ...”.

Now, there are many figurative expressions here, and we will do well to begin to take them one by one and to examine them. This will enable us to have full entrance into this prophecy, which has direct bearing upon the events of the last hour.

We begin with “*The Crown of Pride*”. What does this mean? Let us for a while come back to Revelation 19. Something is said of the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 12. It says, “*his eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself*”. Here we are told that the Lord Jesus Christ is seen wearing many crowns. We know that it is not possible for one man or individual to literally put on many crowns. What then does this represent? It represents the great victories that the Lord Jesus Christ has won, and the great marks of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, power, grace, which are so fully developed in the Lord Jesus Christ. The crowns upon his head reveal his achievements, the character of his person.

And now, if you will turn to 1 Thessalonians 2:19, you will find yet another reference to a figurative use of the word “*crown*”. Paul was writing to the Thessalonians Christians amongst whom he had laboured. He had seen the great power of God coming upon that land, gathering people unto the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation, constituting them into a local assembly of God’s people and leading them in the knowledge of God’s will. To these people, he was writing, in a form of a follow up. And in verse 19 of the second chapter he said certain things that have direct bearing on our subject matter. We read verse 19 and 20.

**“...For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ as his coming?
*For ye are our glory and joy....”***

Here Paul was saying that the Thessalonians Christians were a crown of rejoicing to him and his fellow workers. When the scriptures talk about the crown of rejoicing which, the faithful shall put on, the reference is not to some physical, shining objects, but to the glory that shall be worked into the believer because of the anointing of fruitfulness that has attended the believer’s labour. The crown of rejoicing in 1 Thessalonians 2:15 is figuratively speaking of the results that accrued to Paul and such fellow servants that worked with him.

Let's get back to Isaiah 28. What is the crown of pride? One disturbing feature in many of the church systems of our day is a recourse to empty show of pride in successes recorded in ministry. Quite often what are counted as marks of success hardly meet God's approval. It is even more abhorring when because of such measure of success real or imagined they cause the lord's people to worship at the altar of their assumed greatness. In the figure used to depict their sad condition – "*the crown of pride*" God witnesses against it. Babylon the Great, the great city, always boasting herself of her achievements. That is the first figure of speech that we are examining here.

The next is "*the drunkards of Ephraim*". Recall that Joseph had two sons, which the father, Israel adopted. So, when we talk of the twelve tribes of Israel, it includes the two sons that Joseph had: Manasseh and Ephraim. And you will recall that when Israel was blessing these two sons, though Manasseh was the firstborn, he laid his right hand upon Ephraim, and confer upon him the firstborn rights. Ephraim means fruitfulness, and Manasseh and Ephraim combine to give us a two-fold description of all of the Lord's people. Manasseh is that part of the church that has long gone into apostasy and dead orthodoxy; while Ephraim stand for the Pentecostal church, that arm of the church that know Jesus Christ as saviour and baptiser in the Holy Spirit.

But again when we come to the figure of Ephraim, God uses yet another figurative expression to distinguish between two involved classes: the unfaithful and the faithful. In Jeremiah 31, we find the figure of Mount Ephraim. There, the reference is to the faithful who serve in the will of God. But when the word Ephraim is used without qualification, it refers prophetically to those of the Lord's people who have known God in salvation and in the baptism and workings of the Holy Spirit but are nevertheless walking measurable in disobedience to God's revealed will. This is especially applied to Spiritual movements, denominational churches having these characteristics

The drunkards of Ephraim therefore speak of persons who stand in the room of Teachers, Preachers, Leaders, but who nevertheless are overtaken by the intoxicating wine of this evilage. Remember that in Revelation 17, we are told that that evil lady, that lady of the kings, that harlot woman carries a golden cup in her right hand full of "*the wine of her fornication*". Now, the drunkard, quite often, is off his senses. Persons who stand in the room of leaders in the house of God ought to be examples in Life and service, wholly given to the purpose of God. But when in effect, they lead the flock of God away from the will of Good it is a pitiable sight. The pursuit of personal agenda and the wine of illicit pleasure deaden spiritual series and sets up a soul against God.

In explaining this figure we would be introducing a vital principle that may seen the workings of divine judgement against a rebellious system. Then the next figure we want to talk about is "*fat valley*". We are shown in several places in scriptures that one of the things God does in bringing

severe judgement against that system of things which no longer vitally nor adequately represent his interest in the earth, is to first of all dry up the resources of such systems. Remember before the Medo-Persian overthrew the typical kingdom of Babylon, the first thing it did was to dry up her waters – the river Euphrates, which was the main river that serviced the empire of Babylon. We read in Revelation 16:12 that just like it happened with ancient Babylon, river Euphrates will be dried up in the case of spiritual Babylon. That is in a figure. The figure is that the supply system that keeps the visible denominational church systems going on in unfaithfulness will be greatly attacked by God.

Fat valleys refer to persons with great substance, with much financial blessings, who stand to keep the church systems going. We are told that there will be a judgement against these fat valleys. Those who support systems that are opposed to God are direct enemies of God, and they will first of all, bear the brunt of divine displeasure. May God dry up those resources, which in their use are directed against His redemptive purpose.

Isaiah 28:1 says, “*Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower*”. That is, the prospect of visible church systems that are unfaithful to God, continuing in their religious empires, expanding their frontiers, conquering and ruling over the people like despots, will dim. It would be in essence a fading flower. And that prospect is rested upon the fat valleys, those that supply the systems with funds. It says the glorious beauty, which is upon the head of the fat valley, shall be as a fading flower. In Isaiah 40, the princes among men are referred to as flowers while the ordinary people are referred to as grasses, Verse 7 says the grass withereth, the flower fadeth... One of the things that God will surely do in this last hour is to dry up the fat valleys. The financial support base of great denominational empires seems unassailable. But God will break through with the force of His righteous judgements.

We will just take two or three more observations and we close our meditation. We are told that these fat valleys are overcome with wine. Now, the teachings of the drunkards of Ephraim have had the effect of overcoming these financial wizards, these men of great wealth. Their senses have been overcome. So, they think they are serving God when they make their resources available to serve the programs of the church systems. They are overcome with wine. And we are told that the glorious beauty, which is upon their heads, shall be a fading flower.

In verse 3 we are told emphatically that the crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot. But under what feet? Verse 2 brings out the answer. And that is something we will want you to take very seriously. Because, in a previous message we talked about the power of justification, and showed that the work the Lord is involved in at any given time is that which should exercise His servants. And that when we co-operate or co-labour with the Lord in that

which He is doing at any given time, then our services are counted as justifying works. And we used the figure of Rehab. While in the figure of Abraham we said we must give our all in pursuing the outworking of God's plans and purposes, in Rahab, we are shown that no matter at what costs, no matter what interpretation men may give to our actions, we must be involved in what God is doing at any given time. We are not to be in the vanguard of those whose works are contrary to the will of God.

Let us return to verse 2 of Isaiah 28. It says, "*behold the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.*" The hand in spiritual symbolism always talks about works. They also talk about the works that are fulfilled by persons who have been called unto the estate of the five-fold ministry. So, here we are told that the Lord hath a strong and mighty one. The one individual referred to, is actually a many-member body. God is gathering to Himself as many persons as will give him ears. First He will cleanse them, (because the pollution of the times and the unfaithfulness of the denominational church systems measurably stain us all). When the Lord calls us unto Himself, He first of all, beams His searchlight upon our lives, and we are able to see some awful things in our lives that we were not conscious of. And we begin to cry out unto the Lord in repentance. Then He begins to cleanse strengthen us to stand as His mighty ones.

Let's take a look at the "*tempest of hail*" and "*mighty flood of water*". Through the ministry of teaching and preaching, as we shall show in later consideration God will manifest such things as are according to His will, so that those who are found in it might rejoice in the goodness of the Lord towards them. At the same time, He will manifest those things, which are contrary to His will. This will lead those who have the spirit of the fear of God but find themselves in these things, to cry out unto the Lord for help and deliverance. By prayers, by the ministry of the word and by prophetic decrees, the present unfaithfulness in the visible church systems will be brought low. About seven hundred years before the Lord Jesus Christ came, Isaiah spoke this prophecy, and we shall see the fulfilment of this in our time. In the years ahead, some couple of years ahead, we will see things happening in the church world that answer to judgmental acts of God.

May the Lord bless and keep you. May He stir up in your heart a strong desire to submit and to keep on submitting to His processing. Only such persons who render due reverence to God may abide in the day of the coming judgement.