

LESSON 13



THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

Scripture Texts: Isaiah 9:7; Hebrews 12:18-28; Revelation 19:7-9; Revelation 22:14

Will the widespread apostasy we studied about in the last lesson be the destruction of the Church of God? Will the failure of many to live up to the Bible standard frustrate God's plan and deprive Christ of a pure, holy bride? Will there be none to receive the rewards promised the true and faithful church? Let us see if we can find the answer from God's eternal Word. The church is pure and holy, but there is much that is unholy that mingles with the church. God knows His own and will clear away all who are not His.

MEMORY VERSE: *"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 12:27

An Enduring Experience

Isaiah 9:7 Long before the church was set up, God through Isaiah stated that **of the increase of his (Christ's) government and peace**—overall rule and peace of heart—**there shall be no end**. It was to be established **henceforth even for ever**. The outcome was not to be trusted to weak humanity, but **the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this**.

Hebrews 12:18-24 Here we find a description of the church, Mount Sion (Zion), typified by the literal Mount Zion, the city of David, where David's throne was. The church, in verses 18 to 21, is contrasted with Mount Sinai where God gave the Law. The privileges of the church are much greater than were those of the people living under the Law. In the church we are associated with **an innumerable company of angels . . . the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven**. This speaks of the children of God on earth. **The spirits of just men made perfect**. This refers to the children of God in Heaven. **And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant**—of the Gospel. We see from this that the Church of God is not limited to the earth, but extends into Heaven and includes its inhabitants (Hebrews 12:1). What a great company it is! The church, or **the city of the living God, or the heavenly Jerusalem** (Revelation 21:2, 10) has come to Jesus whose blood is called **the blood of sprinkling**, because the blood of the passover lamb and other animals, which was a type of the blood of Christ, was sprinkled on the doorposts and on the altar before the Lord (Exodus 12:7, 13; Leviticus 3:2, 8, 13; 4:6, 17). The blood of these sacrifices and the blood that Abel shed could not take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). Jesus' blood **speaketh better things**. It does take away sins, because it is divine blood.

Time of Shaking

Hebrews 12:25-27 We are warned that it is dangerous to refuse God when He speaks. As this Gospel dispensation is superior to the Law dispensation, so will punishment be more severe for sin in the Gospel dispensation than for that against the Law. Then Moses **spake on earth**, now God **speaketh from heaven**; then God shook the earth (Exodus 19), now He will **shake not the earth only, but also heaven**. Why will He shake both earth and Heaven? To remove from the church all things not up to His standard of holiness. **Things that are**

made—earthly, man-made, temporary things—will be shaken off from His church, and only the lasting, eternal, divinely-made things will be left (Matthew 24:35; 15:13). God will not shake off anything that we want to hold on to, such as impurities, encumbrances and debris that cling to us and spoil our beautiful garments. We must let them go.

We are exhorted to **have grace**—to live in the power of God, to receive a supply of His life and strength to live **acceptably**, that we may have **a kingdom which cannot be moved**. This is the great hope toward which the church looks. An old song of Zion pictures it so beautifully: "We have a hope within our souls brighter than the perfect day, God has given us His Spirit and we want the world to hear it, All the doubts are passed away. Life will end in joyful singing, "I have fought a faithful fight," Then we'll lay our armor down; And our spirits freed from earthly ties shall take their happy flight, To possess a starry crown."

Nothing matters so much to us as that we be part of the unshakable church. Many temptations, delusions, and discouragements will be brought against us to overthrow us, but God will not forsake us. He will **make a way to escape**, if we will take it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

A Clean Bride

Revelation 19:7-9 At the end of time will be a great day for the church. Christ is coming back to get His bride. His bride is the Church of God, the saints. She will be ready—made ready while living on earth (Ephesians 5:25-27). Her dress will be **the righteousness of saints**, likened to **fine linen, clean and white**. This dress must be obtained in this earthly life. **Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb**. To be the bride of Christ is the hope of the church. This is why everything which is not becoming to the bride must be shaken off. **The true sayings of God** does the shaking off.

Revelation 22:14 **Do his commandments**. This is the requirement for entrance into Heaven. This includes all of them—those for being made a child of God and those for continuing to live the Christian life. Doing His commandments will allow one to eat of the tree of life, thus to have eternal life, and to enter Heaven. This is the hope of the church—and the church only. Only those who stand will make it safely. I do not want to miss it. Do you?

JUST A THOUGHT

"Satan shows the bait but hides the hook."

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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