

BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW COURSE

Class 7: The Sojourning Identity Of The *Ekklesia*

Bill Scofield

I. THE GOSPEL AND OUR IDENTITY

- A. In light of the original perfection of creation, the promised restoration, the coming Kingdom, and the day of the Lord we will now turn our attention to the identity of the *Ekklesia*. The Gospel itself anchors us into an identity as the 'elect'—those **set apart from the nations of the earth**—to inherit the promises of the Kingdom and the resurrection.

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, (1Pe 1:1 NIV)

- B. As those awaiting the coming of Jesus to receive our imperishable inheritance, we are pilgrims and sojourners on the earth now. Our identity as those who are waiting for the promises is ultimately what separates us from the nations of the earth. In light of our calling to inherit the Kingdom and the resurrection, we conduct ourselves in completely different manner than the nations of the earth.

⁹ But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION... ¹⁰ for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. ¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. (1Pe 2:9-11 NASB)

²⁵ And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.'" ²⁶ "But it is not this way with you... (Luk 22:25-26 NASB)

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them (i.e. of the promises of Abraham, cf 9:4) of the rich root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. ... ²⁵ For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; (Rom 11:17-18, 25 NASB)

- C. There has been a massive perversion in the identity of the *Ekklesia* since the Constantinian shift. However, the recent obsession within the body of Christ regarding our 'identity' has really articulated what most of Church history has fought to believe. Namely, that we have fully attained everything that we need to 'get to heaven' at 'conversion', thus, undermining any future need to persevere unto an inheritance that actually hinges upon our conduct in this age.
- D. Within a Christoplatonic worldview we are destined for heaven, and thus all that is needed in order to fulfill our 'destiny' is simply to 'get saved' (i.e. 'forgiven') which ensures our entrance into heaven and thus our destiny. However, **within the context of a real second coming, a real day of the Lord, and real government established on the earth then everything about how we live this life has dramatic consequences forever.**

- E. Man's rebellion and pride has led to an obsession to remove ultimate accountability for our lives from our belief. From infant baptism (*thus ensuring inclusion into heaven*), 'sonship theology', the pre-tribulation rapture, once saved-always saved, postmillennialism, etc... are simply historic deviations from the clear ecclesiology of the apostles which supply believers with a totally false security of their identity.

⁷ But whatever things (i.e. assurance of entrance into the promises, status, security of identity, and reputation, cf. Phil. 3:4-6) were gain (i.e. to my advantage) to me, those things I have counted as loss (i.e. as damaging to me) for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things (i.e. assurance, security, reputation, etc...), and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law (i.e. false assurance of inclusion into the promises of Abraham), but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, (Phl 3:7-13 NASB)

¹² So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; (Phl 2:12 NASB)

- F. The nations of the earth are all living for the same things, but we know their end. Thus, **we must live in a completely different manner** since we don't share their ambitions or their destiny. **The effectiveness of the church's witness on the earth is wholly dependent upon the measure to which they embrace this sojourning identity.**

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. ¹² Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation (cf. Matt. 5:16). ¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution (i.e. governments), whether to a king as the one in authority, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. ¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. (1Pe 2:11-15 NASB)

- G. To the measure that we live after the indulgences of this age as the nations of the earth do, then we have our witness of allegiance to the coming King and His Kingdom dulled and it becomes of no effect. The message of the Gospel is of little or no effect if we don't believe that our Messiah is coming back to actually judge all men by a real standard of righteousness and order our lives accordingly.

II. PRAYER AND THE NEED FOR GRACE

- A. Within the context of a sojourning identity—**still qualifying for our inheritance**—we are wholly dependent upon the grace of God which sustains us unto the day of the Lord and our inheritance in the Kingdom and the resurrection. Thus we organize ourselves both corporately and individually by prayer since prayer is the means that we receive the grace of God.

³ Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. ⁴ For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. ... ¹⁴ It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones. ¹⁵ to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." ¹⁶ These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage. ¹⁷ But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁸ that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." ¹⁹ These are the ones who cause divisions (i.e. not the ones who are steadfast in the Gospel of His coming), worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. ²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. ²² And have mercy on some, who are doubting; ²³ save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. ²⁴ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, (i.e. on the day of the Lord) (Jud 1:3-4, 14-24 NASB)

- B. Historically, the church has organized itself based on its identity of false security. This has resulted in a misunderstanding of the function of grace in the life of the believer, and the means of attaining¹ it. Thus, it is extremely rare that you find any group of normal believers² in church history since the Constantinian Shift that organizes itself in the same way that the early church did. I.e. by constant prayer together.

⁴ Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait (cf. prayer) for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit... ⁸ you will receive power (i.e. grace) when the Holy

¹ The Catholic Church holds to 7 Sacraments [i.e. means of grace] of the Church; Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Last Rites, Holy Orders, and Marriage.

² With the obvious exception of the monastic movements through the history of the church. While there have been some very good monastic movements—and my life has been really impacted by the lives of many of their leaders—many of them went astray within one generation of the ‘movement’ since they viewed their monasticism as a ‘special’ calling to prayer. Thus, although many of them started with great sincerity of heart, many ended with an almost Pharisaic self-righteousness since they seldom viewed themselves as persevering so that they might attain to the promise (like Paul), but as walking out a special devotion to Jesus IN ADDITION to their salvation.

Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses (calling) in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:4-8 NIV)

- ***¹⁴ These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. (Act 1:14 NASB)***
- ***⁴² They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Act 2:42 NASB)***
- ***⁴ "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." (Act 6:4 NASB)***
- ***¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ... ¹⁸ With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (Eph 6:13, 18 NASB)***
- ***² Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; (Col 4:2 NASB)***
- ***⁷ The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. (1Pe 4:7 NASB)***

C. Grace, within the Biblical context, is the power of God that works in the believer to anchor them in authentic faith which is expressed through lives defined by joyfully embracing the cross in discipleship and preaching the gospel with clarity and boldness. Thus, it is not a bonus to salvation, it is the only way that any man will inherit the resurrection and the Kingdom of God.

¹¹ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, (Tts 2:11-13 NIV)

- ***⁵ Now He who prepared us for this very purpose (i.e. the resurrection) is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. (2Cr 5:5 NASB)***
- ***¹³ ... you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph 1:13-14 NASB)***
- ***¹⁰ As to this salvation (i.e. the resurrection), the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, ... ¹³ Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1Pe 1:10, 13 NASB)***

D. The prayers of the apostles, within the Biblical worldview, are simply the prayers that they prayed that the saints might be sustained in their sojourn to persevere in righteousness and a bold witness. All of the prayers of the apostles were generally for three areas of grace:

1. **Understanding of our calling** (Wisdom, revelation, knowledge of God's will, etc...)

2. **Strength to persevere in our calling** (Worthy of calling, strength, perseverance, etc...)
3. **Preaching the Gospel with boldness** (Preach with boldness, signs and wonders, etc...)

⁹ ***For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰ And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.*** (Col 1:9-12 NIV)

²⁹ ***"And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, (Act 4:29 NASB)***

III. THE EKKLESIA DIFFICULTY

- A. Historically, the word 'ekklesia' has been seen as very difficult to understand. Thus, making the identity of the 'church' which Jesus promised to build in Matthew 16 very difficult to understand.

¹⁸ ***"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church (Gr. ekklesia); and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. (Mat 16:18 NASB)***

- B. Traditionally, the *ekklesia* is interpreted within a Christoplatonic worldview which still assumes the idealization of the 'spiritual' and the demonization of the 'natural'. Since this is the primary lens through which the Scripture is interpreted, the Old Testament is seen as the story of the merely 'natural' people of God while the New Testament introduces the 'spiritual' people of God.

- C. Within the framework of traditional Western theology (*Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant*), they were never *really* the people of God since they were simply 'types and shadows' of the 'spiritual' reality. This view is strengthened by the assumption that we are the Kingdom of God, since the Kingdom of God is clearly what all of the patriarchs and prophets were looking for.

¹ ***A Psalm of Solomon. Give the king Your judgments, O God, And Your righteousness to the king's son. ² May he judge Your people with righteousness And Your afflicted with justice. ... ⁴ May he vindicate the afflicted of the people, Save the children of the needy And crush the oppressor. ... ⁸ May he also rule from sea to sea And from the River to the ends of the earth. ... ¹¹ And let all kings bow down before him, All nations serve him. ¹² For he will deliver the needy when he cries for help, The afflicted also, and him who has no helper. ... ¹⁷ May his name endure forever; May his name increase as long as the sun shines; And let men bless themselves by him; Let all nations call him blessed. ... ¹⁹ And blessed be His glorious name forever; And may the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen. (Psa 72:1-19 NASB)***

⁹ ***Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut***

off. And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea. And from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zec 9:9-10 NASB)

- D. This misunderstanding was strengthened in the 17th century with the release of the first edition of King James' 'Authorized Version' of the Bible. In 1611 the—what is now considered—authorized version of the Scripture was first printed. The task of translating the Scripture from the original text was carried out with great diligence.
- E. However, King James I—being quite the scholar himself—issued 15 articles or guidelines by which the translators were obligated to abide. The 3rd article required the translation of 'ekklesia' as 'church'—as opposed to William Tyndale's edition which translated it 'congregation'.

IV. SURVEY OF EKKLESIA

- A. The word *ekklesia* is a generic and secular word that simply means an assembly or gathering of some kind.

ἐκκλησία ekklēsia; from 1537 and 2564; *an assembly, a (religious) congregation*:—assembly(3), church(74), churches(35), congregation(2).³

- **1537. ἐκ ek or ἐξ ex**; a prim. prep. denoting or.; *from, from out of*:—after(1), against(1), among(18), based(5), basis(2), because(10), belonged*(1), belonging*(1), depends(1), depends*(1), derived(1), grudgingly*(1), heavenly*(1), inspired(1), means(1), over(1), reason(1), result(4), say*(1), since(1), some(3), through(1), under(1), utterly*(1), way(1), without*(1).⁴
- **2564. καλέω kaleō**; a prim. word; *to call*:—call(13), called(99), calling(2), calls(7), give(1), invite(2), invited(15), invited guests(1), invites(1), name given(1), named(2), so-called(1), summoned(2).⁵

³⁷ ***"This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.'*** ³⁸ ***"This is the one who was in the congregation (Gr. ekklesia, KJV 'church') in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you. (Act 7:37-38 NASB)***

¹¹ ***For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,*** ¹² ***saying, "I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION (Gr. ekklesia, KJV 'church') I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE. (cf. Ps. 22:22)" (Hbr 2:11-12 NASB)***

³ Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : Updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

⁴ Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : Updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

⁵ Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : Updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

- B. The *ekklesia* is simply the people of God who are called out to inherit the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Old Testament and New.

“The church is the community of all true believers for all time. This definition understands the church to be made of all those who are truly saved... that must include all true believers for all time, both believers in the New Testament age and believers in the Old Testament age as well... both the usage of the term ‘church’ in Scripture and the fact that throughout Scripture God has always called his people to assemble to worship himself, indicate that it is appropriate to think of the church as constituting all the people of God for all time, both Old Testament believers and New Testament believers.”⁶

- C. We have been grafted into the *ekklesia* of Israel by means of the New Covenant, and we await the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham and David just as the faithful remnant of Israel present/past does.

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root (i.e. beginnings with the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. (Rom 11:17-18 NASB)

³⁵ So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. ³⁶ You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. ³⁷ For in just a very little while, “He who is coming will come and will not delay. ³⁸ But my righteous one will live by faith (i.e. in the Messiah). And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.” (cf. Hab. 2:3ff) ³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved. (i.e. at the day of the Lord) (Hbr 10:35-39 NIV)

- ***¹ Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. ² This is what the ancients were commended for. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command...⁴ By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did... ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death... he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. (i.e. who look to Him for their salvation in the resurrection) ⁷ By faith Noah (great grandson of Enoch), when warned about things not yet seen (cf. vs. 1), in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. ⁸ By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise ... ¹³ All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. ³⁹ These***

⁶ [Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 853-854.]

were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. ⁴⁰ God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. ^{12:1} Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hbr 11:1-12:1 NIV)

V. INCLUSION BY FAITH

- A. So we—like the patriarchs and the prophets—are qualified for our inheritance **by faith in the Messiah**. The stipulation for all of the covenants was simply righteousness. God's part (*the 'righteousness of God'*) is to provide the means to raise the righteous sons of Adam from the dust (*i.e. send the Messiah*) our part is to **believe in His righteous character and order our lives in light of it—i.e. repentance**.
- B. The primary confusion within the early Messianic community was not regarding the inclusion of Gentiles, but the means of inclusion. Following the development of the LXX in the 4th century B.C. the inclusion of the Gentiles into the promises became a central concern. Three conditions were put forth by which Gentiles could join the assembly of Israel, and thus inherit the promises. **Circumcision—a sign of the circumcision of the heart, offering sacrifice—an outward expression of the acknowledgment of guilt, and baptism—an outward sign of the cleansing of the heart.**⁷
- C. The offer of inclusion to the Gentiles without keeping all of the signs of the Torah was the primary controversy within the Jewish community of the Messiah. However, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Gentiles—giving them also the guarantee of the resurrection and the Kingdom if they persevere in faith and repentance—it became clear that the Lord was making another covenant with those who were not sons of Abraham.

⁴² "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. ... ⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. ⁴⁵ All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶ For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, ⁴⁷ "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized (*i.e. inclusion to the ekklesia*) who have received the Holy Spirit (and thus a promise from God to have an inheritance in the Kingdom and resurrection) just as we did, can he?" (Act 10:42, 44-47 NASB)

- ***¹⁵ "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. ... ¹⁷ "Therefore if God gave to them the same gift (*i.e. the Holy Spirit of promise*) as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I***

⁷ While baptism is often presented as originating during the intertestamental time, the leaders of Israel were simply formally implementing what was handed down through the Patriarchs. When the ekklesia of Israel was first gathered at Sinai, the basic stipulations given were repent, believe, and be washed (*i.e. baptized*). Since this washing was simply a sign of the cleansing of the heart from wickedness, the prophets also called the people to purity of heart with the same language of washing. Cf. Ex. 19:3-10 "...let them wash their garments", Num. 19:7 "...the priest must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water...", Is. 1:16 "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean", Jer. 4:14 "Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, that you may be saved..."

that I could stand in God's way?"* ¹⁸ *When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles (i.e. without conversion to Judaism) also the repentance that leads to life." (Act 11:15, 17-18 NASB)

- D. Within the New Covenant—just as the rest of the covenants—inclusion and permanence within the assembly of the righteous are both conditional. Belief and perseverance in a lifestyle of obedience and perseverance is still required for inclusion into the covenant.

²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. ²⁶ For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. ... ²⁹ How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." (Hbr 10:25-27, 29-30 NASB)

⁵ 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." (Exd 19:5-6 NASB)

- E. Like Abraham and Sarah, we believe that He who promised is faithful, and so we order our lives based on this assurance.

¹¹ By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. (Hbr 11:11 NASB)

VI. THE SOJOURNING WITNESS OF THE *EKKLESIA*

- A. However, righteousness was never an arbitrary system of conduct. Within the context of the covenants, the Lord would reveal Himself to a group of people to whom He would offer inclusion into the resurrection and the Kingdom. Then the stipulations of faith and repentance were simply based on the revelation of God to them. So, He would reveal Himself as holy to the children of Israel and then require their conduct to be conformed to the revelation of Himself.

² "Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.' (Lev 19:2 NASB)

- B. Likewise, the Ten Commandments were simply a reiteration of the way in which God had revealed Himself. Thus, the people were to have faith in Him (i.e. He really is this way) and repent from conduct that was unlike His nature.

² "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³ "You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵ "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children,

on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. ⁷ "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God (i.e. the way that I have revealed Myself to you) in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. ⁸ "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. ¹¹ "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. (Exd 20:2-11 NASB)

- C. However, these commandments were simply **signs of the covenant** that God was making with them. They were meant to assure them of their election, and to encourage them to walk worthy of the calling to inherit the Kingdom and the resurrection.

¹⁶ "So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant." ¹⁷ "It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed." (Exd 31:16-17 NASB)

¹⁰ "This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised (i.e. a sign of the required circumcision of the heart). ¹¹ "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. (Gen 17:10-11 NASB)

- D. So, in the New Covenant God has likewise revealed Himself in order to confirm the covenant with the elect. **The theophany upon which the New Covenant is based is the cross.** The cross of the Messiah was both an atonement by which those who repent and believe would be qualified for the resurrection as well as the fullness of the revelation of God.
- E. This established our faith in God as synonymous as with a life defined by the humility of the cross. Just as in all of the covenants, inclusion into the *Ekklesia* at the end of the age is conditional upon perseverance in the lifestyle conformed to the image of God in Christ.

²⁶ For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. ... ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. ... ³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul. (Hbr 10:26-27, 36, 39 NASB)

¹³ "You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. (Mar 13:13 NASB)

- F. So, repentance and belief—and thus righteousness—are defined by our acknowledgment of the cross of the Messiah as the revelation of God, and our conformity to the cross.

29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." (Jhn 6:29 NASB)

23 And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.²⁴ "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.²⁵ "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.²⁶ "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.²⁷ "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.²⁸ "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." ...³² "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."³³ But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. (Jhn 12:23-28, 32-33 NASB)

- G. Conformity to the cross is not advanced discipleship—as is commonly presented in the West—it is the only discipleship of the New Covenant.

17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.¹⁸ But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."¹⁹ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.²⁰ But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ...²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. (Jam 2:17-22, 24 NASB)

- H. So, the *Ekklesia* of the Messiah is a witness on the earth of God and the cross with the Spirit being left as a promise which guarantees our inheritance in the resurrection. The Spirit works to bear witness to the cross by conforming the people of the Messiah to His cross, as well as by strengthening them with the powers of the age to come.
- I. Just as the cross was a sign to the generation of the Messiah that He is long-suffering, and slow to anger, so we are a sign in our long suffering of God's patience and love.

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.¹² Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. (1Pe 2:11-12 NASB)