

GLORIFICATION OF THE CHURCH

Glorification of the Church is one of the ten fundamental doctrines of the Holy Bible. It refers to the honours, privileges and exaltation which God Almighty will confer on His people, in this age of the second presence of Christ, in demonstration of His love for them and in accordance with His divine purpose.

The fact that God Almighty has promised to glorify His Church presupposes that His people had been in a state of degradation and decay. This was sequel to the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, at the instance of satan the devil, as a result of which the human race lapsed from perfection to decay and corruption, and ultimately to death. When God Almighty reverses the distressful conditions which His people had suffered all through the ages, they will be raised from the poverty, fears and miseries of this evil world to a life of perfect peace and happiness.

In the context of this sermon, to glorify means to invest with “splendour of a very high degree”. The word church is derived from the Greek word Ecclesia (or ekklesia) which means an assembly or body of professed believers or Christians.

THE CHURCH

Christians are divided into two distinct classes, the Saints, Apostles’ or “Little Flock” class, and the Other Sheep class. The 12 Apostles were the foundation members of the Apostles’ class of Christians, (also known as the Church of the firstborn) the full number of which is 144,000. (Revelation 7:1-8; 14:1-5; Hebrews 10:22, 23) The Other Sheep consists of other worshippers of God who are not apostles.

It is common knowledge that individually and collectively, the people of God suffer many deprivations and persecutions at the instance of the devil. (James 5:10,11; Matthew 11:12; Hebrews 11:36-38) But the situation will not remain the same at this time of the second presence of Christ. (Psalm 102:16; Matthew 25:31) Consequently, the work of God in the last days will be of a much higher order than what obtained in years gone by. Hence in Haggai 2:8,9 it is stated: “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.”

The “latter house” properly applies to the Kingdom of God or His true Church organisations that would be set up in the last days by Jesus Christ at his second presence through the remnants of the saints. (Isaiah 2:2; Matthew 24:15,16; 13:31,32) Wherever it is established, the kingdom will continue to rise even as satan’s organisation continues to fall. “Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.” (Job 8:7) Also, the Bible states: “Of the increase of his

government and peace there shall be no end... The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this".
– Isaiah 9:7.

Evidently, those who serve God will not continue to wallow in abject poverty and want. Rather, they will be blessed by Him, spiritually, materially and otherwise in this age of the glorification of the Church. Apostle Paul, comparing the standard of the work in time of old to that which will be revealed later to the apostles, stated: "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." – 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. See also Exodus 34:20-35; 28:1, 2.

Since God had promised to richly reward his faithful worshippers in this age, it is needful therefore for them to serve Him diligently and sincerely until the end by His grace. Apostle Paul affirmed positively that those who patiently continue in well doing will be rewarded with "glory and honour and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." – Romans 2:7-9. See also Isaiah 49:3-5.

JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is the head of the Church. (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23) It is through him that God Almighty will glorify His Church. During his first advent he was made a little lower than the angels. (Hebrews 2:7) In fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, he was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief". – Isaiah 53:3; Psalm 69:8,9.

In Matthew 17:1-9 there is the record of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that the Lord Jesus took with him Peter, James and John into a high mountain, "And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him." (Matthew 17:2,3) The transfiguration was a vision (Matthew 17:9) to show the apostles the future glory and majesty of Jesus Christ. It also foretold the great honours which other faithful worshippers of God (represented in the vision by Moses and Elijah) will enjoy in God's Kingdom fully established.

Moreover, knowing the immense glories that awaited him, our Lord Jesus Christ, after the successful completion of his mission on earth, prayed the Father thus: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:4,5)

True to His promise, our Lord Jesus Christ was highly exalted by God Almighty and given “a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”. – Philippians 2:9-11

It was with this glorious body Jesus Christ appeared to St. Paul (then known as Saul), who was for three days blinded by the brightness of his appearance, and could not eat or drink. – Acts 9:1-18.

On his ascension to heaven, Christ was asked to sit on the right hand of God until his enemies would be made his footstool. (Psalm 110:1) This waiting period expired in 1914. God Almighty then issued the command: “rule thou in the midst of thine enemies”. (Psalm 110:2) Consequently, satan was driven down from heaven and he, in an outburst of anger, plunged the world into the World War of 1914-1918, in an attempt to destroy all flesh. (Matthew 24:7, 8; Revelation 12:7-12) Concerning the coronation of Jesus Christ in heaven the Bible states: “And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” – Daniel 7:13,14. See also Psalm 21:3-5; 45:7-9; John 18:36-38.

TIME OF REFRESHING

Our Lord Jesus Christ during his mission on earth chose 12 apostles to assist him in carrying out his mission. At a point in time Apostle Peter had cause to ask our Lord Jesus Christ thus: “Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.” – Mark 10:28-30.

This promise of Jesus Christ applies to the apostles and to all faithful Christians by the grace of God. Those who continue in the work of God in spite of tribulations until the end will get life and other attendant blessings by God’s grace. Jesus Christ, exhorting the apostles who are in the covenant of sacrifice with God (Psalm 50:5) stated: “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” – Revelation 2:10.

Based on the assurance by our Lord Jesus Christ, St. Peter, addressing the crowd that gathered following the miraculous healing of the lame man at the Beautiful gate in Jerusalem, delivered an important address to the people in which he spoke of the blessedness that will be the lot of the people of God in this age of Christ’s second presence. He stated: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the

presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” – Acts 3:19-21

The “times of refreshing” and the “times of restitution of all things” refer to one and the same thing, the age of the second presence of Christ who had during his first advent declared: “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” (Matthew 16:27) The first class of those to be so rewarded is the saints. They will be changed into spirit beings and taken to heaven as promised by our Lord Jesus Christ in John 14:1-3,19,22. See also 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52.

Then will fulfill the prophecy made earlier by David the prophet under the inspiration of God to wit: “Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.” – Psalm 102:13-17. See also Isaiah 54:11,12.

St. Paul expressed hope in the promise of God to reward the saints at the second presence of Christ. In his second letter to Timothy he declared thus: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” – 2 Timothy 4:7,8. See also Philippians 3:20,21; Romans 8:17,18; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.

Apart from the apostles, all the other children of God who died serving Him will also be glorified. It was in the sense of the great privileges and honours the faithful will get in God’s Kingdom fully established that Jesus Christ said the righteous shall at that time, “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father”. (Matthew 13:43) Daniel the prophet under inspiration had stated: “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” – Daniel 12:3.

The glorification each will receive will be according to his class and for each person according to his work and the grace of God on him. St. Paul stated: “There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star different from another star in glory.” – 1 Corinthians 15:40,41. See also 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.

It is in the kingdom of God fully established that the glory which God promised His people will be fully realised. At that time the people of God will be raised to glory and honour by God’s grace. They will be exposed to excellences that will exceed whatever contrivance, order or beauty we may have in this world. The Bible says: “The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree,

the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.” (Isaiah 60:13) God has promised that at that time He “will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir”. (Isaiah 13:12) Indeed the Bible says: “...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” – 1 Corinthians 2:9. See also Isaiah 64:4.

EXHORTATION

In view of the abundant promises God has made to His people, they are duty-bound to do His work faithfully and diligently until the end, knowing that their labours would not be in vain. In his letter to the Hebrew Christians Apostle Paul declared: “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” – Hebrews 6:10-12. See also 2 Corinthians 1:7.

We should be steadfast in the service of God irrespective of the hard conditions or tribulations we may go through in this world in the hands of satan and his agents. Apostle Paul, referring to people of his class, the saints stated: “For which cause we faint not but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day”. He added: “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18) On the basis of this hope Apostle Paul further stated: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” – Romans 8:18.