

THE BELIEVER'S ETERNAL DESTINY – Part #2

In # 1 of this study we set forth the thesis that IF the real purpose of creation is the presentation of the glorious bride to the Glorious King and Ruler of the universe then the focus of the church and ministries should be to focus upon this message. IF the principle message of the Kingdom of God is that the perfected saints will be co-rulers with Jesus Christ for eternity as stated in Daniel 7, then this message should be the primary emphasis in the church.

For years it has been assumed that every born again child of God would rule with Christ in eternity. No requirement of character or spiritual maturity was considered necessary. The emphasis was just upon believing something about Jesus, which varied from group to group. In other words the requirements rested upon faith rather than upon character and spiritual development. The consensus seemed to be that character here was not important because in a moment and a twinkling of an eye we would be changed to be like Him. Our fallen human nature would fall away at that time and we would instantly become perfected saints before God. Some were even as bold as to say that gross sinners would be “raptured” at that time simply because of what they believed and not according to the life they were living.

TITUS 2:11] For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, [12] instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, [13] looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; [14] **who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.**

My thesis in most all these studies is that much more than forgiveness of sins is

required to sit with Christ on His throne. In Revelation 2 & 3 it is clear that the minimum requirement is to “overcome” the defects shown in six of the churches.

2 PETER 1:8] For if **these qualities are yours and are increasing**, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. [10] Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; [11] **for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.**

Dozens of scriptures and many warnings are given concerning the kind of life we live here that are connected to the coming of the Lord are too many to overlook. The churches that focus upon forgiveness of sins as the only requirement for “salvation” then speak about “rewards” for those who live a good life and do the will of God. With 150 scriptures focusing upon the Kingdom of God and it's requirements it is obvious that the New Testament is emphasizing something far more than forgiveness of sins by faith in what Jesus provided at Calvary. While that is the only entrance into salvation the emphasis is upon maturity, obedience and spiritual development which we are relating to Kingdom character.

I am setting forth the principle that the bride of Christ will be developed in character, attitudes, disposition and full spiritual growth to be just like Him. Her development in agape love will be similar to His. Since she will correspond fully with Him she will qualify to rule with Him. The next

principle I'm presenting is that this development requires hardships, persecutions, tribulations, sufferings and afflictions that will only be available on earth in this life. If we waste our development in this life through ignorance or refusing to change we will suffer eternal loss even though we may be "saved" by faith. The wood, hay and straw simply will not qualify to dwell in the eternal burnings of His Presence.

One of the "advantages" of giving ourselves to answer the call of God to minister and serve others is the opportunity to develop proven character. ROM 5:3] And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, **knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; [4] and perseverance, proven character; and proven character**, hope; [5] and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Sometimes we attribute to public ministers some ability to develop growth in believers that **can only come** through suffering, tribulation and perseverance. Even this inner working of God only produces eternal benefit if it causes us to grow closer to God and we seek Him for deliverance from any defects revealed in the time of trial. We should not waste our opportunity to change when a need for change is revealed. Because of ignorance the trials, tribulations and suffering can easily produce bitterness and resentment within us during time of severe testing. If this happens we waste the eternal benefit we could have received. We must have some revelation of eternal glory in order to rejoice and be exceedingly joyful during these times of fiery trials.

Since the depth of our fall from Christ-like perfection [God's Ideal Man] is so much greater than we are aware, our restoration is much more involved than we might suspect. If we truly understood that to grow up into Christ in all things was to grow up to the stature of God's Ideal Man, we would know the magnitude of change that is needed in each of us.

Since the sufferings of Christ were so horrific before Calvary, on Calvary and after Calvary and we know that He didn't suffer one second more than necessary to meet God's need for justice, we therefore suspect that all was necessary to pay for every aspect of man's fall.

The Kingdom of Heaven is the government of heaven that has eternal and divine laws that must be satisfied. Every law of heaven that has been broken by man must be atoned for and experientially solved before man can rule with Christ in the Kingdom. When Satan and the angels broke the laws of heaven there had to be eternal consequences. These are revealed as eternity in hell. However, Satan and some of his angels have been permitted to remain free until the man-child [the perfected saints] is elevated to the throne. Then Satan knows he has but a short time left.

Revelation 21 reveals that God has taken a pile of dirt and perfected it into obedient saints that have come to full stature and are qualified to sit on the throne of heaven! This is the very same throne to which Satan wanted to elevate himself. Now because the earthly created beings could be elevated to the government of heaven God could deal with the heavenly created beings that made themselves enemies of God. In other words Satan had no excuse left for his rebellion since lesser created beings had proved their obedience. In addition to that the righteous laws of the Kingdom of God could be fully satisfied through a perfect sacrifice.

From this it is revealed that Calvary and the full sacrifice of Jesus Christ was a legal matter that satisfied the laws of the Kingdom of Heaven. It also legally provided for fallen man to once again

flow into and fulfill the eternal purpose of God and rule over all the works of God's hands.

While legally everything is fully in place through Calvary, the developed character of fallen man is still a problem. Just because a person has had his sins forgiven doesn't mean that his character has been perfected. God threw Satan and the fallen angels out of heaven because of character defects and He is not going to bring in another group just like the group He threw out. This is not just a matter of forgiveness but of "perfection" [Kingdom character defined as agape].

This Kingdom character, summed up as agape, is what determines our eternal rank in the eternal Kingdom. If there is "least in the Kingdom" and "greatest in the Kingdom" then there is rank in the Kingdom! If one rules over 10 cities and another rules over 5 cities then there is rank demonstrated. Also Jesus said "My Father is greater than I". There are also Cherubim and Seraphim and Archangels and lesser angels in the Kingdom of Heaven which means there is rank there. Some who were considered "servants" here will be cast into outer darkness because they failed to use what they were given.

If character is the deciding factor in establishing our eternal "rank" or "official standing in the hierarchy of heaven" then it seems that we must qualify. If some will sit with Him ON His throne and some will stand before the throne and some will inhabit New Earth, it is clear that not all will be classified together but some are elevated above others. If this is true it is important we understand what basis God uses to establish His hierarchy of government

I believe the deciding factor is character rather than just faith even though faith is a part of character. Steadfastness, perseverance, morality, godliness, self-control and faithfulness is all part of character. However, the goal of character is Christian love, Agape. Since God IS Agape and we are to grow up into Him and be like Him we also must develop Agape. The defining mark of character is the manifestation of Agape.

GAL 5:22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. [24] Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Since "SELF" manifests itself as "flesh" the conflict is between flesh and Spirit or between "self and Spirit". The crucifixion of "SELF" then is necessary to walk in the spirit. We could say the fruit of the Spirit is character. The problem is that the fruit of the flesh is also character but there is acceptable character and unacceptable character. It is the character of Christ that is acceptable for "rank" in the Kingdom of God. Character then can be further defined by degrees of perfection. These degrees define the difference between those included in the hierarchy of government and the bride of Christ who has met His standards of perfection.

In horticulture fruit grows on new growth rather than on old growth. That is the reason for pruning of the old growth to produce new shoots of new growth. The more new growth there is the more fruit that is produced. Something similar takes place in the spiritual realms. Character development which is the fruit of the Spirit requires continual new growth. Static Christianity means less fruit but old rigid Christianity means "no new fruit."

Character development requires the crucifixion of the self life or the pruning away of the old life so there can be new growth. The self-life prevents our growth in Agape. Those who refuse to see and acknowledge their selfishness and self-centeredness and their bad attitudes sentence

themselves to a life of no new growth and therefore no new fruit. Selfish, fleshly love is confused with Agape which can only come from God. If “our love” originates on earth it is not Agape or God’s own Love. Those who “rest in spiritual growth” because they think they have arrived at Agape are most likely deceived.

The confusion has been created in the church because some have taught that all God requires is faith. Therefore, our “growth” is measured by what we believe about Jesus or in some cases how much scripture we know. If we judged our spiritual growth by the character we develop through suffering, trials, tribulations and afflictions we would understand that there is still a race set before us. The finish line is still a long way off.

Those who only attain to the New Earth will also have a fixed and underdeveloped character that will be seen as wanting. Therefore, those who have a higher developed character will be needed to watch over and correct those of childlike character. This will also be the case during the millennial reign of Christ on this earth. REV 2:26] `And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, **TO him I will give authority over the NATIONS; [27] AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES,** as I also have received authority from My Father;

A rod of iron suggests that the laws of God will not be negotiable during this rule and no plea bargain will be acceptable. REV 19:15] And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; **and He will rule them with a rod of iron;** and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. [16] And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

The implication is that the perfected believers that rule with Christ during the Millennium will rule just as He will Rule with integrity and precisely according to the laws of God.

To reconcile the “rod of iron” with the agape Love of God presents a problem when the Kingdom is only recognized as a Kingdom of grace and permissiveness. This only confirms that our concept of Agape is too shallow. For example: HEB 12:5] and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; [6] **FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.**”

[7] It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? [8] But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. [9] Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? [10] For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. [11] All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Because God loves us with His own pure Agape He must discipline us so that eventually we experientially share His Holiness and bring forth the peaceable fruit of righteous. Discipline and Agape go hand in hand in perfect agreement.

Since man is inherently “self-centered” , self-willed, selfish and self-motivated God must have a method to change man from what he is to what he must become to be conformed to the character and image of Christ. Even after man hears a clear message on the glories of the Kingdom of God and His eternal government, man just wants to excel so he can achieve a position in the Kingdom “for himself.” “Himself” is still central.

Since the fall in Gen 3 man has sought knowledge as his means of advancement in the world. This lust for knowledge is inherent in man after he is redeemed. For that reason redeemed man seeks for knowledge to build “Christian Character.” Theology is basically seeking after the knowledge of God.

Solomon is a classic example of a man who served God and sought to excel by seeking after more and more knowledge. ECC 7:12] For wisdom is protection just as money is protection. But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors. [13] Consider the work of God, For who is able to straighten what He has bent? [14] **In the day of prosperity be happy, But in the day of adversity consider; God has made the one as well as the other** So that man may not discover anything that will be after him.

ECC12:[8] “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher, “all is vanity!” ECC 12:9 In addition to being a wise man, **the Preacher also taught the people knowledge**; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs. [10] The Preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly. ECC 12:11 The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd. [12] But beyond this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body.

ECC 12:13 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. [14] For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

We discover there is relevant knowledge of God that has benefit and carnal knowledge of the world that is just vanity. While man seeks after knowledge God wants us to seek after His wisdom. The fact is that man does not achieve God’s Character by accumulating knowledge. We may learn social graces to become polite and learn to be socially pleasant. However, many who have achieved a high level of social graces have no character at all. The “character” that is acceptable to the world may be totally rejected by God.

The weak part of the preaching and teaching ministry is that we assume that if people “knew” they would change but then we discover that it requires more than “knowledge” to change. However, knowledge can give us vision and can lead us to seek God for His best. It can lead us to a full commitment in full consecration to the purpose of God. This leads to trials, suffering and tribulations as God requires the consecration that we committed to. After we cry out to God for change in our attitudes and character we are confused by the suffering that follows. This is simply God answering our prayers because He know that is the only way we come to lasting change. The change we need is not social but changed to His likeness. This requires more than attitude change but a spiritual growth so that “change” is permanent and becomes part of our character.

In China and in the Moslem nations there are thousands of Christian martyrs who are freely giving their live for the gospel of Christ. Anyone who has a heart to suffer will quickly find it and are

perfected in some degree by it. However, in this country THAT KIND of suffering is not common. Still we must also come to perfection. How will God cause us to grow up into Agape?

God's program for perfection includes "the church" conflicts, misunderstandings, personality defects, bad attitudes, dealing with social mis-fits and disagreements. Every church needs these to uncover the defects that are hidden by normal hypocrisy. In most cases we don't know how unclean we are inside until it is revealed by contention, conflicts and disagreement. Our duplicity and hypocrisy may only get revealed during tribulation and suffering. If we drop out of the church because these problems exist we sentence ourselves to a static life of no growth.

Another powerful tool for our perfection is marriage with the accompanying extended family. No matter how "successful" a marriage may be there are bound to be conflicts, misunderstandings, selfishness, self-centeredness, bad attitudes and character defects. The normal process is to see all these defects in someone else but never become subjective enough to identify our own defects that respond and are revealed by the other person's defects. If we don't honestly see "our self" we waste the opportunity to change. While we are busy blaming the other person, God is revealing our problems that will eliminate us from His government. Who caused the problem is irrelevant. The purpose of conflict is to expose our defects so we can acknowledge them, confess them, repent and ask God to remove the defect from us. Crucifixion of SELF is the goal! Whether the other person ever changes or not is irrelevant, if we see the light and get changed. Even if we get the upper hand here on earth and prove we right, we still lose out in eternity.

Why then do some seem to suffer so much more than others? This doesn't seem equitable for the Kingdom of God. Surely God treats all His children the same! Suffering creates a great mystery in the church. Even if we create a perfect theology of health, wholeness, happiness and prosperity, suffering still happens with believers. Even in the strongest believers that manifest sincere faith. Surely "salvation" which includes all these benefits is simply by faith.

Unless we consider the Kingdom government of God and the character requirements to participate in that hierarchy of rulership none of these negative things of suffering makes sense. But why some more than others?

ROM 8:17] and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.** RO 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are **not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**

2 Tim 1:12] If we endure (pascho, suffer), we shall also reign with Him;

Our suffering, and the same way with Christ's sufferings, is related to eternal glory and reigning with Him. This still doesn't justify why some suffer more than others. While we don't have clear scriptures dealing with this subject there is strong logic that embraces the scriptures given.

In every government there are sensitive jobs that require a special person who has been trained in that capacity. When a new president takes office there is always the problem of finding these special persons for these sensitive jobs. The success or failure of a president is often dependent upon selecting the right people to fill these jobs. Assigning people to these jobs who don't think like the president or have the same goals always presents a problem. Sooner or later these must be removed. The ideal government has highly trained individuals who are specialists in their field to

fill these offices.

The Kingdom Government of God may also need highly trained specialists to fill the offices in the hierarchy of heaven. These must be tried, tested, found faithful and be counted worthy of these offices. These “offices of heaven” are not filled by volunteers just because they are available! They are not filled by political hacks who have coned their way into authority.

Those who are counted worthy of their office will have obtained a measure of perfection through suffering and will have their character refined. Part of the suffering is persevering through a series of confusing events while holding on to Him in faith. When we can see no reason or no solution our faith is being tested. This perseverance by faith results in proven character.

God’s predestined plan for you may include an office in His eternal government. This office may require a special character or sensitivity or compassion. It may require military strength and resolve to rule with an iron rod and not be moved by pity or emotion.

It may well be that the only way we can be trained for these positions is through suffering, pain, disappointment, betrayal, financial loss, tribulation (threshing), ill health, rejection or many other sanctifying trials.

Those without vision will end up in self-pity, disillusionment, regret, deep sorrow, depression, in isolation or hopelessness. Many will just drop out and quit and by that disqualify themselves. Some will totally abandon the church because they assume the church has failed them or only hypocrites attend. Even though God may wipe every tear from their eye when they see the truth, they still suffer eternal loss. REV 21:4

2 THES 1:5] This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment **so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.**

While we don’t have to be counted worthy of “**forgiveness of sins**” we must be counted worthy of the Kingdom. Until we see the difference confusion will reign. We don’t have to suffer to be “saved” but to take our place in the Kingdom we need to be perfected through suffering, (the same as Jesus).

Because Paul had a vision of the third heaven, suffering couldn’t deter him from pressing on to the high calling of God. In fact he understood that ; For momentary, light affliction is **producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison**, [18] 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.

From this we understand that “glory” is not automatic but must be produced in us through affliction. ROM 8:17] and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer** with Him in order that we may also **be glorified with Him**. When we refuse to suffer we are rejecting the very process that produces the “eternal glory.” We may not see that as a terrible loss until it is too late because our time on earth has passed. There is no more suffering or pain in heaven so there is no more opportunity to advance in rank after we pass this life.

If God cannot perfect us without suffering, affliction, tribulation and pain then we can be assured that He will not permit the trial to continue one second after we have passed the test. Therefore, if we continue to be tried it simply means that we have not passed the test as yet. This implies that

we should get serious about seeking God and finding out if we have failed or what God is after to produce eternal change. If we are fully committed to God's eternal purpose no trial should be considered as an accident or bad luck. The very first response we should have is this: God is training me for rulership. I have things in my life that will disqualify me and God is helping me get rid of these things.