

Part III:

THE LAST DAYS . . . ARE HERE!

The Old Testament prophesied a day when the failure of man would be ended. Of course it would surely come about in the kingdom after the bodily resurrection (Daniel 12:2), but the part about the renewal of the character of man was to come about in Messiah's appearance. Thus were the "last days." These were the days when God's fullness would become known and realized on earth . . . through His Messiah. The final return of Israel was forecast for these "last days" in Deuteronomy 4:30-31.

³⁰ "When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice. ³¹ "For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

DEUTERONOMY 30:6: THE CIRCUMCISION OF HEART

As God moves through the Book of Deuteronomy He describes these last days when Israel returns to Him (30:1-6). He explains that when they return, since they need a new heart, He will give them His own heart so that they will obey Him and never have to be judged again (30:6). This is not a prophecy of an improved heart that they received from Adam, or even a better ability to obey. It is no less than the righteous character (desires) of God. This character **MUST/WILL** keep the Law since it is the very character that Jesus demonstrated on earth. So if the reader wants to be like Jesus, this is the only way . . . to receive the heart of God, one given by God through belief (John 1:12-13).

Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live (Dt 30:6).

The Gospels and the epistles overwhelmingly document that this new heart has come. Paul states it in Colossians 2:11 and Romans 2:28-29.

“. . . and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ . . . “

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”

The point is that when Jesus arrived He possessed this circumcision of heart and gave it to the believer of this age. Thus this "new heart," the righteous character of God, is the actual possession of the believer. That is a massive change, as different as night

and day.

GENESIS 3:14-24: THE NEW LIFE (“ETERNAL LIFE”)

Now this new heart, this new character, had been forecast to come when the “Seed of the Woman” would appear (Genesis 3:15). This was referred to by Adam as “Life,” something anticipated that would replace the “death” that he had passed on to his progeny. So when Messiah appeared He brought this “Life” with Him, this new character, the righteous character of God, which is in Him, would be given to man. This “eternal life” would be given to man at the appearance of the Messiah. This has been demonstrated in the life and resurrection of Christ in the Gospels, to be given to man through the Spirit following His resurrection.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.²⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.²⁶ "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; (John 5:21-26).

That this “eternal life” is the possession of the believer (new character) is confirmed by John in his epistle in 5:13. A radical change has happened to the believer from the Old Testament in the coming of Messiah.

“These things are written to you who believe in the Name of the Son of God that you might know that you have eternal life.”

JEREMIAH 31:31-34: FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND A NEW HEART

Jeremiah prophesied during one of the lowest points of Israel’s history. Israel had rejected YHWH and His Law and was proceeding into exile in Babylon. The long history of Israel had come to total failure. Of course this failure was prophesied in Deuteronomy 32, based on the fact, stated in Deuteronomy 29, that they never had been given a heart to obey.

⁴ "Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear. (Deuteronomy 29:4).

So finally in their hopeless last gasp in the land, God prophesied their hope would come in the Messiah who would give them a new heart, the heart of the Law, the character of God. Then they would obey totally without sin.

³¹ "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new

covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. ³³ "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Yet while they would have a heart that totally obeyed God, they still had the old heart that was guilty of violating the Law, of forsaking God. This required death. This death would be taken care of by Messiah as well (Isaiah 53), and it would be through His death that they would receive the “forgiveness of sins” according to Jeremiah 31:34b.

“. . . for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Recorded in all the synoptic gospels is the event in which Jesus raises the man who has been lowered through the ceiling by his friends. As they were watching Him, He surprised them by, not healing him, but forgiving his sins. The reaction of the Pharisees was simple but stark. Recalling Jeremiah 31:34 they knew that He was claiming nothing less than being the Messiah of God, implementing the forgiveness of sins, which was to come in the Christ (Luke 5:21).

“The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this *man* who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"

Jesus also stated this allusion to Jeremiah 31:31-34 at the last supper when He declared, “for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). The point is that this “forgiveness of sins” was not available in reality in the Old Covenant. Romans 3:25-26 also points this out.

“This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Jeremiah 31:34a stated that the relationship with God would be fully effective as it stated that believers would “know the Lord” and thus would not have to teach the signs and symbols of the Old Testament that were external and only pictured the ultimate Messiah. Now the believer would have God’s character as his own and thus would “know the Lord” fully. This is seen clearly when Jeremiah 31:34 is placed against John 17:3 and 1 John 2:27.

"They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the

greatest of them," declares the LORD, (Jeremiah 31:34)

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (John 17:3).

²⁷ As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. (1 John 2:27).

Now this must be made perfectly clear. The forgiveness of sins is totally here following the death of Christ and His resurrection. One’s current sins are covered by the blood of Christ . . . period. Most people find this rather unbelievable, for if this is true, then one could sin and be exempt from judgment. Think of it. One would never have to worry about judgment for sin again! Well that’s exactly what it is. Because what Christ did was to pay for the sins of your Adamic nature. So while it still generates self-righteousness and sin in you (it can’t do anything else), it is taken care of.

The other thing that must be understood is that God is not improving your sin nature. It cannot be improved since it is totally evil. He has paid for that, and has given you a new nature (“eternal life”) which is guided by the Spirit through the Scriptures. And it cannot sin (1 John 3:9). It is this one that you will keep forever right into the kingdom. The Adamic nature will be dead and gone when you and your mortal body dies. So you are to live to the new nature, the Christ nature, and die to the other one, the one that is paid for.

EZEKIEL 36:25-27: CLEANSING FROM SIN AND A HEART TO “KEEP THE STATUTES”

The Prophet Ezekiel prophesied following his, and the nation’s, exile into Babylon. He looked forward to the day when Israel would receive the new character so they would not come into judgment, and exile, again. This new character would be able to “keep the commands” fully, unlike the Adamic character, which could never do it and ultimately was what brought their judgment..

Ezekiel talked of the future forgiveness of sins and the cleansing. John restates it, but says in 1 John that it has come to pass.

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; ***I will cleanse you from all your filthiness*** and from all your idols.” (Ezekiel 36:25)

“ . . . the blood of Jesus His Son ***cleanses us from all sin.***” (1 John 1:7)

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to *cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” (1 John 1:9)

Then Ezekiel discussed the new heart that would come in the believer through the work of the Spirit. 1 John also speaks of this as coming to pass.

Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and *cause you to walk in My statutes*, and *you will be careful to observe My ordinances.* (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

³ By this we know that we have come to know Him, if *we keep His commandments.* (1 John 2:3)

This is important. The new heart cannot sin. That is the character of Jesus that has been given to you. The old heart cannot do good. You must have the character of Jesus to get into the kingdom, not 99%, but the total righteousness that Jesus demonstrated during His time on earth. Ezekiel forecast it. John says it has come.

SUMMARY: THE CATAclysmic CHANGE IN THE BELIEVER

- **“Eternal Life”** This is the righteous character of the Father that is placed in believers. Jesus had it and the gospels verified that it was, in fact, the very character of God. If the believer wants to know what his new character looks like, he should read the Gospels. It is a quantifiable substance that reflects the exact character of God (perfection, holiness). Adam’s mortal life had to be replaced by God’s life (character). This character (called “eternal life”) is given to man when he has the new birth through belief in Jesus (1:1-3; 5:11-13). This not only includes the character but the bodily resurrection (see Daniel 12:2 for the allusion for this phrase).
- **“forgiveness of sins:”** Man still has the problem of the identity with his old Adamic self. This self is corrupted, being condemned to death, and must be paid for before the identity can be solely that of the New Adam and the new family of God. Thus, through the Messiah’s death the old Adamic self is judged and paid for. It is thus rendered moot. While it is still alive practically, it is judicially dead. Thus it can do nothing good to justify itself (i.e., self-righteousness) since it is totally evil. It can do nothing to bring the believer into judgment since it is forgiven. Therefore the only life that the believer possesses as a real identity is the new life that cannot sin and must please God because it is His character.

When Jesus entered this earth as a baby, everything was about to change. The Law was about to be fulfilled and the keeping of the Law in Jesus imputed into the believer so that he could be righteous. Jesus would die on the cross, which would bring about the full forgiveness of sins, rendering the Adamic nature judicially moot. In Christ's resurrection came the assurance of the presence of the new character in the believer, and the guarantee of the believer's bodily resurrection into the kingdom. Thus, Jesus' appearance brought the full guarantee of the kingdom through resurrection. The believer would be able to give up his mortal life for the gospel knowing his reward would not be now, but in the kingdom to come, in a resurrected body, with the One whom the apostles met and whose presence was recorded in, the Gospels.

The believer is now fully equipped, with regard to righteousness, with regard to full son-ship, to enter the kingdom. He should walk as such . . . a full child of the king. However, he must wait for the kingdom is not now, nor will he bring it in. It will come only when the righteous One returns and establishes His righteousness, the righteousness that is the character of God, throughout the earth. So the believer has his righteousness, but there is a delay until the kingdom comes.¹⁵

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. (Mt 6:10)

¹⁵ There is a phrase which has been used to represent what is going on with respect to the change for the church age in relationship to the kingdom. It is the phrase “already, not yet.” While this must be defined, one definition is that the kingdom is here in some form, but one must wait for the full implementation of it. Sometimes it goes by saying it has been “inaugurated.” While these words are somewhat ambiguous and must be defined, let it be clarified here that the kingdom has not come. The kingdom is when the righteousness of God is obviously seen throughout the earth. There is no such thing as a partial kingdom. It is either a kingdom, with a present king, with his desires being implemented throughout the realm, or it is not. For instance, if the realm (i.e., land) is present, that is not the kingdom. If the king is present, but no rule implemented, then that is not the kingdom. So while the “last days are here,” meaning that God's Messiah has appeared and His character has been fully revealed in Him, and He has given it fully to His subjects (e.g., righteousness, forgiveness of sins), the kingdom which requires these traits in its subjects, has not come . . . yet. In other words, the story has not ended.