

**PRAISE**

— *D. B. E. Atkins*

Some truly wonderful ascriptions of praise are recorded in the New Testament. Each one so worthy of note that it is felt that we would do well to take them up, one by one, looking at the circumstances in which they were written.

The first two are in Romans 11:36 and 16:27. It is interesting to note in passing, that the epistle to the Romans is the only one which has two doctrinal sections -all the other epistles by Paul have only one -and the usual practical portion after. We also do well to remember that this epistle was, properly speaking, a letter of commendation for Phoebe. Paul used the opportunity to write what he did to the Saints in Rome and to deliver it into her hand to take to the saints there. Let us not, therefore, despise writing and sending letters of commendation, and let us at least make use of the opportunity afforded to us to transmit love and interest from one assembly to another. But let us return.

Paul has some wonderful things to say in this second doctrinal section of the epistle (chapters 9-11), on God's dealing with His ancient people and His wonderful ways in breaking out some of the branches of the olive tree (Israel) and grafting in some of the wild olive (the Gentiles), a thing quite contrary to nature. He says in verse 15 of the 11th chapter that "If their casting away be the world's reconciliation, what their reception but life from among the dead?"

Israel's setting aside to bring in the Gentile Bride, has worked to God's glory, but how much more their restoration, when the whole earth shall be blessed through the reign of the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem, and righteousness shall be from sea to sea and shore to shore. And he concludes by showing that, for the present dispensation, all are shut up together to God's mercy and both Gentile and Jew have the same common ground of approach through the Lord Jesus, and he says (verses 32-36): "For God has shut up together all in unbelief, in order that He might show mercy to all. O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable His judgments, and untraceable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counsellor? or who has first given to Him, and it shall be rendered to Him? For of Him, and through Him, and for Him are all things: to Him be glory for ever. Amen."

Is it not wonderful to be able to join in this ascription on such a subject? How wonderful truly are God's ways and we can stand and behold.

In chapter 16:25-27, Paul says: "Now to Him that is able to establish you... the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory for ever, Amen."

Today He is just as able to establish us, according to the glad tidings, as He was once able to establish the Roman saints and we can, with Paul, ascribe glory to the Lord. Yea, to Him be all the glory now and for ever.

Then in Galatians 1:5, Paul can again ascribe glory to God after saying: "...Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins, so that He should deliver us out of the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father," and He adds: "to Whom be glory to the ages of ages. Amen." Yes, He has delivered us out of this world (the course of this world), taken us right out of it by giving Himself for our sins, and set us into an entirely new sphere. To Him (God) be "glory to the ages of ages."

This brings us to Ephesians 3:17-21 in which the apostle says: "...that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love, in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God. But to Him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think, according to the power which works in us, to Him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen."

What a wonderful word this is, coming as it does at the end of a chapter which is a parenthesis. It seems as if the apostle can get no further in the lofty thoughts expressed and breaks out into this wonderful expression of praise.

Though W. Kelly and others agree that the dimensions expressed do not refer to the love of Christ, yet we are reminded of the lovely hymn

*It passeth knowledge, that dear love of Thine,  
O Jesus! Saviour! yet this soul of mine  
Would of Thy love, in all its breadth and length,  
Its height and depth and everlasting strength,  
Know more and more.*

*Lord Jesus when Thee face to face we see,  
When on Thy lofty throne I sit with Thee;  
Then of Thy love in all its breadth and length,  
Its height and depth, its everlasting strength,  
My soul shall sing.*

Yes, beloved, we may earnestly covet to know more and more of that which is unknowable (almost a contradiction, except in the Word of God) until we behold it in its ocean fullness in that glorious day soon to be, when God's purposes — planned before the worlds were framed — come to fruition, and the Assembly is forever united to her glorious Head as His Bride. To Him be all the glory!

In Philippians 4:20 Paul, after having said: "my God shall abundantly supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus," adds: "But to our God and Father be glory to the ages of ages. Amen." He can add this word of praise when he thinks of the wonderful God that we have. A God, Who supplies all our need, not after the grudging, human measure, but "according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Again, in 1 Timothy 1:17, the apostle after saying in the previous verse: "But for this reason mercy was shown me, that in me, the first, Jesus Christ might display the whole long-suffering, for a delineation of those about to believe on Him to life eternal," adds: "Now to the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God, honour and glory to the ages of ages. Amen."

In 2 Timothy 4:18 we have something similar, when the apostle, after having said: "The Lord shall deliver me from every wicked work, and shall preserve me for His heavenly kingdom," adds: "to Whom be glory for the ages of ages. Amen."

There is another wonderful word in Hebrew 13:20-22: "But the God of peace, Who brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the power of the blood of the eternal covenant, perfect you in every good work to the doing of His will, doing in you what is pleasing before Him through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory for the ages of ages. Amen." Yes we can ascribe glory to Him in that He will perfect every good work in us.

Peter expresses himself very similarly in his epistles. In 1 Peter 5:10-11 he says: "But the God of all grace Who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, when ye have suffered for a little while, Himself shall make perfect, stablish, strengthen, ground: to Him be the glory and the might for the ages of the ages. Amen." And again in 2 Peter 3:18 he says: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

And then, finally, Jude says in verses 24 and 25 of his epistle, which warns so seriously of the apostasy of the closing days: "But to Him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before His glory, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages. Amen." This seems to be a culmination in our study and a fitting end (leaving the wonderful passages in Revelation to a separate study, D.V.).

He is indeed able to keep us from stumbling and we shall ascribe all the praise and the glory to Him for this also, for all the way He has brought us, through snares, trials, and temptations. Yes, and shall we not in all things ascribe all glory to both Father and Son, beloved? To both be glory evermore. Amen.

*To be cont'd*

## **HOMeward!**

I wish my soul may go to God —  
I long to find the final rest!  
Oh — no more wandering abroad  
But be at home — the last, the best!

The sweet repose of summer eve  
That soothes all my care and pain  
Stirs up my hope — makes me believe:  
The end must bring the richest gain!

On many works and toils and strife  
But scarce and poor reward was giv'n.  
Thus seems the balance of my life  
But — diff'rent it may look in heav'n!

I wish my soul may go to God  
to learn solution of His ways —  
I could not understand them! But  
The end will be: eternal praise!

So onward, homeward I do go —  
Darkness around — but light on high.  
The hour comes nearer that will show:  
The Morning-Star bright in the sky!

— Hugo la Rivière

## **THE FUTURE (14)**

—H. L. Heijkoop

### *The End of the Kingdom of Peace*

How long will the glorious kingdom of the Lord Jesus last? 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 tells us that it will exist until the time of the end, until the beginning of eternity. And Revelation 20 informs us that it will be for a thousand years.

Many believe that the number thousand has to be taken symbolically. I don't think so. But even if that were true, the kingdom of peace will exist for a time predetermined by God and not for eternity.

There will be both righteous and evil persons on the earth during this kingdom. During that time, the righteous can no longer be called believers, since it will no longer be a question of believing in the rejected and absent Saviour but rather of accepting and willingly serving of the Son of Man Who has appeared in glory and Whose power will be felt and recognized by all (John 20:29).

But this display of power and glory will not lead all men to accept the Lord Jesus. The heart of man is desperately wicked. Even during that time, a man must be born again to be able to truly serve God (John 3:3-6).

However, those who are born again will not be able to show their faith by openly confessing a rejected Lord and by sharing in His sufferings. On the other hand, every public sin will immediately be punished with death so that it will be worthwhile for unbelievers to serve the Lord even in hypocrisy.

For that reason, God will allow a time of great testing at the close of the Millennium so that the condition of every heart will become evident.

### *The Devil will be loosed*

Isaiah 24:21-23 prophesies that Jehovah will judge the devil and his angels at the same time as the kings of the earth. He calls the former "the host of the high ones on high" (cf. Eph. 6:12). Verse 22 says that they will be imprisoned in a pit. Afterwards, the glorious realm of peace will commence (v. 23).

We do not find the details of this event in the Old Testament but we see it in chapters 12, 19 and 20 of Revelation. In chapter 12 the devil is cast out of heaven, and in chapter 20:1-3 he is cast bound into the abyss. The abyss is in Revelation the place of detention of evil (ch. 9:1-11).

At the end of the Millennium, God looses Satan for a little while, but his presence is limited to the earth and he is not allowed into heaven (ch. 20:3,7). This is done to show up who are truly born again and who only feigned subjection. The latter ones will be eager to listen to the call of the devil to revolt against God.

To make the test complete, the Lord Jesus withdraws as it were His power for a little while. Otherwise, it would not be possible for the wicked to unite themselves and to surround the saints and the beloved city (Jerusalem).

But when this extreme danger has caused the separation of those who are born again from the others, fire descends from heaven and consumes all who are not born again.

### *Gog and Magog*

The nations are identified in this passage with the symbolical name of "Gog and Magog." These are the names of the great enemy of Israel mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and 39 which we saw to be Russia.

Ezekiel speaks about the great enemy before the Millennium whereas Revelation 20 speaks of the nations from the four corners of the earth. In Ezekiel, Gog is a person, the head of the district of Magog, but in Revelation, both names are simply put side by side. From these details, it is evident that we ought not to confuse the event of Revelation 20 with the one in Ezekiel 38 and 39.

In Revelation 20, we find the last great revolt against God which is once more directed against Israel and Jerusalem. Great masses of people under the direct command of Satan come from the four corners of the earth. They try to achieve what their great predecessor, the Russian commander, tried to accomplish a thousand years earlier, and *apparently* they have more success.

But then "fire comes down from heaven and consumes them." All who did not possess life from God are killed. Just as in Revelation 19, the commander (Satan) is spared to be cast alive into hell, the lake of fire which had long since been prepared for him (Mt. 25:41).

### *The Resurrection of the Just*

From that moment on only born-again persons live on the earth. Only unbelievers are in the graves. All believers from Abel until the rapture of the Assembly have been raised at the coming of the Lord. In Revelation 4, we find them in the type of the 24 elders in white garments and with golden crowns, sitting on thrones in heaven. In Revelation 19, they come with the Lord from heaven and the first sentence of Revelation 20:4 portrays them as judges sitting on thrones.

Then in the same verse, those believers who died after the rapture of the Assembly are presented. Of them it says, "And they lived and ruled with Christ a thousand years." This contrasts with verse 5 where it says that the rest of the dead will not live until the thousand years are completed, and then follows, "This is the first resurrection." This proves that they have been resurrected.

Further, I don't know of any Scripture that would indicate that born-again persons will die in the Millennium. On the contrary, places like Isaiah 65 indicate to us that they will *not* die. This is quite understandable. Satan will be bound and Christ will reign in righteousness. He who has the power of death (Satan, Heb. 2:14) will be absent, and He Who has the power of life will be present.

Finally, Revelation 20:9 shows us the last instance in which judgment of the living takes place. We may therefore conclude that from that moment on, there will only be glorified saints in heaven and other saints living on the earth. As far as the believers are concerned, the last one who died has been raised at the beginning of the Millennium. Isaiah prophesied this when he said, "He will swallow up death into victory" (25:8, see also 1 Corinthians 15:54).

But "corruption will not inherit incorruptibility." Before those saints who live on earth at that time will be able to enter into glory, they will have to be changed. They belong to Christ. They possess His life. They will be changed into His likeness (1 Co. 15).

Scripture does not supply us with a definite time when this will take place. But according to the general principle of Scripture, it must take place at the moment when the full glory will be received (1 Co. 15:47-53). It thus must occur *after* the end of the Millennium and *before* the new heavens and the new earth with its blessed inhabitants will be revealed.

At the end of the Millennium, *all* unbelievers will have died and *all* believers who ever have died are already resurrected. Thus, when Revelation 20:12 mentions the dead, it can only concern unbelievers.

#### *Are Believers and Unbelievers not Raised at the same Time?*

Revelation 20:4,5 says that there is a time-delay of a thousand years between the end of the first resurrection (the resurrection of the just) and the resurrection of the unbelievers. Revelation is not the only book that mentions this. Other passages in Scripture refer to it as well.

John 5:28,29 is often quoted to prove that only one resurrection will take place at one particular instant. But when we carefully read these verses in their context, we will see that they teach the exact opposite.

This portion expressly differentiates between the two: "They shall go forth; those that have practised good, to *resurrection of life* and those that have done evil, to *resurrection of judgment*." There is no indication whatsoever that these two resurrections will take place at the same time. The word *hour* certainly does not signify this. It is often used to indicate a long and extended period as in I John 2:18. And just three verses before the quoted portion (John 5:25), it is used for the time of grace which has continued for almost 2000 years.

In Luke 20:35 and in Philippians 3:11, the resurrection of the just is called the "*resurrection from among the dead*." The same expression is used in 1 Corinthians 15:20 for the resurrection of Christ. Philippians 3 says literally "the out-resurrection from among the dead."

The significance of this is clear. The Lord Jesus rose out of the midst of the dead. And those who are asleep in Jesus will, at His coming, also rise from the midst of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:23-26). The first "then" (in verse 23) will be at least some 2000 years after Christ's resurrection. The second "then" (in verse 24) will be a good thousand years later again.

If there were one general resurrection, what would have been the significance of Paul's desire expressed in Philippians 3:11, "if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead"? That would not make sense if *all* men would rise at the same time!

But when we know the teaching of the Holy Scriptures about the first resurrection — the resurrection from among the dead — then all becomes clear. Paul desired so much to be conformed to the Lord Jesus that he would gladly die in the same fashion so as to be able to rise "from among the dead" in the same way, *although the actual hope of the Christian is to go to heaven without dying* (1 Thessalonians 4:15).

#### *The Resurrection to Judgment*

The general truth of Scripture concerning the judgment is found in Hebrews 9:27: "It is the portion of men once to die, and after this judgment." The next verse, however, restricts this rule: "Christ... shall appear to those that look for Him... for salvation." These latter ones will, therefore, not be judged.

All who are connected with the first Adam will die and afterwards be judged. But all who have been transferred into the family of the last Adam are justified and do not come into judgment (Romans 5:16,18-19; 1 Corinthians 15:22,45-49). Everyone shares in the position of the head of the family, either of Adam after the fall or of the Lord Jesus after His work on the cross.

The Lord Jesus clearly says this in the same chapter where He speaks about the resurrection to judgment. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that he that hears My word, and believes Him that has sent Me, has life eternal, and does not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

But don't 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10 speak of the judgment-seat of Christ (or, of God) in connection with believers? Yes.

And the words "we all" refer not only to believers but include, as far as I can see, all men, believers *and* unbelievers.

But these scriptures do not say that we will be judged. In Romans 14, it says that we shall all be placed before the judgment-seat of God, and 2 Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we must all be *manifested* before the judgment-seat of the Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body, according to those he has done, whether it be good or evil."

With unbelievers, only evil will be found "for there is not one that practises goodness, there is not so much as one" (Romans 3:12; Genesis 6:5). They will all be judged according to their works (Revelation 20:12).

With believers, there will be a mixture of good works and evil works. But *they* will not be judged. The judgment over their sins was borne by the Lord Jesus in His body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 4:25; Galatians 1:4, etc.). Even today, they possess the same righteousness as the Judge (1 John 4:17).

Their whole life will be manifested there in all its details. They will know as they are known. At that moment, they are no longer in the flesh and will, therefore, judge everything in a divine manner. And all that they see in their lives, both before and after their conversion, will give reason to admire God's grace, goodness, patience, faithfulness and love to a greater extent.

The most powerful proof that believers will not come into judgment is no doubt the fact that they will be glorified before they will be manifested before the judgment-seat (1 Co. 15:51-53). According to 2 Timothy 4:8, they will be manifested in "that day", which is the well-known Scriptural expression for the appearing of the Lord Jesus on earth to set up His kingdom. At that time, they are already a few years in heaven.

### *The Great White Throne*

In Revelation 20:11-15, we find the resurrection to judgment and the judgment itself. The throne is not situated on the earth: Heaven and earth flee away from the face of Him Who sits upon the throne and no place is found for them. The resurrected dead stand before the throne. As we have seen, they are all the unbelievers from the creation unto the end; there will be no believers among them.

Who is He Who sits upon the throne? The Lord Jesus gives the answer in John 5:21-23. There we find two of His glories. "For even as the Father raises the dead and quickens them, thus the Son also quickens whom He will." He is God the Son, equal with God the Father. God alone can give life. And in verse 25 He gives life to the spiritually dead who hear His voice.

Those who are brought to life honour Him and recognize Who He is (Mat. 16:26). But the unbelievers do not acknowledge Him (John 5:18). Therefore, "the Father has given all judgment to the Son (Who is equal to Him but Who voluntarily took a place of subjection); that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father... He has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is Son of Man" (vs. 22,23,27).

It is the wisdom of God that He has men judged by Him Who has been rejected and put to death by men. All men are judged by the Man Christ Jesus Who as Mediator between God and men has been so severely humiliated by these unbelievers.

That is exactly what men cannot bear. When Paul said to the men of Athens that God will judge the earth through a Man Who has died, they started to scoff and did not want to listen any longer (Acts 17:31).

But in Revelation 20, resistance is no longer possible. Who can resist "Him from Whose face the earth and heaven flee away; and no place was anymore found for them"? Then every knee will bow before Him!

### *The last Judgment*

There are the dead — those who before the Flood didn't serve God, those who afterward did not take account of Him, those who before the birth of Christ did not turn to God, those who rejected the Lord Jesus and crucified Him, those who are now disobedient to the gospel, those who in a little while will worship the beast and finally, those who only feign obedience in the Millennium.

*All those of the entire human race who did not turn to God will be there for judgment. Not one will be missing!*

When the Lord Jesus raises the various groups of believers throughout the entire first resurrection (1Thessalonians 4; Revelation 20:4-6), they will come out of the sea, death and hades. Yet that is something entirely different. The voice of the Lord Jesus will have such an attractive power to those who possess life from God that the sea, death and hades will not be able to *retain* them.

But here, the sea, death and hades *give* their dead. Forced by the might of Him Who sits upon the throne, they give *all* who are in them. The secrets of the invisible world become apparent. Even these tools of Satan himself (Hebrews 2:14; Matthew 16:18) are destroyed. Satan, who had the power of death, is cast into the Lake of Fire. His tools are superfluous now that all have been raised and, therefore, they are destroyed.

Not all the dead are equal. There are great ones and small ones. There are those who lived in blasphemies and gross sins, and there are those who have faithfully fulfilled their religious duties. There are emperors and kings, political figures, money magnates, industrial tycoons, artists and great scientists. There are also simple people without any special position or ambition, poor ones and illiterates.

*But during their life on earth, all have not heeded the word of the Lord Jesus and thus come into judgment.*

They are judged according to their works. No matter who they are, the verdict is the same every time: "He was cast into the Lake of Fire."

The books in heaven are accurately kept. "And no creature is hidden from Him but all things are naked and open for the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13).

The judgment is executed in accordance with the pureness of God's nature (The Great White Throne), and according to the responsibility of man toward God.

God had set man on earth to serve Him. And, therefore, all deeds done independently from God are in conflict with man's responsibility: "Sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Consequently, every thought, every word, every deed, no matter how good in man's estimation, will be judged by God if it was not done in obedience to Him.

Reader, will you one day stand before that Great White Throne? "It is terrible to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:13). Turn to God if you have not done so as yet. It is still the day of grace. "Verily, verily, I say unto you that he that hears My Word, and believes Him that has sent Me, has life eternal, and does not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

*To be cont'd*

## **THE GOOD WINE**

— G. W. Steidl

A wedding feast. Probably similar to many others celebrated during that period of history, except for one vital factor — the Lord Jesus and His disciples were invited to this one.

People noticed Him when a problem arose (just like ourselves). They ran out of wine, and He performed a miracle, producing it from plain water — six barrels full! The feast continued and everyone was happy, especially the M.C. who exclaimed to the bridegroom, "You've kept the good wine until now." This was the Lord's first miracle according to the second chapter of John's Gospel.

A strange beginning for the public ministry of the Son of God — or was it? The Bible says that by this miracle the Lord Jesus "...manifested forth His glory and His disciples believed on Him." What can we learn from it?

...that, contrary to popular belief, Christ came to give joy, not to take it away. To His disciples He still expresses His desire that "...My joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full."

...that, when we invite Christ (whether into our individual lives, our family lives, or even into our feasts), He gives a new wine — much better than what we had been enjoying before.

...that obedience to His Word precedes enjoyment of His provision. At the feast they were told, "Whatsoever He says unto you, do it." We cannot know Christ, in any meaningful way unless we recognize Him as our Lord. The Bible says, "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved."

...that the display of Christ's glory which began that day at a wedding in Galilee can begin in your life today.

Anyone for the good wine?