

The Millennium And Union With Christ

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This is the beginning of a series that I am going to be giving at the feast this year, and they all go together, but they can all stand alone as well. You will see as we go through that I have made them all tie together, especially with the introduction but also with the main theme. Just to let you know so that we are all on the same page from the beginning, the theme is union with Christ. We are going to be speaking about that starting with the Millennium and the Feast of Tabernacles as it applies to the Millennium as its basis in the plan of God.

Ted Bowling and I have been enjoying a series of science fiction audio books entitled *The Lost Fleet*. It is written by a former naval officer writing under the pseudonym of Jack Campbell. The books take place far into the future. By this time in the science fiction universe of this man's mind, humanity has colonized a large part of the galaxy, but the two main confederation of planets at the time are called the Alliance on one side and the Syndicate World on the other. These two sides are at war and they have been fighting this war for a very long time, over a hundred years. Just going at it and going at it over these large tracts of empty space.

The series begins with the discovery of a life pod floating in space and it contains Captain John "Black Jack" Geary. Remember Captain Geary because he is the one that I am kind of basing these sermons around, at least in terms of the introduction.

Captain John Geary is a hero in the war's early stages and he was thought to have been long dead (a hundred years ago) because what had happened back then was that Captain Geary had volunteered to be the rear guard in an action to get the rest of the fleet to safety. So he had sacrificed his ship (and everyone thought that he had sacrificed himself as well), to allow the Alliance fleet to avoid certain destruction and get back to friendly space. In the following years, because of this heroic action that Captain Geary performed, the Alliance propaganda machine, seeing that they had a real hero on their hands, had used this one action by Captain Geary to create a larger than life heroic figure to inspire the rest of the officers of the fleet.

They never expected that he would appear again a hundred years later to tell the lie to all of their lies. So Geary woke up from cryogenic stasis to a very different situation than when he had supposedly died. The long war had taken a heavy toll on both sides, everyone was war-weary and had no idea what it was like to live in peace. Generations

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had grown up at war, the two sides viscerally hated each other, and when their fleets would spot each other from who knows how many light years away, they would literally fly at one another with reckless abandon and usually what would happen is an undisciplined melee ensued and just dozen of ships would come together and fire upon on another and whoever had the most ships when it was all over was the winner.

Because of this lack of tactics, the ships and their crews were expected to last just a couple of years, because there was no discipline at all. They would just use whatever they had and got all shot up and died. Because of this situation, most of the officers were young and inexperienced, they were insufficiently trained, except in bonzai charges and just flying at each other. That was all they seemed to know. And because they were so young and inexperienced and had not been brought up in a tradition of professionalism and honor, they were all out for the glory and promotion. They tried to climb as high, as far and as fast as they could.

So not long after Geary is found, the Syndics, as they are called, treacherously assassinate the Alliance fleet admiral during negotiations, and because Captain Geary has a hundred year seniority on everyone else, he is put in charge of the fleet. So now he has this awesome responsibility of getting this fleet home. That is basically what it evolved into, a rescue mission to get this fleet back into Alliance space because that is all the ships they had. If they did not get those ships back to Alliance space than the Alliance was done.

So Captain Geary had to get these ships home and intact and as fast as possible, but it was not that easy. It is not just a matter of flying the fleet home, but he had to fight his way through every star system to get back, because they had lost their admiral at the home planet of the enemy and they had to fly through all of this enemy territory to get back home. And because the ships are all that remain of the entire fleet, he has to make sure that when he fights these battles, that he wins the battles and he does not take any losses, or as few as possible.

Everyone in the fleet thought that it could not be done, they thought they were doomed and would die in enemy territory. But because he was from another time, because he had grown up differently and had been trained differently, Captain Geary has some advantages that everyone else lacks in the whole fleet. These advantages make a huge difference in getting his fleet home and in a parallel way, to throw in our theme here, Christians have similar advantages that make a difference in the millennium.

The author of these books, Jack Campbell, did not realize that this theme applies well to Christians in the Millennium, but I am glad he wrote these books because it sparked

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something in my mind that became the inspiration for this series of sermons.

Now back to Geary. He is a throwback to a more honorable, life-valuing time, but he is surrounded by captains whose eyes glaze with hatred for their enemies and they want nothing else but to annihilate them all, especially after they kill the admiral. They have no mercy for their enemies, they wage total war, and want to just wipe them all out.

Of course now that Geary is in charge of this whole fleet, he has got these officers to deal with and he has to keep them on short leash and teach them that while they should fight to win, because that is their jobs as military officers, they should also be magnanimous and merciful in victory and even go that extra step to give aid to the enemy.

Now one of the first things he does in his mission (as he looks at it) to get these people back alive and intact, is to reintroduce the military salute. He starts with a very simple gesture, respect for the superior officer as well as engendering a feeling in the person giving the salute that he belongs to something, a comradeship, a brotherhood of officers that he is joined with and is able to help in this cause. So he reintroduces the military salute, because discipline and respect for authority had degraded so much throughout the war, over a hundred years, that there is no longer any tradition of military honor and professionalism.

When you are only expected to live a couple of years out in space during a war, why do it? What is the use? Some officers, because of their ladder climbing attitudes, had even fought duels, which was against military regulations, but it had gotten to that point.

So Geary had to reintroduce, right away, proper decorum and origination. He had to eliminate factions because all of these officers were at each other trying to knife each other in the back and climb over one another, and he had to get everyone unified and pointed toward a common goal. And finally he has to correct his officer's penchants for headlong, heedless rushes and charges at the enemy, because this had become an ingrained behavior. You saw the enemy, you pointed your ship at them, and you threw everything you had at them.

Now how does Geary accomplish such an enormous task? I find this very interesting, as the book was being written, how the author showed this. He did not get the officers all in one room and give them lessons on proper tactics in battle. He did this by employing long forgotten tactical maneuvers in battle and they had to follow him. He gave them every order from his command chair and they had to do whatever he told them to do and to get them thinking in a different way. These headlong rushes into battle were

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stupid and were a waste of men and material, so he told them they had to fight smart, they had to confuse and outwit the enemy, which would give the Alliance fleet an advantage and this advantage would then become victory in battle.

In affect, if you want to break it down, what he does is to encourage his officers to stop reacting and to start thinking. To weigh the various options that were open to them, to consider the endgame, to plot out scenarios, to prepare for contingencies, and to work as an efficient unit to bring their plans to fruition. Their overall plan were not to annihilate the enemy, their plan was to get home safely. That was their mission.

Now getting back to the spiritual application of this story, when Jesus Christ returns and He puts down all rebellion, ending the catastrophes of the end time, raising us from the dead as His firstfruits, as His bride, we then have eternal life and a future with Him in His Kingdom. We, the firstfruits of God, will be like Captain Geary in many ways, a people woken up from a different time with different training, with different ideas, and we will wake up like he did to a people who have just come out of a long war and many atrocities.

We will be throwbacks, if you will, as Captain Geary was, to a better way. The world will have a lot of lost, war-weary, confused, and hopeless people. They are going to need leadership, instruction, clear goals, solutions that they can follow, and our job will be to provide these things under Christ.

We will see throughout this sermon and in the sermons that follow, that it is our union with Christ now and then that will by the key to our abilities and success in the Millennium. That is the key point, our union with Christ is going to be the key.

Please turn to Leviticus 23 and we will look at the instructions for this holy day and for the whole Feast of Tabernacles, as God gives them to the children of Israel and to us.

Leviticus 23:33-35 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the Lord. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it.

That is why we are here, we are at the holy convocation and we are not at work. We are obeying what God says here.

Leviticus 23:40-43 'And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the

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fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.' ”

The instructions here are pretty straightforward, they are very fundamental, and we do a pretty good job of observing what He says here. Of course we no longer go and get branches and make booths, nowadays we live in temporary dwellings, like a hotel room. But even though a hotel is a very nice place to stay, there are still inconveniences. We are not at home, we are not in our routines, and we still have some complaints.

It is nothing like the Israelites had to go through, but even so, we know that we are not at home, we are out of sync in a way, we are not doing what we normally do. So we can learn some lessons from this in a modern way, even though it is nothing like the Israelites had to go through trekking through the wilderness, but we still understand the principles. It is a reminder, in a small way, that we are strangers and pilgrims on our way through the wilderness of faith toward the Kingdom of God, and that is what it is supposed to be a reminder of every year, that we are spiritual descendants of these Israelites.

Let us parse verse 43 a little bit. This is God's reason for this memorial week of living in booths, tents, or temporary structures, of residences on the move.

Leviticus 23:43 That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

I have pulled out three things that we can learn from this. 1) God *made* the Israelites dwell in booths. *He* did it, He *made* them, it was purposeful. The situation as they came out of Egypt, when they were walking and when they stopped, they set up their tents and they dwelled, they did not just sleep over one night and leave the next day. Oftentimes they would settle down for a while and they never knew when God was going to tell them by the pillar of the cloud or the pillar of fire that they needed to put their tent away and get everything together and off they went again.

God made them dwell in booths for a reason. He designed their departure and their wandering in the wilderness to teach valuable lessons to the Israelites. They needed the wilderness after escaping the Egyptians, it was part of the education, so God made them do it. There may have been other ways, other things that He could have done, but He said No, I want them to go out into Sinai and I want them to live in tents for a long as it takes before I bring them into the Promised Land.

So now this brings up point two. Points one and two are similar, but the emphasis in point one was that God made them, it was purposeful. Point 2) is that Israel lived as transients, they were not permanent anywhere in the wilderness. They may have stayed in some places for a few years, so they *seemed* permanent, but they never knew in those years that they were living there when God was going to take them to some other place.

So they were transient, wandering without a country in an inhospitable environment, separated, and this process of being out there in the wilderness and not knowing when they were going to pick up and leave the next time, separated the wheat from the chaff, or you could say that it separated the adults from the children, the men from the boys, as it were. It divided people up into categorizes.

This experience out in the wilderness, the experience of moving through the wilderness, not being settled, proves something about the people and it taught them something. We know from the story, because we have read it many times, that only two men made it out alive. The book of Hebrews says that all the rest of their bodies were strewn throughout the wilderness. Everybody else died except Joshua and Caleb and perhaps some of their families. That is quite an elimination process, that of perhaps 2.5 million people only Joshua and Caleb survived it with their character intact. That is not very much wheat. That is a very puny harvest when you think about it.

Now you know why they are called the children of Israel, because there were not very many adults. There were two and we can probably count Moses and maybe Aaron, but even he and Moses had some learning to do too. Moses made a mistake and he could not even go into the Promised Land. Not to take away from Moses, but Moses should have known better. He should have known not to strike the rock because he should have known Who the rock represented.

It just goes to show you what a little flock God produces, because throughout this transient life that we live, we learn these lessons and it begins to eliminate people right away because it is difficult.

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Let us go on to the third point from verse 43, which is: 3) their unsettled existence occurred after they were released from bondage. They were free, but they had to go through this after their release from bondage, because when they were in bondage they did not learn a thing, they knew nothing. They were like little babies that had to be taught.

Remember that they were slaves and they had been slaves in Egypt for generations just like those people in the science-fiction novel that I was talking about had been at war for generations. They did not know peace. Well, in the case of the children of Israel, they were not at war for generations, but rather they had been enslaved for generations and they did not know what it was like to be free.

So God had to make them leave Egypt, make them stay out in the wilderness. How many times did Dathan say, or whoever it was, say hey, let us go back to Egypt, we had it good there and at least we knew what was going on when we were back there. But God made them stay out there in the wilderness because it was necessary to educate them on how to live under God in freedom.

They probably thought, hey freedom, wonderful, we can do whatever we want, we do not have an Egyptian task master with his whip telling us what to do. The truth is that freedom under God is not like freedom the carnal mind thinks it is. Freedom under God is one of great responsibility, one of great self-discipline.

All that time the children of Israel had other people who would impose discipline on them. Then once they got out into the wilderness they had to learn to impose it on themselves and they could not do it. That is why all those bodies were strewn out in the wilderness, they were not learning the lesson.

Point three is where I think the situation of the children of Israel ties very well with the situation with the situation just after Christ's return. We are going to see, at that point, a people who survive into the Millennium, who have been freed from their bondage to Satan, they have been freed from their bondage to the beast and to the controlling powers of this world, but they are not going to know how to live in freedom under God. They are going to have to be led under difficult conditions. Not to a promised land—it says in many places in the Bible that the Israelites especially, will come back to the land. They know that is where God's law is, they know where the victor is.

People are going to see Christ coming and they are going to know that He has come down on the Mount of Olives, and that is at Jerusalem, and the Israelites are going to return in the second Exodus. So we are not going to have to necessarily lead them back

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there to any place, but rather we are going to have to lead them to character, to peace—peace with themselves, peace with one another, peace with God.

We are going to have to lead them to hope, because they are not going to have any hope, not after what they have been through. We will have to lead them to security because they are going to feel like there is no security. When stars fall from the sky, when the heavens roll back like a scroll, when one third of the fish die in the sea, or waters turn to blood, they are not going to think that there is anything settled. All that they thought was firm is going to look like Jell-O.

They are not going to understand and they are certainly not going to trust anybody. We will have to lead them to trust because everyone they have ever met has pulled the rug out from under them or tried to kill them. They are not going to know contentment or joy. Joy to them will be a distant memory and even then it probably was not the right form of joy. We are to lead them to true godly joy.

Ultimately we are to lead them to faith in God, that scary Person, the ‘alien’ who came down and destroyed the beast and the false prophet with all this power. That is how people think of God. They think they know Him (Jesus), but they have no idea because the churches of this world have been teaching another Jesus, another gospel. So, like the Israelites, the people that come out of the great tribulation and the Day of the Lord will have to learn how to live in liberty under God. They are not going to know.

Now let us see a few prophecies of this time. Ezekiel 5 is the great tribulation, and what Israel would have experienced. This is the explanation of what Ezekiel had to go through with chopping off the hair and all that he did, this is the explanation he has given of the sign. Starting in verse 8 here:

Ezekiel 5:8 Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations.

So let us get this straight at the beginning. The great tribulation is a punishment from God even though He going to allow Satan to do all these things. Because just like in the time of the Syrian invasion of Israel back in 722 B.C., just like in the Babylonian invasion of Judah in 586 B. C., those were God's punishments on a idolatrous, Sabbath-breaking, just totally disobedient people, and what we have here is a similar thing. He says that He is bringing it on them as punishment.

Ezekiel 5:9-10 And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like

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of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds.

Now just feel this. It is not necessary to understand all the little ins and outs here, but I want you to feel this, I want you to have a visceral feeling of what is going on and what these people have experienced. So we start off with cannibalism even within the very family.

Ezekiel 5:11-17 'Therefore, as I live,' says the Lord God, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them. 'Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon them, and I will be avenged; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it in My zeal, when I have spent My fury upon them. Moreover I will make you a waste and a reproach among the nations that are all around you, in the sight of all who pass by. 'So it shall be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, and an astonishment to the nations that are all around you, when I execute judgments among you in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I, the Lord, have spoken. When I send against them the terrible arrows of famine which shall be for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, I will increase the famine upon you and cut off your supply of bread. So I will send against you famine and wild beasts, and they will bereave you. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I, the Lord, have spoken.' "

What a horrible time. No wonder Jesus says that is the worst thing that has ever happened, and if He did not step in after all is said and done no life would be saved. This gives us just a taste of what end time Israelites would have experienced in the great tribulation: disease, famine, war, captivity, cannibalism, wild beasts, and every kind of degradation and affliction. And you know what? They will utterly deserve every bit of it for their disobedience to God, their immorality, and as God calls them, their abominations.

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It is tragic to think about and they have no idea that they are "cruisin' for a bruisin'," as we say, because they have not been taught, they have not been reached, and what they have learned, they have rejected. God says I have had my fill of this and they should have known and I am not going to take it any more.

The Bible is in every household, sometimes 2-3 of them, all gathering dust. Preachers are on the air, even if they do not preach the right Jesus, they are at least getting something out there, at least trying to point people in the right direction of God. You have preachers on the television, but no one is listening, very few anyway. There are few out there that try but it seems to be getting a smaller and smaller percentage all the time.

Think about it. The people who come through this are the kind of people the firstfruits are going to have to help. How do you do that? What do you say to people who witnessed a family member eat another family member? When they have gone through the horrors of war, when they have been naked for years in a concentration camp; when they have barely been given enough to survive; when you can count every bone in their body; when they have watched cities go up in nuclear dust; when they have watched armies go through and kill everything alive and salt the earth behind them? How do you turn people like that around?

Not only will they have experienced this themselves, they have watched their loved ones go through these things and it is far worse to watch someone you love to go through it than to go through it yourself. It is sobering and it is not a pretty picture and to correct it will not be easy by any means. You see the soldiers coming back from Afghanistan with PTSD and the problems that they go through. The psychiatrists are, in many cases, absolutely befuddled about how to help these guys, because they have seen the atrocities of war and their mind just cannot handle it.

That is in *today's* world, and it is almost a walk in the park compared to what the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord are going to be like. How do you help people like that? How do you turn them around and give them hope?

Let us go a little further in the book here to Ezekiel 28. Most of the time we come to this chapter and we look at the thing about Lucifer, but we are going to go after that, after he has been put away. Fortunately Satan will not be there and he will not be able to push buttons on these people because he will be locked away by the time we are able to get to these people and help them, and there will not be that distraction of Satan trying to make more trouble. So at that point Jesus Christ will have eliminated a major stumbling block to them, but even so their minds are going to be so messed up and their

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character, so we are going to have to help.

Ezekiel 28:25-26 ‘Thus says the Lord God: “When I have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and am hallowed in them in the sight of the Gentiles, then they will dwell in their own land which I gave to My servant Jacob. [So they are going to go back to the Promised Land, the holy land, the land of Israel] And they will dwell safely there, build houses, and plant vineyards; yes, they will dwell securely, when I execute judgments on all those around them who despise them. Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God”

So we see the end of the rainbow here, things are going to get better, there is going to be healing. This is the point that we are aiming for: the gathering together; the teaching of God's way; providing safety and security; the renewal of agriculture and industry; putting the people at rest and giving them security and peace, and leading them to God.

However, to get them from what we saw in Ezekiel 5 to what we read here in Ezekiel 28, will be a long and difficult road. It is not even going to take place in a year, or five or even fifteen. Mr. Armstrong told us years ago that he thought that it would take a couple of generations to get to that point. And do you know why he said that? Because of what happened after Israel left Egypt.

The generation that came out of Egypt would not be trained, they kept rebelling. They were so engrossed in their own ways of doing things that they would not listen to God. Now perhaps with what happens at the end, those people will be softened up quite a bit more and be willing to listen, so maybe it will not take two generations, maybe it will take only one.

Even so though, can you imagine people going through a holocaust of some sort? We know from our own experience through World War II with the Jews, those people were scared forever, and I do not mean the numbers tattooed on their arm. They remembered it so vividly that it touched everything they did and all the decisions they made. Those people will not be any different, although we will have the grace of God and God's Spirit and that helps cover these things over a bit. But these are real people with really monumental problems and minds that have been twisted in the vortex of the end time.

I am trying to lay it on thick here so that you understand that the job we are going to have when we rise with Christ at His return is going to be more than what we think we

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can handle, certainly right now. It is going to be daunting. God is to be thanked though that there is so few people. It is kind of cruel to think that God eliminates nine-tenths of humanity or whatever it is going to be, so that we have an ability to help these people, but what if instead of, lets say a billion people that are left on earth, what if there were only 7-8 million people, how do we help that many? The firstfruits are only 144,000, but God makes it manageable for His sons and daughters and there is grace in that.

So the problem that we face when we rise in the resurrection is going to test the most skillful, creative, and patient among us, even with all the powers of God, because the people we are trying to help are still people and many of them at that point will not have accepted God's Spirit. This is a huge job we have ahead of us.

Now let us go Isaiah 30 and we will get a little insight into how we are going to help them.

Isaiah 30:18-21 Therefore the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. [We see the time setting here, we are at the beginning of the Millennium, Jesus Christ has finally returned. I believe the ones who wait for Him are us. Are we not doing that? We are waiting for Him. The people dwell in Zion, meaning they have come back into the land.] He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. [so you get the idea that at this point God is close, He can hear, He is open to them, there is a change, the destruction has passed, His justice has been fulfilled, He is done punishing. The people return and they cry out to Him, He hears them and answers them and He is going to give them grace.] And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.

What we see here is that God's grace will make all the difference to these people at that time. Christ will be the one who will do the great bulk of the work and thank God for that. He will be there giving, finding, healing, helping in all the ways that only He can do. But what we see here as we get into verse 20 is that He has help.

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It is not just a teacher is there, but it says “your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore.” It also says that these teachers are visible. They see them, they hear their voices, they are available whenever they have a decision that needs to be made. They are there to give wisdom and help and they will be wise and helpful in their aid.

The metaphor that comes out here about the teachers here is that of hedges along a path and when someone is about to step off the path and go in one direction or another that is not good for them, they will be there to say, “you may not want to do that. Going this way leads to this and going that way leads to that.” We will be able to narrow their path into the way that leads to God.

As we see here in verse 26, you find that the teaching of Christ and the teaching of these teachers ultimately leads to the binding and the healing of their wounds. The Bible prophesies that the work that we do in the Millennium will be successful, even though it is going to be very tough, even for us at that time with the help and the powers that we are given as the firstfruits.

Now who are these teachers? I have already given you the answer. We understand that they are the resurrected children of God, the ones who are called the bride of Christ in Revelation 19. These are the ones who will rescue the lost, comfort the grieving, teach the ignorant, and point the way to salvation in Christ.

Now as an aside here, in verse 20 where it says, “Yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore,” it is actually correct—teachers, plural. In the Hebrew the word for teachers is in the plural. So it does mean more than one, but the construction of the sentence allows it to be understood as what is called a plural of respect. So a lot of modern translations will capitalize it and put it in the singular so you think of it as God or more specifically, Christ.

It says your teacher will not be moved into a corner anymore, God Himself will not be removed. He will not be invisible, He will not be far away, but He will be close. What is really interesting is that there is a third way to look at this. It is not just teachers (plural), and it is not just a plural of respect. Like Elohim is a plural of respect, it means one God in certain situations but it is in a plural form. In this case this word teachers can be seen as both at the same time.

To us, most of us being English speakers, we have definite singular and plural and we expect it to be that way all the time, either one or the other. But here, in this case, as thinking of it as both fits the context best. It is an interesting thing because we see it in the New Testament this way.

What it implies then is that one master teacher supervises the instruction but a number of others of the same mind perform it. So He—singular—gets all the credit, but the actual teachers—plural—are many. Now what does this fit perfectly with, the idea of plurality in unity in the body of Christ? There is one head, but many body parts and they all function as one in unity.

So we have here the figure of the church as a body, of the whole body of believers as the bride of Christ. We have Peter and Paul talking about the church being a building that is growing up into Christ, or as living stones in a temple that are being built as an edifice of the Spirit of God. So it works here in both singular and plural.

We are going to be working closely with Jesus Christ to perform this monumental, almost impossible task. He will get the credit and the glory, but the teachers on the ground will be His bride, doing the grunt work if you will, with the people directly. So their teachers will be there working with them and teaching them the way of God.

Recall that Paul writes in I Corinthians 1:26-29 that God has chosen the weak, the base, and the foolish of the world. Jesus says something similar in Matthew 11:25, saying that the Father has hidden the truth from the wise and revealed it to babes. And why does He say this? Because “it seemed good to Him,” it says. That is how God decided He would do it. He picked the cream of the crud, as it were, and He would give them the truth and help them to learn, so that they would be able to teach from the bottom up, if you will. They have been through it all, they have seen it, and they have gone from foolish, weak, and base to become the exalted, wise, and powerful in the Kingdom of God.

Now let us go to Colossians 1:26. I want to focus in on this word mystery here. God has revealed this mystery to babes and to weak, foolish, base people. The sermon has taken a slight turn here because I want to talk about us a little bit. We have talked about the people who we will be teaching, but I want to talk about the teachers now.

Colossians 1:26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

The mystery that has been kept from everybody else has been revealed now to His saints, to a very select group of people. Paul calls God’s Word or His plan, the gospel, whatever you want to call it, he calls it ‘the mystery.’ In Matthew 13:11, Jesus makes it plural, He calls it “the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.” So there is a big mystery and there are a lot of little mysteries that make up the whole mystery.

Now a mystery, by definition, is something that difficult or impossible to understand or explain; it is something that is beyond us; it is an enigma; it is fuzzy in some areas because we do not quite have all the information we need; some vital part of it has been kept from us or is has not been unlocked.

That is what has happened in this world. The mystery has been withheld from the world by God Himself, from the foundation and He has revealed it only to His saints. He has only given it to a select number of people. So the simple truth here is that God's Word, divine instruction about a godly way of life, knowledge that is absolutely unavailable from the beginning to anyone not given or consecrated to understand it. All of this, this mystery, this understanding, the words of life, as Jesus called them, has been given exclusively to God's saints.

It is an exclusive truth that the carnal mind cannot grasp. You can explain it until you are blue in the face, but it will not sink in for them, because the key, the mystery, has been withheld until God decides to give it or to open up the mystery to that mind. We even find out that those people, even if they think they are trying to seek the truth, they cannot.

A lot of people say they are seeking God. How can you seek something that you do not know? What happens is that normally they seek something that satisfies them and they wind up making an idol. It ends up not being God at all, it is something else that they like and in many cases God is something we do not like because we are carnal and He thinks so much differently than we do. He knows what is good for us and we do not, even though we think we do, because we think we are so smart.

But the Bible consistently shows that truth, this mystery, the gospel, must be given, it has to be revealed. It is not wide open to everybody. The calling is wide open. God says to go along the highways and byways and pull the people out of the hedges and ditches and let them know what is going on, but in John 6:44 He says that He calls people individually and He chooses a small number. "Many are called, few are chosen."

So He whittles it down until He get the group that He wants for His purpose. That does not mean that these people will not have an opportunity later, when they can understand it best and work with it best, but for right now in this dispensation, this knowledge is just for the saints. The key is just for the saints.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the

Spirit.

I want you to listen as we go through this. Paul, throughout this entire chapter, keeps defining who a saint is, who God's people are. So he says here that now these special people are not under condemnation because they are in Christ Jesus and they do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. So we are starting to get some qualifiers here about these certain people. Drop down to verse 5.

Romans 8:5-9 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

It is very clear here. The saints, those who are Christ's, have God's Spirit dwelling in them and they live according to that Spirit, they do not live according to the pulls of their fleshly nature. As a matter of fact if they try to, it says here in verse 7 that they cannot. A carnal person *cannot* live according to God's law.

But if you are living according to God's law because you have the Spirit of God in you, you are spiritually minded and you are thinking about things like life and peace, good things and good ends and doing things right, pleasing God and fearing Him. Whereas it says in verse 6, the carnal mind, when it comes down to it, only thinks of death.

Have you ever heard of the culture of death? It is the ultimate ploy of carnality and that is what we have in the United States here with 52 million abortions since 1973, and the other nations of Israel are doing the same things and a lot of the other nations as well, Russia is even worse.

So we are getting an idea here, there is the great large group on the one side who think carnally, who have a mind of looking down the road at death and that is their only goal. But then there is this small group on the other side that God has revealed Himself to, has given His Spirit to, and they look at things much differently. They look at things through the lenses of life, of eternal life, of good and of peace, and they want to please God.

Romans 8:9-11 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:14-17 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. [That is the classic definition of who is a saint, if you are led by the Spirit of God, you are a son of God because God is not going to give you His Spirit unless He has chosen you. That is how He differentiates you from anybody else in this world.] For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ [our Bridegroom, soon to be our Husband], if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Right at the end there he puts the knife in and says you are going to have to go through a lot of bad experiences before that comes, but that is okay, you are suffering with Christ, in Christ, it is all good, it will be made up to you later.

This is the classic definition of a saint, that we have been sanctified and set apart by the Spirit, because He has put His Spirit in us. It is the Holy Spirit from God in Christians that makes the difference, that is our edge, if you will.

Now let us go back to Colossians 1. I stopped there and only read the one verse there because I wanted to read this after we found out the definition of a saint.

Colossians 1:27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

If we want to get the mystery, the glories of the mystery, down to a simple phrase, if you want it in a nutshell, the mystery that you know, that you can take as wisdom and learn to apply, is *Christ living in you*. That is the key. That is the difference. It is His Spirit that dwells in us. It is His life that is in us. It is His wisdom that is in us. We are not just normal people anymore, we have an edge—a big edge that we can use at any time we

want.

God is not just a prayer away, we have got to be even closer than that! He is in us *all the time*, He is there. Do you believe that Christ is in you now? It is His power that allows you to believe, His power that allows you to act, His power that allows you to grow and put on character. There is not very much that we do at all actually. Our job is pretty much to say, "Yes, Lord," but we usually wind up saying, "No, Lord I don't want to do it, it's too hard." But He says I am in you, I abide in you, I continue in you. It is not just that He is there, He is there all the time, at all times forever, if we want it to be.

As Paul put in I Corinthians 2:16, "we have the mind of Christ" that we can tap into at any time if we really want to, if we can discipline ourselves to do so, if we will submit to Him and follow His way. John 14:15-23 is where Christ says, "I will not leave you orphans, I'm going to come to you and the Father is going to come to you and we're going to live in you. You'll have us around all the time."

They are there to give us what we need, to fill up what we need, to do what is right, to learn the things we need to learn, to grow in character, and to make the most of our lives so that we will have the character when we go into the grave and be able to use it when we come up out of it.

Now let us go through a few scriptures that I think are important here.

Revelation 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God [he is talking about the saints] by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation [He gathered us from all over the world], and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

He is telling us what He has done. He has redeemed us and brought us into His Kingdom and given us offices, rulership, teaching, mediating, and judging authority. Why is He able to give this kind of power to these people. Well, we see a description of the Lamb and also His firstfruit here.

Revelation 14:1-5 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. [they are God's, God's people] And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as

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it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. [Why does no one else learn that song? Because He has not given it to them to learn. He has chosen those people out of the world and only those particular ones were given the key to the mystery of the Kingdom of God. They are an exclusive group.] These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

This is how far they have come after learning the mystery and submitting to God's will and to following the urgings of the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 19:6-9 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

So we have here a quick character sketch of these people: you, the firstfruits of God, will reign a thousand years to help those people in that time to learn, to grow and to grasp this mystery, to put what has happened to them behind them. We see here is that

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these people, these saints, these 144,000, by the time they get to this point where they are granted authority to reign with Christ, they will be perfectly qualified to teach and help these people because Christ in them will have taught them how to do it. And it will not be that we are just going to help them recover from the horrors of the end time, but we are going to teach them to thrive in the freedom of God.

Just jot down Obadiah verse 17, and also 20-21. It says at that point that saviors come to Mount Zion, and they teach and judge. At that point, as the firstfruits of God, the bride of Christ, we are going to be so identified with our Savior, Jesus Christ, that we too will be considered saviors with Him and that is how they will look on us—as the ones who came with Christ and saved them from that horrible Day of the Lord and all the terrible things that happened at the end.

I hope you can see that Christ in us makes all the difference. We will teach and guide them in a way of living that is totally new to them, a way of life, of honor, of righteousness, and peace, and we will heal them and keep them on the right path.