

The Triumph of The Church

By Elder Gregg Thompson

"Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lambs wife;" – Revelation 21:9.

Man, in his fallen state, is blind, vicious, and unhappy, and will remain so, unless changed by divine grace. Sin has dominion over him; and although he may acknowledge the existence of a God, yet, in reality, he is without God, and without hope in the world. Into this abyss of misery and wretchedness he has plunged himself, and has made himself a fit companion for devils and wicked spirits. He has violated the law of his Creator, and fallen under its curse; his soul is stained with guilt, and his mind has become enmity against God, so that he would fly from his presence. Man had not long been in this hopeless condition, when God promised a deliverer in the person of *"the seed of the woman."* This Deliverer was to reign in righteousness and truth; his kingdom was to fill the whole earth, and to have no end. Time rolled on, and God renewed his promise to Abraham, and made him and his posterity the depository of his oracles.

He called Moses, and set him over the children of Jacob, and by his mouth revealed to them his will. The children of Israel were taken under the special protection of the Most High, and were commanded to have no God besides him. The religion given to the Jewish nation recognized one only infinite and holy God. Its ceremonies were wisely calculated to raise the mind of the people to the majesty of the Supreme Being, who dwells in heaven, and fills immensity. The morality of their religion was I pure, and taught them to love God with all their heart, to obey his statutes, and to do good to one another. It was also figurative; and every sacrifice that was made upon their altars was calculated to bring fresh to their minds the promised Redeemer, who should put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. God also raised up prophets among his people, who, from time to time,

taught them of the coming of this promised Redeemer, of his character, and the nature of his kingdom. Moses, inspired with the spirit of prophecy, and remembering the ancient promise of God, says, *"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, they have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him;"* -- Deuteronomy 18:15-18

The other prophets very clearly describe the character of the Redeemer, both in his humanity as man, Prophet, and King; and in his Divinity as God, the Almighty, and the everlasting Father. Their predictions were gradually developed, as the time for the entire accomplishment of the promise approached. By inspiration, the great Eternal unfolded to Daniel what was in futurity, and showed him, as fleeting clouds, the great empires which would succeed each other, and finally terminate in the reign of the SON OF MAN, to whom belonged all power, honor, and glory. And Daniel thus describes this glorious personage: *"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed;"* -- Daniel 7:13,14. To prove to the world that the man Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, was this King of glory, it was essential that the time of his coming should be clearly and distinctly foretold. Within the seventieth week from the publication of the edict for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, was the time fixed that the sceptre should depart from Judah. When the seventy

weeks had expired, according to the word of the Lord, the sceptre had departed from Judah, the nation had become subject to the Romans, and felt that the power and authority had departed from her. These signs were observed by many of the Jews, and they recognized the time pointed out by the prophets, and were in expectation. They proclaimed everywhere that the Messiah was about to appear; and all people were expecting some great event at the time when Christ was born. The wise men saw his star, and came to worship him. When the curtains of night had fallen around the shepherds, and in silent meditation they were watching their flocks, suddenly the silence was broken by the sweet music of heaven; the glory of the Lord shone around them, and the angel of the Lord proclaimed to them the joyful tidings: "*Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.*" This was spread abroad, and caused wonder in the minds of those who heard it. It was not long until, according to prophecy, the voice of one was heard in the wilderness, crying, "*Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight paths for our God.*" The people in multitudes crowded to see him, and many were ready to receive him as the promised King. A Prophet had been promised them; the time for his appearance had come, and they asked John if he was that Prophet; and John answered them, "No;" and told them that he was not worthy to unloose his shoes; but said, "*I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.*" But John fulfilled his mission, and pointed out the King to them, saying, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*" When John had borne his testimony, and fulfilled his mission, he sealed it with his blood.

This extraordinary man, that John calls "*The Lamb of God,*" is the promised seed of the woman, the Redeemer, the long desired of all nations. Carnal men esteemed nothing but worldly glory; they expected their king to come in the pomp and show of the world; his wealth and parentage must give to him dignity and prowess. But this man was humble and poor; his

reputed father was nothing but an humble mechanic; and by way of reproach he was called "*the carpenters son.*" But his wisdom put to naught the wisdom of the world; the doctors and lawyers were confounded by him at twelve years old. He commanded the winds and the storms; he walked upon the waters; and in the desert he multiplied the loaves of bread. The sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, and those possessed of devils, implored his assistance; and at his word they were immediately relieved. When the weeping Mary and Martha had deposited the earthly remains of their dear brother in the silent grave, and four days it had lain in the cold embrace of death, he had but to speak, and the dead was raised to life; and if any were possessed of evil spirits, at his bidding they fled, confessing that he was the Son of God. All his works proclaimed who he was, so that a learned Pharisee said, "*We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*"

While these miracles proved that he was God, he was tempted, he hungered, and he wept at the tomb of Lazarus, giving evidence that he was truly man, and as such could sorrow, and suffer pain. The prophets foresaw him in his true character; and speaking of his manhood, called him a child born, a son given, a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief. And speaking of his divine nature, they called him the everlasting Father, the God of the whole earth. In the word he is called God, and man; and besides these two, there is no other nature ascribed to him. As man, he has received of God, glory, honor, power, and a kingdom. He is called the man of God's right hand; and as such he is set upon the holy hill of Zion, to rule and reign as King. As man, God called him his Son. When John immersed him in Jordan, God the Father said, "*This is my beloved Son.*" Who was the beloved Son? The man John immersed. The same was repeated upon the mountain, when the disciples were directed to "*hear him.*" He was their King, their Lawgiver, their Teacher. This is the Prophet which the Lord God promised to raise up from among their brethren, in whose mouth he would put his word, and unto

whom they should hearken. "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,*" says Jesus. He is, therefore, a King, but his kingdom is not of this world; it is a heavenly kingdom, and its subjects are made heirs of heavenly blessings.

He calls himself the Son of man, and also the Son of God; and declares that he came to do the will of him that sent him; and to set up and establish his kingdom on earth. He taught as one having authority, and spake as man never spake. He is clothed with the omnipotence of Deity; worldly wisdom is confounded by the brightness of his virtues; he is clothed with a glory which is infinitely more resplendent than any which belongs to this world. But he lives a life of humility, and is a man of fasting and prayer. He calls around him a few poor, illiterate men, and instructs them in the nature of his kingdom, by parables the most simple and striking. He sought not applause of men, and desired not worldly authority, or honor; for when the people wished to make him king, he fled into the wilderness. He knew for what end he came into the world, the work he was to do, and the bitter death he had to die. He taught the necessity of his death, and comforted the disciples with the promise of another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who should abide with them, and should fill their mouths with wisdom when they were called to stand before the rulers and princes of this world.

When the time determined for him to die came, he submitted to the ignominy of the cross, and like a sheep in the hands of the shearer, or a lamb brought to the slaughter, he was dumb, and opened not his mouth. For three dreadful hours he bore all the agonies of death upon the cross; the sun was darkened, the earth trembled, the rocks bursted, the veil of the temple was rent, and with his dying breath he cried, "*It is finished.*" The work of redemption is completed, the cleansing blood runs freely from the opened veins of the sacrifice, the promise is fulfilled, the types and shadows

are ended, the imperfect, conditional covenant is done away, and an end is made of sin.

But he could not be holden of death; the third day he rises, and shows himself to his disciples; and for the space of forty days he is with them, and instructing them; he eats with them, and they handle him, and know that he is not a spirit, but that the man has triumphed over death. *"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."* He asserts his sovereignty, by declaring, *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;"* and he gives the apostles the command to teach all nations, and to baptize them, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He specifies what they shall teach, and for their encouragement promises to be with them, even unto the end of the world. When he had finished his work, established his church, and gave to her the executive power in his kingdom to administer its ordinances, execute its laws, and do whatever he had commanded, he ascended up to heaven, where he ever lives to make intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

The manner of his death, as well as its object, was the subject of prophecy. Isaiah speaks of him when he says. *"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgressions of my people was he stricken."* It was, therefore, as a substitute that he died, and it was for the sins of God's people, his elect, his bride that he was cut off out of the land. Daniel understood this, and said, *"And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself."* It pleased the Lord to lay on him the iniquity of us all. Christ himself says, *"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for*

the sheep." And again, *"I lay down my life for the sheep."* He takes the place of the flock, dies as their substitute, bears their sins in his own body on the tree, and puts them away by the sacrifice of himself. He dies for his church, or in the room and stead of it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, and present it to himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. His elect, his bride, had fallen under the curse of the law in her earthly head, Adam, and was so polluted with sin that she is said to be black as the tents of Kedar, and the sentence of death is passed upon her; she has become a prey to the mighty, and is in lawful captivity. With all Adams posterity she is dead in trespasses and sins, and *"children of wrath, even as others."* God, who declared the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done, saying, *"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure,"* before the earth was fashioned, or the deeps abounded with water, saw all that was in futurity, and established his covenant with his chosen. And in the book of his divine counsel all the elect were written, when as yet there was none of them. They were given to Christ as his bride his sheep, his portion; as he says, *"Thine they were, and thou gavest them me."* Thus setting up, constituting, and appointing Christ the Husband, Shepherd, Head, and Representative of his chosen seed. The means of their recovery were provided before they were created, or had actual being; and according to this divine arrangement of infinite Wisdom, when they were created, and had fallen under the curse, in the fullness of the time, the appointed Husband, Shepherd, Head, Representative, and Redeemer, came to bear the penalty, pay the debt, and redeem his bride. He came, according to divine appointment, as it is written in the volume of the book, to do the will of his Father. By covenant appointment, and not by transgression, he comes under the law; the transgressions of his bride are imputed to him; he fulfills the law in her behalf, and bears the penalty due to her sins, redeems her by means of his death from the transgressions under the first covenant, that she might receive the promise of an eternal inheritance.

When we look at the bride as she stands in Adam, her fallen head, we find that she was created in him, and possessed all the goodness that belonged to him, and no more; and when he fell she fell in him into all the depths of sin, iniquity, and pollution in which his posterity was involved. For she was a part of the same posterity; so there was no difference. In this condition she was black, guilty, and helpless; the flaming sword of justice was suspended over her, ready to pierce her through. But, like Isaac of old, when the time had come for the victim to be offered, and the knife was drawn to strike the blow, a substitute was provided, and he receives the sword in his own heart, pays the debt of his captive bride, opens her prison door, proclaims her liberty, and brings her up out of the filthy pit into which she had sunk herself by sin. She is stripped of her filthy garments, clothed in robes of righteousness, and with garments of salvation. She that was as black as the tents of Kedar is now made as fair as the curtains of Solomon; she that had become a mass of corruption, deformity, and ugliness, is now made the fairest among women, and altogether lovely. She is compared to the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley; her garments are wrought gold, and she is brought unto the King in raiment of fine needlework, clean and white; for they are washed in the blood of the Lamb, which cleanseth from all sin. Her Husband, Head, Priest, and Redeemer has washed every stain from her, so that she can be presented unto the King without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing.

I have used the words bride and elect as meaning the same people; for they are a chosen people, chosen of God in Christ before the world began, and predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. This election was eternal, unconditional, and personal, and embraced all that should be redeemed by Christ. It was an act of Divine sovereignty, and wholly of grace. The elect were not chosen, because they were a holy, spiritual seed, or because of foreseen virtues, but that they should be holy, and without blame before God in love. If it were the purity of the seed, or

the particular quality or nature of those chosen, that caused their election, or if it were foreseen virtues, then the election were a debt, or reward, and not of grace, but of works; for in that case the elected procured their own election. The elect were sinners of Adams race; for they were chosen out of the world, from among men, and were ordained unto eternal life, and to be conformed to the image of Jesus. This election was not based upon the actual existence of those elected, but upon the foreknowledge of God, who made the election when as yet there was none of them.

It was by man that sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death has passed upon all; (elect and non-elect;) for all have sinned. In creation, and as fallen sinners, there is no difference; the condition of one is the condition of all; *"for there is none good, no, not one."*

But God has chosen his people through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Christ. In the first Adam they have fallen, and become strangers, foreigners, and enemies to God. But by the electing love of God they have a standing in the second Adam, and when the fullness of the time was come he was made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law; and they were represented in his life of obedience, and death of bitter sufferings. When Christ bowed his head on the cross and cried, "It is finished," he paid the debt of all his chosen seed; and being delivered for their offenses, he rose again from the dead for their justification.

His blood cleanseth from all sin, and they are made the righteousness of God in him. In view of the complete and finished work of Christ, the Redeemer of all his elect, Paul says, *"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right*

hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." By the death of Christ upon the cross they are reconciled to God; and by his life they are saved. He is made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and they are complete in him, and justified from all things from which they could not be by the law of Moses. According to the divine purpose, in the fullness of the dispensation of the times, they are gathered together in him; regenerated, made partakers of the divine nature, called to be saints, that they might show forth his glory, and the exceeding riches of his grace in the ages to come. His elect embraces as many of Adam's children of every nation, tongue, and kindred as shall enter into that eternal rest beyond this vale of tears. John describes them as a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and crying with a loud voice, "*Salvation to God, which sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb.*" These are they who have come up through great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. This is the bride, the Lamb's wife, the church of God, who is a chaste virgin, and has kept the commandments of God, and her garments unspotted from the inventions of men, and institutions of the world. She has passed through the fires of persecution, and her innocent blood has been shed, and her thousands and tens of thousands have suffered cruel tortures and martyrdom from the hands of her enemies, because of their faithfulness to their Lord, and refusal to unite with the societies of the world, and the inventions of men, which are unknown to the gospel, and the commands of God, or the sayings that she must keep to have a right to enter into the city, and take of its fruits. The souls of her martyred hosts, who were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, are beneath the altar, crying with a loud voice, "*How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*"

The day of vengeance will come, when all these worldly systems shall be destroyed, and their builders sink in eternal disgrace. But the bride, who has kept the commandments, will hear the voice of the Bridegroom, saying, *"Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee. Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards."* Her days of sufferings are over; with her lamps trimmed and burning, and clothed in her rich and spotless robe, she is waiting and looking for her Lord. A voice is heard, saying, *"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."* Clothed in her wedding garment of spotless white she leaps with joy, claps her hands; and shouts, *"Come, Lord Jesus!"*

Look up yonder! See her enter the city that hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Listen! Hear the song: *"Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."* Their harps immortal are tuned, and,

**Without a jarring note, they join
In ceaseless songs of praise,
And to the sacred Three in One
Loud hallelujahs raise.**

Dear brethren and sisters, you may have a few more stormy days to pass through, dark clouds may gather around you, and you may feel the

piercing of the enemy's darts; but fear not, that happy home is yours, and your Beloved will soon call you up to be with him, where sin, sorrow, and death can never come; and with garments white you will enter the holy city, and sing a sweeter song than angels ever sung. Here you are a little flock despised and hated by the world; but fear not, the victory is sure; your Father will give you the kingdom.

**Shout ye little flock and blest;
You on Jesus' throne shall rest;
There your seat is now prepared,
There your kingdom and reward.**

O sweet day, when Jesus shall come to take his ransomed home! Let us keep our lamps trimmed and burning, and live constantly looking for his coming; for, *"Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."*

Dear sinner, your joys and pleasures are all delusive, and will soon be gone forever. The awful hour when you must quit this world, and enter the eternal world, is rapidly approaching you; it is not far off. Are you careless and thoughtless about that solemn hour? I tremble for you, and from my heart of hearts I pray God be merciful to the sinner. Jesus on the cross prayed for his cruel enemies; Stephen, the first martyr, with his dying breath prayed for his murderers. And with a heart full of love for you, and a strong desire for your eternal well-being, we can humbly pray, God be merciful to the sinner. But we close with the words of the Savior, when he prayed in the gloomy garden *"Thy will be done."*