

“JERUSALEM MEETS ROME AND FINDS BABYLON: A STUDY IN CHURCH PURITY”

FALL 2022-SPRING 2023

I. WHY THE CHURCH?

- A. In the mind of God BEFORE the foundation of the world*
- B. It is mystery in the Old Testament (TANAKH) and revealed in the New Testament*
- C. It is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise or covenant - all the nations of earth will be blessed in your seed*
- D. It is God's gift to His Son to share the Kingdom of God, which He will inherit, with Him*
- E. It is redeemed and authorized by the Christ, born again and empowered by the Spirit, gifted and “fruited” by the Spirit*
- F. It is an open witness to the wisdom of God to all the angelic host especially the principalities and powers who have witnessed the rebellion of man and angel*
- G. Made up of people once completely separated from God who are now, by the gracious incarnation of the Son of God, drawn into an inseparable, eternal union with Christ*
- H. The church in its intimacy with Christ is His bride and their relationship is the model for human relationships, in particular, marriage*
- I. The church will reign with Christ in the restored Kingdom of God; she will live forever with Him*
- J. The church is the one in whom Christ has invested His witness and wisdom. The church is the repository of the Truth on earth. It is the light of the world.*
- K. The church is the ambassador of reconciliation to the world. The church represents Christ on earth and presents His terms of peace prior to the Father's judgment on the earth as He delivers the kingdom to His Son and makes His enemies His footstool*
- L. The church is the royal priesthood to demonstrate the praises of the One who brought us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. We are to make continuous intercession for one another and for the lost sheep who have not yet met the Savior. We are to be in prayer for all men especially those in authority*
- M. The church is the living sacrifice being offered daily to God*

- N. The church is the body of Christ doing what is left of Christ to do on this earth. Christ's work on earth is not completed until He returns. Until He returns the church is His body. We are to be filled with good works for our Father to be glorified. We do those works in the Son's name and in the way the Father would do them or has told us to do them*
- O. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it is a start on the things which are revealed about the church. The church is living, mobile, and dynamic so its work will always be contextual to the region it enters*

II. CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT - JERUSALEM INVADED BY ROME

- A. The setting: The middle of the earth – Israel; in the land God chose for the descendants of Abraham to whom He promised it; a land that had been war torn and occupied by 4 different nations by conquest for over 500 years; second temple is rebuilt and a traditional, ritual faith is being practiced; they are ruled by a treacherous Edomite and a resentful Roman governor; political intrigue is happening all the time: Some groups are trying to overthrow the Roman rulers and assassinations take place often; people rebel at the presence of Romans in the holier sites of Jerusalem so protests are not uncommon; the temple priests are more secular than religious seeking power from the government; Pharisees, self-appointed holy separatists, rule over the people by the authority of their teaching and are becoming the sole and only accepted teachers of Torah and their version of it in their study notes (in only a few years they will become the rabbinical Judaism that is the forerunner of modern Judaism); through them traditions run rampant; some of the people have abandoned the “city religion” with its corruption and have established communities of rigid Torah practice away in the wilderness areas; Messianic rumors have been followed for nearly 200 years and a strong messianic hope is alive in all the people to one degree or another, usually fed by messianic literature that shows up from time to time; many people have grown hopeless that anything is ever going to change; John the Baptizing One has showed up on the scene calling for repentance and announcing that the Kingdom of God is near as is its King further enhancing high messianic hopes. Additionally, floating in this environment*

is the Grecian philosophers, the Grecian and Roman lifestyles, the mystical religions of the middle east. Many have caved into the Greco/Roman culture and have abandoned Judaism as lifeless. It is into this mix that the Lord Christ, Son of God, is born as Jesus of Nazareth of lowly descent.

- B. The timing: Daniel the prophet had been given a time for the people to look for the messiah. He had passed it on in his book of prophecy. For those prophecy buffs alive at the time, they would know that time is very near. Political unrest is fomenting as it has been for at least 200 years already, always waiting for an opportune expression. Several greater and lesser “messiahs” had showed up and withered back down in failure; Messianic literature is being read or listened to especially among those less privileged. There are no solid sources of information; it is all biased, mixed with truth and error. The Romans are oppressive and arrogant believing the Roman way is civilized and these people are pagans or followers of a depraved religion. The Jews feel ethnically superior and exceptional as God’s chosen people; they thought their chosen status would keep them above these kinds of troubles; now they sense God has rejected them. They are on their own. Groups of people are flocking to the wilderness where ascetic groups are following Torah and having visions, seeking some hope for the future. Many have gone to John the baptizing one to join with others in a messianic community. A sharp divide is coming between the more formal Jews of Jerusalem and the rural Jews of Galilee and other rural areas as well as the Samaritans and those outside the borders of Israel. Tension is felt all over the land. It is just right to bring in the Messiah of hope and the offer of eternal life. Gal 4:1-5*
- C. The people: God was preparing a people for the Son. He was already drawing them away from the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the political zealots who are realizing there is no hope in them. Many of them were already following John the baptizing one. They were discontent with the status quo but most of them knew there was not a political solution being offered that would be lasting. There only hope was in the faith of the fathers some way. They were looking for the messiah. God is giving the people who belong to Him to His Son. He is drawing them to the Son. They are able to hear Him for they too are not of this world even as the Messiah is not of this world. Most of them were not of any*

political power, financial wealth or class position. They were common people with common tastes. They were common laboring people of the trades and of all other types of positions of little or no power to effect change anywhere. They were ordinary people with nothing outstanding about them. They were about to be changed by the Son of God and had no idea it was coming! Their lives together with the Messiah were going to turn the world upside down in a few short years.

III. GOD FORMS THE CHURCH - JERUSALEM IS THE CAPITAL OF THE NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY

- A. Foretelling His coming - prophets*
- B. Proclaiming His coming - John the baptizer, angels, magii*
- C. The Incarnation - The work of the Holy Spirit*
- D. The life of Jesus, the Christ - Shekinah glory walking among men; reliving and perfecting the life of Israel; reintroducing the law; confirming the work of God; setting up the next great exodus*
- E. Hand picking and training small group leaders to carry on the work after His departure; He goes to get the final home ready for His bride*
- F. Demonstrating true servant leadership; teaching them to model it*
- G. Paying the price for the debt - crucifixion; cancelling the legal debt owed to God – paid in full; cancelling the old man and old people*
- H. Resurrection - giving new life to a new people; the new order of creation has begun!*
- I. Ascending to the Father - further proof of Deity*
- J. Gathering the outcasts of Israel to Jerusalem - Pentecost*
- K. Tongues - reversing the effects of Babel*
- L. The gospel preached to “all the world” with confusion gone*
- M. The Holy Spirit forms a new community of people with a new lifestyle - the new covenant is alive in the people of God*
- N. Small group leaders getting ready to assume a world wide role*