

## THE CHURCH'S DESTINY

"...the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him...and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev.22:3,5). Service is not only our privilege now, but also the Church's blessed prospect for eternity, for which eternal vocation of course, we have to be prepared and qualified now. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that it is the vocation of the saints to judge the world and judge the angels (1 Cor.6: 2,3). This is the most astonishing idea, in this Corinthian context, for their church hardly seemed to provide promising material for such a high vocation. Nevertheless, the truth that the redeemed are destined to reign with Christ, is repeatedly referred to in Revelation.

The Lord Jesus told His disciples that they were the light of the world. While that is true, it is equally true that the world is largely unable and unwilling to appreciate that light, even when it shines. The day will come however, when the Lamb-illuminated Church will provide help and guidance to the nations (Rev.21: 24). In this aspect. of things, we see the Bride as Queen -consort of the Lamb sharing His rule of loving service. In the divine concept, to rule is to serve.

It is quite impossible for us dwellers on earth and in time, to visualise how the eternal ages of untiring service provide for the fulfillment of our destiny. Whom will we rule? Whom will we serve? There is much that we do not understand in this connection, but that does not lessen the thrust of this final vision which speaks of "the healing of the nations" (Rev.22:2) and the ministration of blessing to them (Rev.21 :24). The Bride's destiny is closely connected with that of her divine Bridegroom; the Church will always be at His side, not just for personal enjoyment, but for "Universal ministry".

This should not lessen our devotion to the service of the Gospel now -far from it. Service in God's eyes arises not from some outward obligation but from an inward attitude of heart, which is in fact the Spirit of the Master (John 13: 15). Not that we should wait for eternity in the hope of a place and honour there, but rather that, because of eternal prospects, we should be the more devoted to the task of serving others and seeking to win men for Christ. If service is to be our future vocation, then we must stick to it now. It may prove that our present activities form a kind of apprenticeship. When we think compassionately of needy men, we must always remember that when we least expect it, the cry may ring out, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh".

Whatever else Revelation 11 may mean, it does give us some indications of the life of witnessing, which characterises those who in due course are raised up and hear the great voice saying unto them, "Come up hither" (Rev.1;1 :12). Though we may not clearly identify the two prophets as to who they are, like them we shall also be raised, hearing the voice of the Lord at His coming. This blessed hope will surely empower and encourage us in our witness for Christ in this hostile world.

The first point to note is that there are Christ's minimum of two. The Church's Testimony in the world involves individuals but should never be individualistic. We need one another. The next is that although their testimony is on earth, their origin and source of supply is in heaven. They are "the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth" (v.4). Every believer needs to be in intimate relationship with the Lord, and to know the constant supply of the Spirit, but especially if men are to stand true to God in a world which is spiritually Sodom and Egypt, and where their Lord was crucified.

Is this Jerusalem in apostasy? Is it not a reminder to all witnesses that although the Church may have times of relative tolerance or even popularity, the world in which it witnesses is essentially, deeply, hostile to the Lord of Whom it testifies? Life may be relatively peaceful for us, but the time is coming when the painful aspect of living for Christ, as here mentioned becomes real. However, for them and for us all, there is the comfort in knowing that the great testimony, the Ark of the covenant, though hidden in heaven, is the unfailing assurance of God's faithfulness to His people who battle on earth (v. 19). Though hated and attacked, we will only be overtaken by death when our task here is completed (v. 7) and in God's good time His witnesses will be vindicated in a striking way. The manner of their going up to heaven in a cloud gives at least a hint of that great conclusion to this Dispensation which is described in 1 Thess. 4: 13-18, which we call rapture. The Lord sustain us all in this lively hope.