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ASCENDING AND DESCENDING

No.283

INTRODUCTION

When the Lord gave me the title for this study, I wondered what it was going to be about. I knew it was not about Jacob's ladder with the angels ascending and descending. Then I realized that it has to do with what I have been writing recently: First Resurrection.

John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, meaning that by the Spirit he was able to see things that would happen in our day. He faithfully recorded the visions for us first and since then, Christians have been striving to decode and understand their meaning. First resurrection is a subject that is truly of great interest, especially as the closing of this age has come.

In two consecutive chapters, we find the unfolding of the visions as they are beginning to appear in our day. One is about first resurrection and the reign of the priests of God and of Christ, the Great White throne and the judgment of the dead. The other is about New Jerusalem, the bride as she is descending from God out of heaven.

I knew then what the Spirit was saying. These two events are simultaneous, that is they take place at the very same time. The priests of God and of Christ are ascending into the Spirit to take their place of rule, while the bride of Christ is descending or appearing out of the Spirit into a visible realm.

FIRST RESURRECTION

*“And I saw **thrones**, and **they that sat upon them**, and JUDGMENT WAS GIVEN UNTO **THEM**. And I SAW THE SOULS of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and*

*which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reign with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. **THIS IS THE FIRST RESURRECTION**. Blessed and holy IS **HE** that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but **THEY SHALL be priests of God and of Christ**, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”*
(Rev.20: 4-6)

In a previous study, we saw that “first resurrection” is the mark of the high calling of God in Christ that the apostle Paul was pressing toward. As we see Christians today, it is obvious that this subject is not their main point of interest or goal. But for those among us who are hearing, it is a most interesting and vital subject.

First resurrection could be called “Firstfruits resurrection.” The scriptures above plainly describe the Lord's firstfruits, who rule and reign with Him, as those who are the first resurrection. Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection.*” First resurrection is not an event, it is Christ Himself arising in His body of people. Note how it is written, first it speaks of HE that is blessed, and then, the “He” becomes the “THEY” that shall be. It is Christ in His many-membered body who will rule and reign with Him a thousand years.

They (He in they) shall be the government of the earth, for a rule of a thousand years. The thousand years are not literal as according to our calendar, but rather a definite age (day) in which this rule will take place.

John saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. Paul wrote, *“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?”*(I Cor. : 2-3)

The “saints” are the ones who are separated and sanctified unto His purpose. They are the same that John saw seated on thrones. This vision is symbolic of those who have overcome the systems of men and have given themselves to witnessing the Word that they see and receive from the Spirit of God.

May we keep in mind that this is not speaking of the “witnessing” of the “evangelists” to bring souls to Christ. This witnessing is done by those who hear or see God's living word, and stand as a witness of that Word, against the “religious” spirits that have taken over the lives of God's people. Jesus is the faithful Witness of the Father. He stood in the Father's Word against the establishment of that day.

We are His witnesses in the earth as well. Such witnesses are still being **beheaded**. This means that their identity has been cut off, and their word finds no place among the established, ruling corporate assemblies or associations of religious men professing Christ.

Their lives come from another source. They do not receive the mark of the beast (man of flesh) upon their foreheads or in their hands which means they do not think nor act according to the ways of this world. For that reason, the world and worldly religions have set themselves against them, to destroy them. But the Lord has decreed and they are not going away anytime soon.

When the Lord set Ezekiel to be His prophet to Israel, He warned him that they would not listen to him. *“...they will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted.. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.. As an adamant have I made thy forehead: fear them not,*

neither be thou dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.”(Eze.3:7b-9)

Ezekiel's mind was sealed by the Lord and he could not be swayed. The forehead represents the area where thoughts are either permitted to enter the mind, or resisted against. It is the place that God can make so hard that no man or beast can ever change it. The Lord is speaking of the stubbornness of God's people on one hand.

On the other hand, He made Ezekiel's forehead as hard as a diamond, so that none would be able to influence him. The saints are sealed in the foreheads and cannot be swayed or influenced either. They will never accept defeat at the hand of the Adam man and his systems.

In every day life this translate into the fact that when God speaks a Word to us, we receive it and are not swayed by the wiles of the world trying to convince us otherwise or change our minds and deeds; our forehead is as an adamant. We are built upon the Rock and when the storms come, we do not crumble under the blows.

Such are the people who form the Body of Christ and who will rule and reign with Him in the age to come. They are ruling and reigning with Him even now by the measure of the Word they receive.

If we hear, comprehend and embrace these words, we are already enrolled in this Body of people. We are still in preparation, but by and by, we are taking hold of our ruling and reigning by the Word that we receive from our Father. We may be fighting many battles in our natural life and body, but our minds and hearts are sealed and we are dwelling in Him.

ASCENDING TO THE THRONE

The firstfruits are the witnesses who have been dead in the streets of the city. This means that they have been ostracized from their assemblies because of the Word they represent and speak. This does not mean that they are literally dead, but the Word they represent has been rejected and lays dead in the operations and programs (streets) of the visible

church. If any of us were to share what we believe with anyone other than those who are called, we would not be understood nor received; we are dead among them.

First resurrection is the raising up of His true witnesses; the people who have become His Word of life. First Resurrection is unique in timing, in importance and in another very purposeful way: **It is the ascension to the throne.**

When Mary met Jesus at the tomb, she wanted to touch Him to assure herself that it was truly her Lord. But He quickly moved aside and said, “*..Touch me not; for I am **not yet ascended to my Father**; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*” (Jn.20: 17)

Jesus had just come out of the tomb into His glorious resurrection body. He had triumphed over hell and death, yet there was another very important step for Him to take. He needed to ascend to the Father. He needed to take His place at His Father's right hand and begin His time of ruling and reigning until all enemies would be under His feet. Jesus had overcome death in spirit, soul and body and He was ascending to the throne of judgment.

When the resurrected Jesus visited the seven churches, He gave promises of reward to the overcomer. One of these was, “*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, **even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.***”(Rev.3:21)

And again, “*And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.*”(Rev.2: 26-27)

These are mighty promises to the overcomer. The overcomer is the Christ creation man within us. The “old man” within us is the Adam man. The rod of iron is the unbending word of God that breaks to shivers the old man within. I am so grateful for this

rod of iron that breaks down the stubbornness in me each time I am faced with the deadly forces of my old nature.

It is when the rod of iron has worked its work in us, that we will have power to deliver the nations (ungodly). This is what Jesus meant when He said, “*He that overcometh **and keepeth my WORKS..***” We keep His works in us, and we keep His works in whatever He leads us to each day.

THE THRONE OF JUDGMENT

When Jesus told Mary to go and tell the brethren that He was going to ASCEND to the Father, He was speaking of taking His position in the throne, or absolute authority of His Father. This is the position that Jesus holds now. He is seated in the throne of His Father, joined by the overcomers, until ALL His enemies are under His feet (the feet are His body in the earth), the last enemy is death.

“*For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*” (I Cor.15:25-26) This is the day when He shall appear in His saints, “*When he shall come to be glorified IN HIS SAINTS...Wherefore we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” (II Thes.1: 10a,11-12)

The Psalmist was filled with great joy when he wrote, “*Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall ALL THE TREES of the wood (people of the earth) rejoice before the Lord: for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall **judge the world** with righteousness, and the **people** (His people) with his truth.*” (Ps.96: 12-13)

When Jesus came into the world, He declared, “*And if any man hear my words, and believe not, **I judge him not**: for **I came not to judge** the world, but **to save** the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him:*

the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him IN THE LAST DAY.” (Jn.12: 47-48)

Jesus came the first time as the Savior of the world but in the last time, **it is His Word through His body that is judging the world.** Is this not what we are witnessing today? Men in high places and in government places are being judged by the truth. Unperceived by most, it is God's “righteousness” and truth, embodied in a people on earth that are judging the world in these last days. It is the fire of their Word that He has put in their mouths that is causing all the shaking and burning.

The more we, who hear His Word, give witness to what we hear, the more the world is being shaken as it has never been shaken before. His Word is engraved in His saints, they are His rod of iron that is breaking the nations to shivers.

Today, few people have respect for the laws of their land; they know it is corrupt and void of power. All nations are taken by surprise at the violence that is erupting; they are unaware that they are being judged by the Word of truth and righteousness that is arising from God's true church and the evil within is crashing down in one day. The rod of iron that we hold is the Word of life that arises from within. As we stand in His Word of truth, without leaving our homes or crying out loud, the nations are being broken to shivers. This is surely happening today.

We are flooded with news of the corruption that is being uncovered in the world's rulers. Every form of government whether it be a democracy, a republic, a monarchy, an aristocracy, a dictatorship, a communist state or any other, all that men have set up to rule societies and the populace is passing through the fire. We are seeing that truly there is none good among us; absolutely none. This revealing shall continue until all is made bare. All that is not of the truth will be uncovered. And that which has a measure of truth is being scrutinized, sifted and tested by the rod of iron.

This is God's plan for these last days; He has taken His abode in His body in the earth and the fire of His presence cannot be quenched until all have

been purified and a new Day appears as the Sun of righteousness arising with healing in His wings.

This is the time of first resurrection and it is awesome because it comprises the **ascension to the throne of God.** It is from that position in Christ that the saints are judging the world and also angels. This judgment is not to destroy the world but to purify it by fire until the serpent seed that feeds the old Adam nature is totally removed from the earth.

In the days of Noah, the earth was judged by the flood, but in these last days, God's judgment is by fire. His Word is a consuming fire and it is removing all that is not of Him. The seed of the serpent will no longer be found in the minds or hearts of any man. As it is written, the woman “His church,” will bruise (break) its head.

“For behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” (Mal.4: 1)

Jesus finished the work and none of the Adam man shall escape. We can either go through the fire willingly or be dragged through it, but all must pass through the fire. This judgment began at the house of God and will continue until all is accomplished.

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (I Pet.4: 17)

Indeed, each one of us have experienced the fire of His presence in some way in our lives. None can escape for all have been purchased by the blood of the Lamb of God and, as the prophet Malachi declared, there can be no remnant nor root nor branch left of the tree of the first Adam man in the earth... all must go through the fire.

The saints of first resurrection shall rule with Christ a thousand years in the earth, during which time the devil, the false prophet and the beast, “the deceiver and the receiver” (Adam nature), end up in the lake of fire and brimstone, never to return. (Rev.20: 10)

John describes this phenomenon, *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”* (Rev.20: 11-12)

This “great white throne” is none other than Christ in His body. The throne speaks of authority and white is the righteousness of God. The dead are being judged by a people who have become God's truth and righteousness, just as His word proclaimed it would be.

At that time, the “books” are opened. These are not books as one might think; these books are people who have lived in the earth in the nature of the first Adam. They will stand with their deeds exposed to be judged by truth and righteousness.

As His church we have gone through such judgment already. When we enter in Christ our names are written in the book of life; until then, we are written in the books of the Adam man and will be judged according to our works. In Christ, we are judged already.

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were all judged every man according to their works.” (Rev.20: 13) It is at this point that *“...death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”* (Vs.14-15)

In the lake of fire, death and hell are destroyed. And all that is of the nature of the first Adam man is destroyed as well. This is the second death. I have touched on that subject in previous studies.

THE DESCENDING CITY

“Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit

to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God.” (Rev.21: 9b-10,11a)

When one of the seven angels called John to come up and take a look at the bride, he was shown the most wonderful spectacle. He was told that he was going to see the bride, and what he saw was the holy city descending out of heaven!

This makes us know that the “bride” which is the “church” and is the body of Christ, is also the “city” New Jerusalem. The difference in the terminology has to do with their function at the time. It is the same as my being Jackie, the writer and also the wife of my husband and the mother of my children and the patient of my doctor and the neighbor of my neighbors and so on.

I am the same person but I have a different relationship with each of them. The bride is the one to whom Christ intimately speaks, while the city is the entire body, each member having its own function.

What John saw in his vision was not the city Jerusalem in the country of Israel today. The Jerusalem we know as a nation never came down from God out of the realm of Spirit. The Jerusalem that John saw was the one Paul tells us about, *“But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.”* (Gal.4: 26)

Jerusalem from above is the free woman. She is the church or the bride that has been redeemed from her slavery to man's religions. She has been washed and lovingly prepared by her bridegroom. The Spirit has been speaking to us through symbols and allegories, but as He arises, we are able to take hold of the truths that they represent, and see their reality within us and within His called out people.

If anyone sees the city as an physical city of bricks and stones, such a one is unable to relate to the truth of who they are in Christ. If one sees the city with streets of gold or even one street of gold and cannot translate the symbols into the reality that the street of gold speaks of our walk in God's divine nature,

then such a one still has an “outer” form of religion, and cannot fully relate to the reality of the Spirit within.

Paul teaches us that God “*Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter (literal word), but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*” (II Cor.3: 6)

What John beheld by the spirit was not a regular city made of brick, mortar and building materials. What the angel was introducing to him was truly, “*the bride, the Lamb's wife!*”(Vs.9b)

Paul also compares the church to a bride. “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*” (Eph.5: 25, 29-32)

The great mystery is that the Son is gathering His bride and imparting to her His very life. This bride is the called out people, His church. John saw her in her perfection, adorned and ready for her husband. We have been experiencing this gathering unto Him and now we are coming to the time when **He in our spirit, and we in the earthen vessels will be made one new creation.** We are the visible part of Himself, even His own flesh and bone! He is her invisible life's blood (Spirit) and she is His visible body in the earth. THE SONS (Spirit) HAVE BEEN CAUGHT UP TO THE THRONE (ascending), WHILE THE BRIDE (body), IS BEING REVEALED IN THE EARTH (descending).

John saw the entire church, the one that Jesus said He would build upon the Rock, the one who was chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world.

Our Lord has gathered and prepared His church in the invisible realm of Spirit within each one of His beloved. What John saw, was her appearing in the visible realm of earth. This splendid apparition is

described in symbols of jewels and most precious stones, denoting the beauty of holiness in this body of people.

At this point, one might ask about the “manifestation of the sons of God.” How does this compare? And this again is part of this great mystery.

The bride is the one who gives birth to the sons. Just as Jesus was the Word made flesh, the sons are the Word that the bride gives birth to. Each Word of God that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Church, is a son of God that is delivering creation. This has been happening in a small way, but the day is at hand when there will come powerful Words from the true church and these words will change the hearts of men and bring the creation out of its bondage of corruption.

We should not imagine that the manifestation of the sons consists of groups of men going around accomplishing wonders in the world. It is the Word spoken (birthed) by His church that will do the wonders. This has already begun among us to a small measure. God has spoken words of life to His true church, and these words are coming to pass as we speak.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE BRIDE

The question was asked long ago, “*Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?*” (S.of S.8: 5a) Only with the eyes of the Spirit can we behold this bride as she appears from her hiding place to become the visible part of Christ, the Son of God.

Through constant communion with Him; eating His flesh and drinking His blood, she has become flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone and she lives by Him. “*Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.* (Jn. 6: 54-57)

His church is made of a people who have been built in Spirit to hear and understand the Word that

He speaks daily. His Word is often quickened to us by anointed ministries we hear or read and it is most certainly confirmed to us by the written Word in the Bible, but the Bread of life that we must eat to grow in spirit and in truth, is the Word that comes directly to us from His Holy Spirit within. *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”* (Rom.8:14) As sons, we now eat His flesh and drink His blood. This is the living Word that He speaks daily.

The Son is the Spirit or the life of the visible body called the church. He is the Husband within. *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”* (Eph.5: 23)

Indeed, it is the life of our Husband Christ within who saves our bodies. *“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”* (Vs.30) The Son is the Spirit, the invisible life of the bride. This is where we who have been following the Holy Spirit, and eating the Bread of Life are finding ourselves today. This is where our “walk in Him” has been leading us to.

AN ARDENT LOVE AFFAIR

There are no more poignant and ardent love affairs in the history of man, than the love of Christ for His church. He has shown such love, patience and kindness to each one individually and now He is ready to present us to the world as one glorious church.

The other night I had this dream, *“I was on a walk alone. It was a very very long straight road. It was sheltered all the way by a dome-like transparent cover that arched over the entire length of the road, similar to a transparent tunnel. I walked for a long time. Then the scene changed and I was in Paris again. I was walking on streets that were not familiar to me and I still felt this same loneliness.*

Then I felt that a man was walking side by side with me. We silently walk for a while and soon I felt his hand holding mine. We walked on for a time holding hands, then we stopped and he brought me face to face with him. My heart was thumping hard

within me. I felt such love coming from that man and I loved him so very much too.

He then leaned his face closer to me and looked straight into my eyes with great desire, he said, “I love you!” At that I moved forward and placed my cheek next to his and softly whispered, “I am free!” I had in mind that I was no longer married to anyone and free to marry him. I anticipated a quick positive response, but he said nothing for a long time. I then said to him, “I love you too!” Then I knew this was what he was waiting to hear.” End of dream.

When I awoke, a song I once heard came to mind. It went something like this, *“Oh! Let me love you Lord, the way that you love me. With all that I can, all that I am, all I will ever be..”* I knew that this song expressed the very yearning of my heart. Our Husband Christ has shown us His love and proven Himself to us in so many ways. Now He desires a bride that loves Him the same way.

I represent His bride in this dream. All who are His bride, have been separated unto Him and have been walking this long lonely road under the shelter and protection of His Holy Spirit. We have felt very lonely, feeling the need of His closer presence.

Then we found ourselves in Paris, the City of Light, a symbol for a place of greater understanding in the Spirit. But we still felt unfamiliar in that place although this is where He has shared many beautiful revelations of Himself. Little by little, we felt His presence. His Hand holding our hand and we have continued our walk with Him. Each day we have found ourselves closer to knowing Him as He truly is.

Now, the time has come to see Him face to face. We can hear Him say with so much desire, “I love you!” While on our long and lonely walk, He has made us free from all our worldly and religious desires. He has tested us and proven us in many ways and we feel ready for our full union with Him. We want so much to be one with Him, not only in Spirit but also in flesh and bone. We declare that we are free yet He is silent. When will it be? When will we

fully be consumed by His love? The answer comes as we are able to declare, *"I love you too."* Our Bridegroom is not commanding us to love Him, He desires our love to come from a heart who is not satisfied until we are found in His likeness. A heart who will love Him AS HE IS! *"How can we love Him as He loves us? How can we love Him as He is? Jesus gave us the key.*

One day, Jesus taught about *"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory..."* (Matt.25: 31) Then He proceeds to explain about His judgment between the sheep and the goats.

He identifies the goats by their works and says, *"For I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat. I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not. Sick, and in prison and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him saying, Lord, when saw we thee...Then shall he answer them saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."*(Vs. 42-45)

The point we want to make here is about Jesus and our seeing Him as He is. We see Him in ourselves, but we know He is also in our brethren. Here He is revealing His position in His people. Sometimes He is hungry, sometimes He is sick, sometimes He is in prison! This is how He has been in us, and how He still is in many.

This is how we need to see Him. When a brother or sister feels sad and calls on us for a little comfort, are we too busy to take time to talk to them? If one comes to us asking about a word of wisdom or of understanding, can we be patient and explain what we know to help that one? Are we aware that it is the Christ within them that we minister to?

When one is in bondage and seeks help, do we pray earnestly for that one to be set free? When we do, we are touching the Christ within them. This is what Jesus was saying to them. At the time of His coming

with the saints to judge the world, will we find that we have had compassion and care for those who were slower in their spiritual growth.

The sheep and goats that Jesus separated are in the same pasture. They all belong to the same Master. They all represent "Christians." Goats look much like sheep. They graze together, but they behave differently. They are self-seeking and stubborn. Sheep are obedient and give their wool; lambs give their lives. We may be Christians and have much revelation and a great knowledge of the Word, but if we do not care for the least of His sheep, we are goats.. Paul worded it best, *"Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."* (I Cor.13: 1)

There are many wonderful people who dedicate their lives to feed the poor and care for their natural needs, but Jesus was speaking of His people who are in bondage spiritually and are reaching for strength to overcome in their daily struggles.

With this, Jesus answered my question. How can I show my love to you Lord? The answer is simple and very powerful, *"When you do it to the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.*

Jesus is more than the man who walked the earth two thousand years ago. And He is more than the Lord who came forth from the tomb. Jesus is the Christ that is formed in each one of His beloved people. This is how we are to love Him. This is what He needs to see before the consummation of our vows.

Mother Teresa and many other dear souls have lovingly met the needs of the outer man. But the sons of God who are arising in His name, are called to minister to the Christ in one another. When we are as He is, we will be transformed and begin to minister to the dying world as well. He is arising within us as a life-giving Spirit to deliver His beloved creation and we are ready!

Because of His love, *Jackie Caporaso*