

Revelation 21:4-8 – Restoration 复原 Continues

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: From the last time we looked at Revelation 21:1-3, you learned of the appearance of the New Jerusalem – the new redeemed Bride of Christ. This New Jerusalem is adorned with Christ's righteousness, and blessed with Christ's presence. Today you would see details of the ongoing renewal of his Bride... a restoration that has begun on earth and will conclude in eternity in heaven.

Our headings are: The Characteristics of the Renewal, The Certainty of the Renewal, and The Conclusion of the Renewal.

Our goals are: That you will confidently face the troubles of your life and work for Christ, knowing that you have the beginnings of Christ's blessed presence and promises now, and that you will receive these things in their fullness in heaven.

The Characteristics of the Renewal

4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

1. What joyous hope the church has: She will have no more tears. She will have no more tears because she will have no more death or sorrow. Do you get the implications 暗示 of this? Consider how it is a daily struggle for man to be healthy. Karen has been limping 瘸着走 for weeks with her hurt foot. Elder Kidd has been in pain and discomfort for months. Marianna has had so injuries and sicknesses that would boggle many minds, Isabel's and Lucy's mother had to deal with cancer. Jason has had major surgeries, kids have had allergies, and mothers have had the pains of pregnancy, child birth and C-sections...and still cook and clean when they had the flu. Some have rebellious children. Others have had to deal with the death of loved ones...Historically it was no different...It was often worse. We saw last Friday the death of John Hus, burned alive for his faith in Christ. More recently, Egypt has had increasing severe persecution of God's people by Moslems in the past months. Parents have had to watch their children hanged or beheaded for no other reason than because they believe in Christ for their salvation. But then God says: I will remove all the reasons for tears! But this wasn't false, token comfort. God didn't just wipe away the tears, but he removed the reason for the tears. That should bring tears of joy to your heart. That is something to which you must look forward. Imagine how great a comfort this was to the suffering churches at the Roman and Jewish hands in the 1st century...and those who were suffering during the time of the Reformation at the hand of Roman Catholics!

2. God removes your reasons to cry because you have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God. Though you now mourn and might be persecuted, you will be comforted. And even though you die you will be raised. There is reason to smile...and sing...and shout...Hallelujah.

1Thessalonians 4:13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

The doctrine of purgatory is distinctly missing from Paul's teaching.

3. And yet, at the same time, this removal of the tears has already started. You notice this at a Christian funeral. Christians mourn, but not as those without hope. You know that your loved ones in Christ will rise again. The sting of death has been taken away. Death doesn't bite...anymore.

1Corinthians 15: 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

To put it in the vernacular 白话, death can't do squat 蹲! You are saved by Christ's life and death alone.

Your old things are passing away now. Your soul is being renewed. You are in purgatory now! Let Christ purge you!

2Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

4. The great Church Historian Philip Schaff understood this: "To the Lord and his kingdom belongs the whole world, with all that lives and moves in it. All is yours, says the apostle (1 Corinthians 3:22). Religion is not a single, separate sphere of human life, but the divine principle by which the entire man is to be pervaded, refined, and made complete. It takes hold of him in his undivided totality, in the center of his personal being; to carry light into his understanding, holiness into his will, and heaven into his heart; and to shed thus the sacred consecration of the new birth, and the glorious

liberty of the children of God, over his whole inward and outward life. No form of existence can withstand the renovating power of God's Spirit. There is no rational element that may not be sanctified; no sphere of natural life that may not be glorified. The creature, in the widest extent of the word, is earnestly waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, and sighing after the same glorious deliverance. The whole creation aims toward redemption; and Christ is the second Adam, the new universal man, not simply in a religious but also in an absolute sense..."

Schaff was illustrating the fact that as the world is renewed more and more troubles will go more and more away. So you must let God work through you to renew the world more and more. Live evangelistic lives.

The Certainty of Renewal

6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

1. Just like Christ said on the cross, he again declared that his work was "done." ("Alpha- 1st letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega, the last.) He was the beginning of man's salvation and he is the end of man's salvation. You contribute nothing to your salvation; you wouldn't even chose him without him moving you. And these words indicate that Christ guarantees that what he said would happen. We can have this illustrated in a limited sense... like if you hear someone is a **mechanic**, you trust them with your car...or if you hear someone is a **dentist**, you trust them with your teeth. You would not trust your mechanic to fix your teeth, nor would you trust your dentist with your car. So you are able to trust eternity issues with one who is from eternity...and life issues with one who is the Creator of life. Christ is the beginning and the end. This is certain.

2. You see that certainty of God's provision and Christ's victory in the Lord's Supper. It is future thing, but it also a present thing. It is normal to eat and drink when the battle is over. Then you celebrate. In God's eyes, this restoration is so certain that you can sit down to eat and drink.

3. But look at Verse 6 again. After Christ said: "It is done" out flowed the fullness of the water of life for his people. Do you remember what happened at the cross when Jesus said: "It is finished?"

John 19: 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

This was not accidental language. The church gained her life from the blood of Christ and then baptized with water. There is no merit in your good works. It is by grace you have been saved.

1 Peter 1: 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish 玷污 and without spot.

Like Christ, after the blood comes the water. And that water gives life to the world. So preach!

John 4: 14 "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

John 7: 37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

The Conclusion Renewal

7 "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ to John was not simply a foretelling of the facts – like the fact that the Jews would be excommunicated 逐出教会 and that Satan would be bound, released, and then permanently destroyed. Those are true...but the Revelation was to remind Christians that they would overcome their present persecution, and they would overcome the biggest enemies of all – sin, death, and hell – through Jesus Christ – now and in the future. This picture of the glorious success of Christians was to encourage them. John spoke about this in his other letters as well.

1John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has

overcome the world—our faith.

And that victory that the Christians will enjoy, and even now begin to enjoy, is through the fact that God is faithful. Telling Christians that they would overcome the Jews and the Romans was not enough. Christ wanted to make sure that they knew of their full and final victory in the future. That is why Christ moved from mostly predicting the destruction of Jews and the Romans to also talking of their eternal security and joys of heaven in the future. You overcome, you win.

2. Jehovah is God of the Christians, and he joins you in your daily life and especially in the fellowship at the Lord's Table and worship.

2Corinthians 6: 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

While you are able to presently enjoy communion with God in life and worship-and that is a rich blessing-you will find the fullest fulfillment of God's presence in heaven. How can you not overcome sin, the flesh, and the Devil is God is at your side?

8 "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

3. On the contrary to the victorious conquering Christians, those who still have their sins on their heads will be condemned to the lake of fire forever. And notice the first characteristic of the wicked: Cowardly. They condemned did not have the courage to stand up to the attacks of the Devil. The righteous did not deny their faith. (Revelation 2:13, 13:10, 14:12)

1Corinthians 6: 9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

This is not to say that Christians had not sinned, but they confronted sin through Christ's power.

1Corinthians 6: 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

The lists of those who are condemned to hell's fire are unique. They are usually mentioned in the context of baptism. Gal 5:19-26, Col 3:5-10.

Conclusion:

Your Lord Jesus Christ, he alone, will restore all things that were lost in Adam. And even now he is restoring all things. He is able to restore all things because of his life, death, and resurrection. He gives water to the thirsty so they may live...and once man drinks of that water, he is never thirsty again. His body and blood nourish his children than none is every hungry again. You can count on that. The one who began a work in the heart will fulfill it. He even fellowships with his children in their lives and worship.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: What a wonderful doctrine! Your sins are fully paid for. You won't have to be purged in purgatory...that imaginary place; you are purged now. And though you have troubles now they will all be taken away in the future as well. So you get the flu...or you lose a job, or a loved one dies, don't worry. You will be renewed in fullness. God will wipe all your tears away. This is what kept the brothers going who received the Revelation of Jesus and this is what will keep you going too. This is what will make you work for Christ as well. Christ won...so you will win. Guaranteed.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, I hope you see your hopelessness and helplessness without Christ. Only if you drink of the water that he offers...will you live. That living water comes to you because his blood was shed for the sins of the world. I urge you to accept his free offer of water. Drink and live.

Discipline –Purpose of Discipline -Part 1

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You might recall that we recently asked the elders and pastors from our sisters churches for advice regarding the discipline of 2 sisters in our church who are living unfaithful lives before the Lord. We asked the brothers if they thought we would be right to exclude them from our congregation for the sinful lives they have chosen to live. As we were going through this process, I realized that this was one area in which I have not preached about in detail. So I will, Lord willing, preach 5 sermons on this topic. Today and next week we will deal with the purpose of discipline, then we will deal with the order and nature of discipline, then the acceptance of discipline, and finally, the limits of discipline. So first, the purpose of discipline: Part 1.

Our headings are: Discipline is to Purify Christ's Church, Discipline is Necessary for Evangelism, and Discipline is necessary for the confidence of Believers in Christ.

Our goals are: That you will understand the need for discipline in the church of Christ, and that you might accept discipline if given to you, or advocate 拥护 for discipline for the unrepentant believer.

Discipline is to Purify Christ's Church

1. During the time of the Reformation 宗教改革 (16世纪), the Roman Catholic church had rules for everything – quite like the Pharisees. They made rules even for things for God did not require rules to be made. Some say in the RC church it was hard to lift a finger without breaking some kind of rule. After the Reformation, when many churches were freed from Roman Catholic tyranny 暴政, some Anabaptists 再洗礼派信徒 decided that they should throw out all rules. As a result, discipline largely disappeared. Here were two extremes. They were both wrong.
2. Jesus demanded that his church must be holy as he is holy – separated from sin. Therefore, any laws made must be for the purpose of procuring 获得 and preserving holiness. Part of preserving holiness is the need for discipline of those who wander away from orthodoxy – straight thinking.
1Peter 1: 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."
A church that has an infection is a stench 臭气 in Christ's nose. Remember how strongly God demanded that any sacrifices offered to him be kept pure? Spotted animals were rejected. Sick animals were rejected. Those sacrifices pictured Jesus, and his holy nature demands that he be surrounded with those who are pure. Further, an impure church cannot prosper, as you would well remember when Achan kept secret sins in his heart. He had to be put out for his people to prosper. And Ishmael had to be put out for his wickedness of mocking the child of promise. One infected sheep infects the whole flock.
3. This essential need for a pure church is regularly illustrated in the Scriptures. Once Christ illustrated this was in the work of leaven. Remember his words: Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? You are called to purge 清除 old leaven, personally and communally (in the church) for the sake of maintaining the purity of Christ's church. This is often difficult to grasp, as we live with a high degree of tolerance for filthy living. The government, for example, allows so many maggot 一种双翅目昆虫的 eggs for so many kilograms of raisins...so much bacteria for fresh fruits and meat...so many living worms in kilograms of fruits for fruit juice, etc. And even though 70% of gas pumps and escalator rails have deadly bacteria, our bodies tolerate them. But that is not what he requires for the church. He demands purity.
4. This is not to say that anyone who is working hard at overcoming sin and staying pure must be disciplined. No, he must not be disciplined, but encouraged, supported, and prayed for. Christ is a very longsuffering Lord. He knows the depths of sin and he knows how long it can take to climb out from an overwhelming sin. But the man or woman who chooses to stay in the pit, and does not attempt to come out, must be disciplined for his and for Christ's sake.
5. Added to man's high tolerance for sins, you have another problems that destroy the holiness of Christ's church. Sin is insidious 诱人的. If it is let to grow, it will subtly 巧妙地 destroy. This is why sin is often called leaven. It is because it will grow and destroy without you realizing that it would grow.

Luke 12:1 In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." The Bible also describes sin as a cancer that spreads and destroys...just as if you have a lustful pair of (small) eyes, it causes the whole body to be cast into hell. Lust enters and spreads through out the length and breath of your soul. And that is why Jesus called on men to (figuratively) pluck out their eyes so that their whole body is saved from hell. You might feign 假装 righteousness on the outside as the Pharisees did, but the spiritual cancer might be destroying your insides.

6. There is another problem that contributes to the impurity of the church. Most **people tend to say that others are “not so bad” because they want to use that as an excuse for their own sins.** But the church must labor to make sure that she is kept pure. After all, who wants a bride who contracted horrible diseases by loose living, a disease that would eventually ravage 毁灭 and destroy her?

Discipline is Necessary for evangelizing

1. If the church does not discipline sinning members it cannot command the respect of the world, the world would reject Christ...and Christ would be robbed of his glory. Consider a church!

1Corinthians 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned 哀悼, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

2. It was so bad in the church in Corinth that even Gentiles (non-Christians) did not accept such illicit 违法的 behavior. This certainly affected the church's ability to evangelize the Corinthians. Corinth itself was known to be a very evil city. "Corinthianized" was an expression that meant to live in "sexual shamelessness." Aphrodite 阿芙罗狄蒂(Venus)维纳斯 stood with a thousand priestesses 女祭司 who were religious prostitutes in a gigantic 巨大的 brothel 妓院. Having sexual relations was done in the name of their religion – and was part of worship. So with this worse perversion in the church, how could she evangelize 传福音? The non-believing Corinthians could see few visible differences between the Christians and the Corinthians! Further, the Corinthians were so full of themselves (arrogant) they did not mourn this great sin. And this sin of ignoring sin was worse **than the incestuous man's sin.** The Corinthians lost the ability to blush 脸红 at sin. They had no shame. No wonder they could not mourn when such great sins were committed.

3. So the church is not to be “broad-minded” 思想开放 or “open-minded” regarding discipline – for it is not up to you to decide how HIS church is governed, taught, or disciplined.

4. Practically, one of the most common things you hear from non-believers whom you are trying to evangelize is the sinfulness of Christian church members. Now you cannot say to them that the church is perfect in obedience; that would be a lie. But you should be able to say that those who persistently refuse to submit to God's law are regularly being disciplined in Christ's church: They are rebuked, excluded from the Holy Sacraments, and eventually excluded from the assembly and treated as non-believers.

Discipline is Necessary for the Confidence of Believers in Christ

1. If the church does not discipline sinning members it cannot **keep the confidence of those who are members.** (Just like children might appear to want total freedom, but when given total freedom they lose trust in their parents.) How could a Christian know if he is living well if sin is not

punished by the elders? How can he confidently trust the advice and counseling of his elders?

Wasn't this what Peter was all concerned about when he spoke with Ananias and Shapphira?

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 "While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.

Of course God is not teaching you that the church must kill the wicked, as it was God who directly ordered the execution of Achan and it was God who killed Ananias and his wife. The point was that you must see how seriously God takes the purity of the church so that others could have confidence in him as a holy God. If piety and purity were not demanded by the Lord of his church, how could she have a proper view of the holiness of God, and so serve him better?

2. Imagine how this would have affected the young people of at the time of Ishmael or in the time of Achan or in the time of Paul at Corinth! But wouldn't Paul's warning in 1Corinthians 5, have been a motivation for them to live holily before the Lord? At Corinth the Corinthian Christians tolerated a man living in adultery with his close relative! Imagine what kind of example that was to the young people in that congregation! Imagine how the people would have lost confidence in their leaders.

3. If the church does not discipline sinning members, that would give an open license for other members to live however they want. Members have to be mutually accountable to each other.

4. Because discipline helps to instill (put) confidence of the believer in Jesus Christ, it is necessary for one congregation to recognize the proper discipline of other congregations. A church that does not recognize the proper discipline of other churches is contributing to the delinquency 违法行为 of that person under discipline, to the diminution (reduction) of their confidence in Christ, and hinders non-believers from coming into the kingdom of God. Ever more practically, if a church does not discipline it can lead to a break up – schisms - of the church.

Conclusion:

Ecclesiastical 教会的 discipline is necessary for the church, the Bride of Christ, to be kept pure. Ecclesiastical discipline is necessary for proper evangelization to take place. Ecclesiastical discipline is necessary for Christians to have confidence in the earthly and heavenly leadership of the church.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: Does it bother you when someone who has the name of Christ goes and sins in gross 恶劣 ways against the Lord and refuse to repent after repeated attempts to speak to them... encouraging them...and praying for them? Doesn't it make you sad? It should trouble you so much that you would want that person disciplined by Christ if he would not repent. (Wouldn't you want this for your child...so shouldn't God want this for his children?) Discipline is a means by which the church is kept pure from sinful infections 感染. So non-activity is not acceptable action against gross 恶劣的 unrepented of sins. At the same time, the church today needs to remember that ecclesiastical discipline is a gift of God to save the soul of the unrepentant by making him come to his senses. So it must be done with love and the desire for restoration. And thank God for this good thing that keeps the church pure.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, this lesson today still applies to you also. Salvation is only within the bounds of the church. If you have not been declared freed from the Devil – as is done at baptism and membership vows – you are still under his control. My prayer is that you will come out from your sins and be joined to the church of Jesus Christ – for your good and for Christ's glory.