

THE
DOCTRINE
AND
ADMINISTRATION
OF THE
CHURCH

PAUL R. JACKSON

The Doctrine and Administration of the Church
Third Edition

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*To my wife,
who throughout my ministry
has been an inspiration
and a faithful and capable partner
in the Lord's work*

Introduction

MARK JACKSON

“HE . . . YET SPEAKETH.”

How well I remember reading page after page of the handwritten copy of this book as it came from Dad’s pen a number of years ago. He always loved the church, and his churches loved him. Later, as president of Baptist Bible Seminary and national representative of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, he was one of the most respected and loved men in the ranks of fundamentalism. I was proud of him.

He often said that a local church was the hardest thing in the world to kill. You can maim it, wound it, bleed it, and do it injustice—but it’s hard to kill it because it is a divine institution and Christ is its head!

Dad’s clear thinking about spiritual things, about the operation of the church, about the doctrine of the church, brought this book into being. Now it is accepted in many places as a standard work on local church administration.

The Laodicean lukewarmness predicted to come on the church has fallen upon us. In areas of both polity and doctrine, the terrible declension has come. Churches have no deep-seated convictions about the Word of God; pastors are compromisers and opportunists; laypeople in the pew have been deeply infected by worldliness.

Against this bleak but predicted condition is the bright promise that such lethargy marks the time of the Lord’s return. In light of that, the true church of Jesus Christ, represented by faithful, Bible-believing Baptist churches, must determinedly submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ and honor Him with every fiber of their being. The content of this book, if studied and applied in the churches, will enhance faithfulness in our polity and clarity in our doctrine.

I sincerely trust that the perpetuation of my father’s life, ministry, and convictions through the means of the revision of this book will be a blessing to all who study it.

Foreword to the Third Edition

JOHN GREENING, GARBC NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

TYPICALLY, PROFESSIONALS have “anchor books” within their libraries. These classic references are repeatedly consulted regarding the basic principles and practices of a discipline. Ask a physician what anchor books he uses, and the doctor will quickly identify the titles. The same could be said for an engineer, an investment counselor, or a copy editor. Each professional has access to definitive guides that provide universal clarity to certain core, frequently needed information.

For instance, in your home you may have *The Merck Manual*, which provides general medical information related to organs of the body, diseases, and treatments. This manual is not the final word in medical care, nor does it contain extensive details that would be found in a thorough discussion of a subject. What it does provide is a wide range of helpful basic information that can be regularly accessed.

As a pastor for many years and in my current role as the representative of an association of churches, I have found myself often faced with questions or situations related to the structure and operation of a local New Testament Baptist church: How does ordination take place? What is the relationship between a pastor and deacons? Who leads the congregation? Is there an appropriate procedure for church discipline? Many more questions like these confront pastors. In my years of pastoral ministry, I found that I needed guidance in operational situations I had never previously experienced. It was beneficial and reassuring to have an anchor book available that answered many of the questions that inevitably arose. *The Doctrine and Administration of the Church* has served me, as well as many of my ministry colleagues, as a valuable anchor book.

Author Dr. Paul Jackson was a highly respected leader within the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. He served as a Bible college president and national representative of the GARBC. Underlying these leadership roles

was his commitment to the pastorate, the role in which he began his ministry and served for many years. His peers selected him for influential organizational leadership positions because he loved the local church and recognized it as God's frontline ministry platform. Dr. Jackson's genuine heart for the local church and the office of the pastor clearly evidences itself in this book.

The Doctrine and Administration of the Church was first published by Regular Baptist Press in 1968. That was the year I began attending Baptist Bible College, Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania, the school where Dr. Paul Jackson had earlier been the president. The main administrative and classroom building carried his name, "Jackson Hall." I remember often seeing his formal portrait on a wall of the school. My wife and I began our first pastoral duties with Dr. Jackson's son, Mark. My life and ministry in its formative years were deeply influenced by "Jacksonian" ideals about the local church and pastoral service.

Dr. Jackson writes from the perspective of a consistently Baptist theology. This book has the marks of Hiscox's *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* (1890) and *The New Directory for Baptist Churches* (1894), but with a greater personal and practical local church tone. Its timelessness makes it an essential volume for every Baptist ministry student, pastor, deacon, and leader. This book is now in its tenth printing—a testimony to its continuing value and functionality.

I continue to recommend this book and turn to it for guidance. I became a better pastor and a more consistent Baptist by making this one of my anchor books. I trust it will also find a place of easy reach within your library.

1 *The Church That Is His Body*

GOD NEVER CHANGES (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17), although His dealings with people have changed during the ages. From Abraham to Christ, His relationship with humanity centered in the nation of Israel. Since Christ, His ministry has been through the church. Israel as a nation has been set aside until the church is raptured (Rom. 11:25). For fifteen hundred years before Christ, the law given through Moses was in force. Since Christ, the Scriptures declare that believers are not under law but under grace (Rom. 6:14; see also John 1:17).

This does not mean there are two ways of salvation. God has never saved people by works in any age. Faith in Him has been the universal qualification. Shed blood has been the unvarying requirement. Before Christ, animal sacrifices were offered at the command of God. Sin was thereby acknowledged and covered (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 10:1–4). Then Christ came and died for our sins. He died for the sins that were past (Rom. 3:25) and redeemed those who were under the law (Gal. 4:4, 5).

So while God does not change and salvation has always been by faith in Him, God did an entirely new thing when He established the church. The distinctions between law and grace, Israel and the church, must be clearly discerned if the Word of God is to be understood.¹

The Scriptures also distinguish between the church, which is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23), and local churches. The local church is the current practical manifestation of the Body of Christ. The local church is the major emphasis of the New Testament. The Greek word *ekklesia*, translated “church,” is applied

1. See Myron Houghton, *Law and Grace* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Books, 2011).

to the local churches some ninety times, and to the church, which is His Body, about twenty times.

Sometimes referred to as the universal or the invisible church, the church, which is His Body, is a blessed fact, emphasizing the unity of God's people in this age. It includes all the redeemed, whether Jews or Gentiles, from Pentecost to the Rapture, whether in Heaven or on earth. It never meets during this age. It makes no decisions, exercises no discipline, administers no ordinances, and preaches no gospel. It is awaiting completion when it will finally be gathered in Glory as "the general assembly and church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23).

The local New Testament church is often dishonored by referring to the church, His Body, as "the true church," thus inferring that a local church is not a true church. It is a true church if it has been established according to the Word of God. The terminology that refers to the body as an organism and the local church as an organization needs to be used carefully lest the false inference be given that the organization is of human origin and unimportant.

If these distinctions are clearly seen so that the local church is not robbed of its significant position, the truth concerning the church, His Body, encourages and comforts.

An undue emphasis has been placed in the present day on so-called "body truth." It has resulted in minimizing the local church upon which the Scriptures major.

Some people refuse to obey certain Scriptures that command the discipline of disobedient brethren. They magnify the truth of believers' relationship to each other in His Body out of proportion to the Biblical commands to maintain a pure local church (1 Cor. 5). This imbalance of truth has also caused a tragic disregard of New Testament churches so that many persons consider baptism and church membership as nonessentials. Some have virtually become church tramps, without any local responsibility in attendance, stewardship, or discipline. This is a serious situation and should arouse us to our tasks in our own churches as we follow the Word of God.

The Lord help us to love all our brothers and sisters in Christ, wherever they are or whatever they are doing. We ought to seek their welfare, fellowship with them when it is possible, and pray for them earnestly. This relationship, however, never justifies our participation with them in disobedience. Many Biblical commands like the following are amply clear: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6). These "traditions" certainly seem to refer to all the oral and

written apostolic ministry of that day (see 2 Thessalonians 2:15). It is not Biblical, therefore, as many argue, to have fellowship with all people simply because they are saved, or claim to be. Even though they are saved and we shall spend eternity with them in Glory, we are not authorized to spend the present with them in their disobedience (see Matthew 18:15–17). This is a truth that every born-again believer needs ever to bear in mind.

By refusing to fellowship with others within His Body, one of the divine objectives is that such ones should be delivered from disobedience and restored to fellowship. This is evident in the judgment imposed in 1 Corinthians 5:5 and the subsequent forgiveness in 2 Corinthians 2:6–11. It is our responsibility to seek such deliverance for fellow believers (Gal. 6:1), but we are never justified in fellowshiping with them in their sin. To do such a thing is definitely forbidden by God's Word and is thus to be shunned by every born-again believer.

The Church Purposed

The church is repeatedly called the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23). We shall consider the significance of this terminology later. It is this Body, the church, of which Paul wrote in Ephesians 3. Read verses 1–12. Here the church is called the “mystery of Christ,” which in other ages was not made known but is now revealed. The unique feature, entirely new in this age, is “that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs [with the Jews], and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (v. 6).

This church was born in the eternal purpose of God (v. 11), and this mystery was hid in God from the beginning of the world (v. 9). Jesus Christ began the unveiling of that purpose when He said, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). The apostle Paul was chosen to be the primary channel of revelation of this mystery (Eph. 3:1–4), although he declared (v. 5) that “it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”

The claims made by some extreme dispensationalists are obviously false when they declare that Paul was the single source of revelation and that he knew nothing of this mystery until his Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 2 Timothy, and Philemon). Not only did he say that the Spirit revealed this truth to holy apostles and prophets (plural), but he himself knew this truth early in his ministry. See 1 Corinthians 12:13: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

In Ephesians 3 it is evident that God planned and purposed the church throughout eternity, but He did not reveal it until this age. It is perfectly natural that this should be true! God is a reasonable Being with all wisdom and power. We change our plans and make new ones because we do not know the future and have very limited understanding. But this is not true with God, Who has never been surprised or defeated. He “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph. 1:11). The “blueprint” of the ages has always existed in His infinite, unchanging intelligence. How comforting this is to the believer as the ages unfold. Our Lord is “the Father of Eternity” (Isa. 9:6, ASV footnote).

God’s eternal purpose to build the church did not center merely in the salvation of souls, although that is a glorious aspect of this work. He purposed the church from all eternity that in it might be seen the riches of His grace (Eph. 2:7) and the greatness of His wisdom (Eph. 3:10), and that Christ thereby might have the preeminence so rightfully His (Col. 1:18).

That He should choose us to fulfill such lofty counsels should humble our hearts and lead us to adore and worship at His feet.

The Church Pictured

No revelation of the church is given in the Old Testament. However, now that it has been revealed in the New Testament, it becomes evident by the word pictures of the Old Testament that this new creation was in the mind of God, Who is the author of the whole Bible. The things that happened to Israel were designed of God to provide examples for us (1 Cor. 10:11). The tabernacle, the offerings, and the priesthood are rich with “life-size object lessons” of Biblical truths. Christ and His work are pictured in types and shadows of the Old Testament (Col. 2:16, 17).

No Christian can afford to neglect the study of the Old Testament along with the New. God is the author of both portions. As someone said long ago, “The New is in the Old contained; the Old is in the New explained.”

Three well-known examples picture the Bride, another figure used to describe the church in believers’ relationship to Christ.

1. With the New Testament revelation in Ephesians 5:29–32 before us, it is clear that in Genesis 2:21–24 we have an Old Testament picture of the church, the Bride of Christ.

As God caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam and then from his opened side took the material from which his bride was made, so God caused the deep

sleep of death to fall upon the “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45), and from His pierced side came forth the blood for the redemption of His Bride.

The parallel continues as Adam says of Eve, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh,” and of Christ and the church we read, “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph. 5:30). Thus is the parallel drawn in Scripture.

2. In Genesis 24 Abraham sent his servant into a far country to secure a bride for his only son, Isaac (see Genesis 22:12). Many interesting details of this delightful narrative suggest the blessed ministry of the Spirit, Who has come into the world to secure the Bride for Christ.

The picture does not present the thought of our redemption. It does suggest, however, that the Bride must be born of the proper family! The servant was obligated to take a bride from Abraham’s kindred, not from the Canaanites. He therefore did not determine that Rebekah was the bride for Isaac until he knew her family origin (Gen. 24:24, 26, 47, 48). So must we be of God’s family to be the Bride of Christ. Unless by the new birth we are partakers of the divine nature, we shall never share the glories of the heavenly Bridegroom.

Another significant aspect of this picture is the way in which this unnamed servant skillfully directed Rebekah’s affection to Isaac. He told her of Isaac (Gen. 24:33–45) and how he inherited the greatness and riches of his father, Abraham. He began from the first to shower upon her some of the riches of his master that he had brought with him to this far country. Though she had never seen Isaac, he was so presented to her that her heart went out to him; and when asked for a decision, she promptly replied, “I will go.” So does the Spirit of God woo for Christ those whom God has chosen for Him. We learn of His greatness, we receive of His bounties, until, without compulsion but with wills transformed, we gladly say, “I will go!”

We point out only one other similarity. As Isaac came out of the house into the field at the end of the day, the servant had completed his mission and was bringing Rebekah to him from her old home. As they met, he took her back to his father’s home as his wife. The blessed hope of the church lies at the evening of this Day of Grace when the Lord Jesus will leave the place God is now preparing in the Father’s house (John 14:1–3; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17). He will descend into the air to meet His Bride that the Spirit of God will then have completed and prepared to meet Him. Together they shall return to the Father’s house and to the marriage of the Lamb!

3. Many truths are revealed in the book of Ruth, and among them is the story of the kinsman-redeemer who redeemed for himself a bride from among the

Moabites. No Spirit-taught heart can miss here the picture of the One Who was made flesh so He could redeem us and make us His Bride.

According to the law of the kinsman-redeemer as stated in Leviticus 25:25–55 and Deuteronomy 25:5–10, it was the God-given duty of the one “nearest of kin” to redeem the land or the person of a relative who, because of poverty or other reason, had been seized by another party. In addition, if a husband died without an heir, it was the duty of the brother or next nearest relative to marry the widow and raise up a child to perpetuate the name of the dead husband.

In order to become our Kinsman-Redeemer, the Lord Jesus was made flesh (see Heb. 2:14–18; Gal. 4:4, 5; Eph. 5:23–27). The law, which was weak through the flesh (Rom. 8:3), was unable to produce life; and now we are dead to that law in order that we might be married to another, “even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom. 7:4).

All this is pictured in the lovely story of Ruth and her kinsman-redeemer, Boaz. Read the entire book, especially the fourth chapter.

Obviously there is not enough detail in these narratives to have prematurely revealed God’s purpose. But they are sufficient to indicate the delighted anticipation of God as He contemplated that purpose and waited until the appointed time.

The Church Promised

Jesus Christ, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, came into the world to undertake the work of a new creation. As He stood on the threshold of the accomplishment of that eternal purpose, He declared, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18).

The events that followed seemed to threaten the fulfillment of this promise. Men forsook Him. Peter denied Him. The enemies captured Him. Fetters, trials, a cross, a tomb—these appeared to contradict His promise. But His words were pure words. He could not deny Himself. Wicked men who crucified Him did not know; but God knew that “except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24).

He arose from death triumphant, as the Head of the new creation. Redeemed with His blood and undergirded by His resurrection power, the church was now to appear. His promise would be fulfilled.

The promise of the church relates not only to its origin, but to its preservation. Christ said, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not

prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). He has promised that satanic opposition will not overthrow His people individually, or His church corporately, in this age (1 Pet. 1:3–7). However, this statement in Matthew seems to go beyond that, promising that even death itself will not triumph over the church. The gates of a city do not invade or conquer an enemy. Hell here is “hades,” the place of the departed dead. Literally, therefore, the promise is that death itself will not prevail against the church. As members of the church at Thessalonica died, the Thessalonians seemed disturbed over this very problem. They were comforted and instructed thus: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thess. 4:13, 14).

He has promised not only to build but also to preserve the church for all eternity.

The Church Purchased

Self-righteous people are consistently seeking to secure God’s favor and a place in Heaven through things they give or things they do. Nothing could be more futile, as is evident from Titus 3:5, Ephesians 2:8 and 9, Romans 4:4 and 5, and similar portions.

God condemns with awful finality any other way of salvation, because Christ provided the one perfect way. Any other way is an insult to our Lord Jesus, Who is the Way; and God will not tolerate any other (Gal. 1:8, 9; Prov. 14:12; John 3:36). An infinite price has already been paid for our redemption with the precious blood of Christ, and it is blasphemy to seek to substitute another “price,” or to supplement that price with our own contribution as though His blood was insufficient. To us who are saved, Peter wrote, “Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

Why must it be the blood of Christ to accomplish our redemption? Many are not clear in their conception of this matter. *It must be blood* because the life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11), and the righteousness and justice of God require a life for a life if we are to be redeemed. He took my place and became my Substitute: “Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6). When His blood was shed, He gave His life in place of mine under God’s judgment for sin. *It must be Christ’s blood*, for all others have sinned and would die for their own sin. Furthermore,

because He is God, His blood is of infinite value (it is precious blood!), and He is the propitiation not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). No wonder we delight to sing:

*Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb!
Redeemed thro' His infinite mercy;
His child, and forever, I am.*

This redemptive act of God was necessary if He was to save people, for all have sinned and are sold under sin. When He gave Himself for us, it was so He could redeem us from all iniquity (Titus 2:14). Redemption through His blood brought about our deliverance from “the power of darkness” and our translation into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 1:13, 14). The death of Christ is also the instrument for the destruction of the Devil and the deliverance of “them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14, 15). Therefore, the precious blood of Christ is the only price of redemption that God will recognize. It fully and finally delivers every believer from the judgment of God that should rightfully have fallen upon us who were sold under sin, characterized by iniquity, and subject to the bondage of Satan and the power of darkness.

In paying this redemption as He died upon the cross, the Savior satisfied the righteous claims of a holy God. Justice was meted out to a willing Substitute; sin was thereby brought into judgment; and God was just in His justification of the ungodly (Rom. 3:23–26). The redemption is not paid to Satan to release us, as some have erroneously taught, but is necessary to the satisfying of divine justice. God has willed to bring every sin into judgment. This He must do, for He is holy. It will necessitate that every individual who neglects or rejects the redemption provided in the precious blood of Christ will fall under His eternal condemnation.

In His death the Lord Jesus loved us and gave Himself for us as individuals. But He also had in mind the purpose of the church, as declared in Ephesians 5:25: “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Acts 20:28 speaks of “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” We, therefore, belong to Him and, as Paul says, are espoused or betrothed to one husband—that is, to Christ (2 Cor. 11:1–3). Certainly we ought to be faithful to our Lord and love Him in word and in truth. We are to love Him with a pure and undiluted love. We are not to love the world or the things that are in the

world. The wife who forsakes the love of her husband and gives her affections to another is contemptible before God and mankind. So also is the church when she forsakes the love of Christ. The Word speaks with terrible bluntness upon this subject: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

The world crucified our Savior and still tramples under its feet the precious blood of Christ. This fact fully justifies the awful denunciation of those who profess to love Christ, but who are the friends of the world. The Lord help us never to fall into such base ingratitude!

The Church Produced

The church was purposed in the mind of God throughout the eternal ages; it was pictured in the Old Testament; it was promised by Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry; and it was purchased on the cross of Calvary. It was not, however, produced as a living reality until the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection of Christ.

The time of the creation of the church is indicated in the following Scripture: (1) the church is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23); (2) the Body is formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13); (3) the disciples had not been baptized with the Holy Spirit at the time of Christ's ascension into Heaven, but were then promised, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). Ten days later, this took place; the church, His Body, came into being.

The words in John 7:38 and 39 are significant in this connection: "The Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." While the Spirit was always here in the sense of His omnipresence, He was promised in a new and different sense when the Lord Jesus said, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16, 17).

This age of the church is often called the age of the Holy Spirit because of the distinctive relationship He bears to the redeemed in this age. He now abides with us, and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, which we have of God, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:19.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not to be confused with the indwelling of

the Spirit, yet the two cannot be separated. When He indwelt the believers on the Day of Pentecost, He also united them into an organic unit called the Body of Christ. The Body has many members but is one Body (1 Cor. 12:12), and Christ is the Head (Eph. 4:15, 16).

Men who believed were saved during the Old Testament ages and also during the earthly ministry of Christ. Apart from the national unity of Israel and her covenant relationship to God, people did not then enjoy any such unity with each other and the Lord as has come to pass with the creation of the church. This blessed experience is ours through the sovereign grace of God and not through any merit that we possess.

The Lord Jesus met with His disciples repeatedly before His ascension, and certainly encouraged and authorized such assemblies, which became local churches. John 20:19–29 records two such occasions. They are not here called churches, nor is there yet any indication of the offices of pastor or deacon. But these meetings were not held in synagogues. The brethren assembled were those who were the charter members of the church established in Jerusalem. The Lord did breathe upon them and say, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (v. 22). Twice they met upon the first day of the week (vv. 19, 26) and experienced the blessed presence of the risen Lord. We certainly see here the superintendence of the Lord Jesus in producing the local church He had promised, even though the final climactic acts of the Spirit’s baptism and filling were not experienced until Pentecost. These were transition days, as the church was produced under the ministry of the Lord Jesus and fully implemented by His gift of the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort (John 16:7).

No adequate comprehension of the Bible exists unless it is clearly understood that the church is wholly distinct from Israel. Its origin, nature, conduct, and objective are all in contrast to Israel. Much doctrinal error is common today among people failing to recognize this distinction. There are three groups in the world in this age: Jews, Gentiles, and the church of God (1 Cor. 10:32). The first two are unsaved; the last one is saved. When a Jew or Gentile accepts Christ, that person is saved, becomes part of the church, and ceases to be either Jew or Gentile (Gal. 3:28)!

It is a Biblical principle that when more is given, more is required. In view of what the Lord has done for us in this age, therefore, we ought to be more willing than were the saints of past ages to love and praise Him, to serve and sacrifice, to live or die for Him.

The Church Presented

This part of the church's experience that is still future holds within itself the hush of anticipation in us and, in a sense, in His heart also. All the ages of time have been moving toward this great climax. Christ will perfect the church and "present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27). For this purpose He came and died.

Who can say why an infinite, eternal, self-existent God finds delight in His creatures? We can only rejoice in this fact and delight in the blessed implications it holds for us. This truth, so far beyond our understanding, is stated briefly in Ephesians 1:23, which it speaks of the church, "which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." As God, of course, He needs nothing to complete Him. But as the "second man" and the "last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45-47), He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. Now God has highly exalted Him (Phil. 2:6-11). As the Head of the new creation, He is no more complete without His Bride than Adam would have been without Eve.

Let us consider the preparation for this presentation. On the part of Christ it involves His present work of intercession as our High Priest. He thereby guarantees the safekeeping of those for whom He died as He ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). He, in this ministry, also cleanses and purifies us for that day as He washes us in the water of the Word that we, the church, might not have "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:26, 27).

The preparatory work of Christ for that presentation also includes the judgment of believers' works at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We must all appear before that judgment seat as believers (2 Cor. 5:10), not to determine our destiny but to appraise and reveal the quality of our works and service in this life. Read 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. This portion declares that "if any man build upon this foundation [Christ], . . . he himself shall be saved." Interwoven with that glorious fact is the solemn truth that our works here are to be made manifest at that time. The dross will be consumed, and we shall lose our rewards. All that is for His glory will remain and be rewarded. In that day there will doubtless be real shame and tears for many of us. John warned that we should so live and abide in Christ now that "when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28).

This work will certainly precede the presentation of the church to Christ and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Purification will be complete; reproof will be over; and Glory lies ahead!

On our part, in this age, preparation for that glorious day involves the

perfecting of ourselves with the provisions Christ has given us. The hope of Christ's coming is a purifying power in itself (see 1 John 3:3). The prospect of seeing Him should cause us to confess our sins and secure His cleansing (1 John 1:9). We need to be clean.

We are to grow up in Christ as we feed upon His Word (1 Pet. 2:2; Eph. 4:11-32).

We are to be faithful stewards in all things committed to us, including the evangelizing of the world (1 Cor. 4:2).

These and many similar truths should enable us to prepare for that day with the care with which a bride prepares for her bridal day. There should be the restraint born of a proper fear of grieving Christ and the encouragement of the anticipation of seeing Him and hearing His approval.

When all the preparation of these days is over and the church is presented to Him, a new ministry will begin. We read in Ephesians 2:7 that in the ages to come He will show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. Sinners, transformed by His grace, translated into His presence, will forever vindicate before the whole universe the amazing sacrifice of Christ at Calvary. In that day He will be glorified in His saints and admired in all them who believe (2 Thess. 1:10). In that day "every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10, 11). Hallelujah!