

The Continuing Testimony of Jesus

By Michael Clark

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A few years ago I was at a Vineyard Church conference in Canada. The sister in charge of the "ministry team" in the Church took my wife and me aside and spoke prophetically over me. I don't remember much about it other than one phrase. She said, "You will boldly go where no man has gone before."

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Most of us recognize this phrase from the opening monologue of the old TV series, "Star Trek." I chuckled when she said it and told her that during the Vietnam war I was stationed off the coast of North Vietnam on the USS Enterprise, the aircraft carrier the spaceship in that popular TV series was named after.

In a way this phrase reminds me of a quote from Alexander Pope, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." Captain James Kirk and his crew were always getting into impossible situations with aliens "in ages to come" and somehow by his good fortune and great wits would find a way out of trouble, learning something more about the far reaches of the universe in the process.

Paul the apostle wrote to the Ephesian Church and told them of a precious promise.

. . . even when we were dead in trespasses, (God) made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:5-7, NKJV).

The verse from Ephesians quoted above reminds me of another "treky" of old, one of God's bold ones and HIS "crew." His name was Joshua. Moses had just been taken away to die and be buried by the Lord. Before he died he was allowed to see the Promised Land with his own eyes "from afar off," but he was forbidden to enter. On the other hand Joshua, one of the two remaining people who originally came out of Egypt, was taken by the Lord to the boundary of the new land, the river Jordan. There the Lord commanded him to speak these words to the new generation of Israel that was about to cross:

When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before. (Joshua 3:3-4, NKJV).

I believe that in every generation, "every age to come," the Lord takes a man or even many men and gives them a heavenly vision of "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." That man or men see something that the visionaries of the age before were not able to fully comprehend by the enlightenment that God gave them. In the Old Testament these men were often called "seers" or "prophets." They saw something of the riches of God that others were not seeing and explained to the people what God wanted *all* of His people to see.

Have you ever noticed the place in the book of the Revelation that Jesus repeats himself seven times? Seven times! I can't think of any other place in the Bible where He does this. And what point is Jesus driving home by this repetition? "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." He is saying let ANY man that has a spiritual ear hear. Hear what? Hear "what the Spirit says," not what the Spirit DID say or even WILL say, but IS SAYING to the Churches! In showing John "things which must shortly take place," Jesus seems to be saying the church is becoming deaf to His Spirit.

Some time ago, a brother and I spent a day with a dear old saint who had seen many things over the years in his "heavenly vision" and enlightened many of the saints of God along the way by sharing what he saw. As we visited with this dear brother we shared some of the things the Lord had been showing us, the next generation, and

there was a resistance in this old saint. What we shared, though similar, was not the exact same vision that the Lord had shown him. Even though it dovetailed into where he left off, he could not see it. Like Moses, he could only get a glimpse of the land a far off, but was not able to "cross the river" with us.

This is really tragic, because it does not have to be this way. So often the wineskin can only stretch so far and if it is taken any further it will burst risking the loss of its old wine. Because of this Jesus said, "You can not put new wine in an old wineskin." Men of an earlier "outpouring" often prove these words of Jesus to be so true, "And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, `The old is better.'" (Luke 5:39, NKJV). It is so hard to let yourself be poured out like wine, when the vintage of that last move of God was so good and you have so much invested in what the Lord revealed to you during that time.

In the passage about the crossing of the Jordan quoted above, notice that the priests and the ark had to go into the river ahead of the people. They lead the way, but they only went half way across the river and stopped. The people were to look upon the ark as they crossed and actually went into the promised land ahead of the priests.

I see two things in this. One, there are always visionaries that God sends out ahead of His people to prepare the way. They take the risks so that others can follow them into God's new kingdom revelation. These visionaries have often been rejected in the process. What would have happened if the waters did not part when these priest carrying that gold covered ark stepped into the river? At the least they would have looked pretty foolish and at the worst, they might have drowned, becoming bogged down in the mud and torrents of the flood.

These forerunners are the "breakers" that make the breach in the walls of tradition that hold others back from following God. As the Lord told the people, "You have not been this way before."

I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together like sheep of the fold, Like a flock in the midst of their pasture; They shall make a loud noise because of so many people. The one who breaks open will come up before them; They will break out, Pass through the gate, And go out by it; Their king will pass before them, With the LORD at their head. (Micah 2:12-13, NKJV).

The second thing I see here is this. In the Book of Revelation, John sees the ark of the covenant IN HEAVEN (Rev. 11:19)! God is still sending forth the ark of His covenant in a spiritual sense to enlighten each generation and make a way for them to go further than any man has gone before. As Paul said, "We NOW dwell in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We all get to see the ark! We all get to be enlightened daily by the presence of His Spirit in our lives as we dwell in heavenly places.

Take the work of the apostle Paul. He was given a clear vision of the priesthood of the believer and the common access of all saints to the wisdom and throne of God. He understood this better than any other apostle and, as a result, he takes the believer by the hand and walks with them into the heavenly vision.

No longer is the Holy Place an exclusive local open to only a few chosen priests. When Jesus died on the cross it is recorded that the curtain over the entrance of the holy of holies was torn from top to bottom, making it accessible to all. Now the mercy seat of the ark is available freely to all. As Peter wrote so vividly,

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10, NKJV).

God did not speak through the apostles 2000 years ago and then become mute when they died as some teach. John wrote, "The spirit of prophesy IS the testimony of Jesus Christ." Jesus is not sitting up there in heaven, passively watching us stumble along in the dark, while He kicks back on the veranda and drinks mint juleps. Jesus is still active via the Holy Spirit, guiding us along the way, testifying to us and speaking to us as a shepherd to his sheep. Sometimes He forewarns us of pitfalls in the path ahead and sometimes He just shares with us the glories of His Father's house. As he promised:

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (John 16:13, NKJV).

Wow! I find that exciting! We, each of us, need not be held captive by the philosophies and traditions of men, but are free to listen to the voice of God and follow the Good Shepherd wherever He shall lead us. *He stil leads His sheep!*

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." (John 10:1-5, NKJV).

Have you ever gotten a thought as you were praying or reading the scriptures or even while you were watching a movie or washing dishes, that you had not heard from the pulpit or read in a Christian book? All of a sudden you "see" something of a kingdom nature in a whole new light. THAT is Jesus speaking to you. As Paul wrote, "yet I show you a more excellent way."

So often what happens next is that you go to "church" and share this exciting discovery with your fellow believers and you get all these "cock eyed" looks. You feel like you are in a room full of bug-eyed flounders, so you go home embarrassed. You feel like YOU are the crazy one, so you swear to yourself that you will NEVER do THAT again! You might even get a call later from the "pastor" telling you, "You were really off on that one!" Why this reaction? Most often it is because the Church is blinded by the philosophies and traditions of men and so it makes void and of no affect the rhema word of God which Jesus continues to speak to His sheep.

Brothers and sisters, don't let these professional Church leaders and their adherents "silence the lambs." Keep listening and if you can't find a true friend in Christ in whom you can confide or like many do these days, a "talk list" on the internet in which you can share these "pearls" that the Lord is giving you, then at least write them in a daily journal or diary and go back and read them from time to time, encouraging your heart as you see just how far the Lord has taken you on since you first heard His voice began to write what you heard.

Remember, we are in those "ages to come" that Paul wrote to the Ephesians about. "(God has) made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages

to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." As Jesus said,

"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. (John 15:15-16, NKJV).

May God richly bless each one of you as you seek His face.