

## The Church

Eph. 5: 27; 1 Peter 1: 19; Rev. 21: 2, 3; Rev. 22: 3.

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We do well, beloved, ever to keep in mind that all the blessing we have been brought into began with the work of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that foundation, as we have read in 1 Peter 1: 19, is based upon the shedding of His precious blood. Peter speaks of the basis of that redemption as "the precious blood of Christ." He also speaks to us of the One Who shed that precious blood, our Lord Himself. He describes Him as "a Lamb without blemish and without spot." It is interesting, in looking into the types that Peter has obviously in mind, that the first time the question of "without blemish" is introduced in relation to a sacrifice is in Exodus 12. It involves that our Lord was perfect in sinless, subject, obedient Manhood. He had every attribute of perfect Manhood in His accomplishment of the work which He came to do, primarily here, in dealing with the question of sin. It is not till we reach Numbers 19 that we find the second word Peter uses here, "without spot." It is interesting to note that not till we reach this chapter do we read of this word "spot." So far as I can trace, it is not used in any other book but Numbers, where it is used about five times. Looking up these words some time ago, we discovered that without blemish means without a defect, that is, nothing is missing. Without spot seems more to have to do with what is external, like a splash of paint **on** one. Not only then do these words assure us that our Lord was perfect with every attribute of perfect Manhood, but that He passed through this world with all its corruption and evil on every hand yet was never once stained by it. That is the bearing of the book of Numbers, the wilderness, and in this chapter death and corruption are on all hands, yet the blessed Lord passed through it all, unstained by it, in His sinless perfection. He left it as pure as when He came into it. Of only one Man could that ever have been true, the Second Man. No defect within; no defilement without; and by the blood of such an One we have been redeemed. Can we wonder that it is called here, "the **precious** blood of Christ"?

Turning back to Ephesians 5, we see here that those very two things said of our Lord in His pathway through this world are now said to be true eventually of the Assembly. As we know, His coming is in view here, when He will present the Assembly to Himself not having spot; that is the first one. To think that all He was in this world will yet be seen in the Assembly as the fruit of His work in ministry. The danger with us is that we are so susceptible to these defilements and may not be conscious of it. It was said of Ephraim "gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not," Hos. 7: 9. Decay had set in and he was unaware of it. Samson did not know his strength had gone. How preserving it is, beloved, to be sensible of defilement, for then we shall take steps to have it removed. But if we are at times conscious of this, thank God there is a time coming when we are going to be free from it for ever. So at the rapture we shall all be without spot for ever. Secondly, we shall be without wrinkle, without any marks of decay. Thirdly, we shall be holy in nature completely. Fourthly, without blemish, the second word which we read of in 1 Peter. How wonderful that He is working with us now to make us like Himself, a vessel fit to share with Him in the administration in the world to come. These four marks mean, we shall be stainless, ageless, sinless and blameless in the day that is coming when He presents us collectively to Himself. Nothing less than His Own standard will do for His complement and His sanctifying work going on now will produce this eventually.

It was said this afternoon that no one can do a single right thing unless the Lord help us to do it, but when we do it, He gives us credit for it. When the moment comes for the marriage of the Lamb, His

wife — not bride here — has made herself ready. The Bride is the fruit of His love but the Wife is the fruit of His work and so it is in Ephesians 5, where we have just been reading, "Husbands, love your **wives**". We understand the term "wife" has in view a competent vessel to share with Him in His administration in the world to come. That is why in Rev. 19, it is the wife that has made **herself** ready. That competency is being formed in us today and is the fruit of all growth and progress under the ministry of our gracious Lord from heaven. It has long been held that by the time the marriage comes, we shall have passed the judgment seat and all that has been of Christ will be established. In spite of all the unrighteousnesses of the saints which we are so apt to notice today, there are so many righteousnesses of the saints that they will be enough to clothe her in a garment of "fine linen, clean and white." This is the fruit of the ministry of Christ, for there she shall be seen, spotless, ageless, sinless and blameless, ready to come out with Him as His helpmeet in the kingdom.

I read Rev. 22: 3 to shew that God and the Lamb will be at the centre of that city and their glory will shine out through it. To it will be brought all the response of the nations of the earth. It is interesting to note in the second book of Chronicles, there is not a single failure of Solomon recorded. We have long regarded it as one of the most complete pictures of the world to come so far as earth is concerned. The visits of the Queen of Sheba and of the kings of the earth are recorded there, a picture of this city, used for the display of the glory.

The end is seen in the verses we read in Revelation 21 where, in our eternal home, the city and the bride and the tabernacle are all in view. I believe the city will be the eternal establishment of the work of God; the bride, the work of Christ; and the tabernacle, the work of the Spirit. We are the subjects of this threefold working today, for the Father is working and Christ is working and the Spirit is working to bring to pass a vessel in which all will be glorified. The one thing which we are told will mark that eternal day is that God will be all in all and this, we believe, is Father, Son and Spirit. The Assembly will bear the marks eternally of this threefold working and so God will be all in all.

Let us seek grace to go on for God today knowing that these things which engage us now, based upon what Christ has done, carried through by what He is doing, will not only be seen in glorious display in the world to come but will go on to that eternal day for the pleasure of the Godhead.