

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : THURSDAY 29 MAY 2014 ASCENSION DAY SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 47:1, 4

Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Song of praise: Scripture Versification 15-7:1, 5, 6

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation of the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises**
- **General prayer**
- **Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.**

Amen

Psalm 119:46

Scripture reading: Acts 1 and Revelation 22

Scripture text: Acts 1:11 and Revelation 22:12

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

(Acts 1:11)

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."

(Revelation 22:12)

The ascension brought about a change in the perspective of the believers.

- The disciples and all the people of the Old Testament were caught up in everything that was important on earth.
- Therefore the laws of the Pharisees were "do not touch or taste" laws.
- That is why the disciples were gazing up to the sky dumbfounded. What do we do now? The Lord has left us!

The angels then pointed out a new perspective: Jesus will come again!

- Live in expectation of His return
- Build your life towards the hereafter.
- The ascension runs into His return!

The last chapter in the Bible deals with this. But the last chapter in the Bible differs totally from the rest of the Bible.

The Old and New Testament both preach of the Lord's grace:

- How often do we not read in the Old Testament: Repent says the Lord!
- The New Testament starts with the preaching of John the Baptist: Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near
- There is time for repentance and all that are alive are called upon to repent.

The last chapter is completely different. The call to repentance is not repeated.

- It is only written: "Yes I am coming soon!"
- The time for repentance has run out!

All the revelations to John are past.

- The last part of the Bible now assures the believers that the Bible is trustworthy and true.
- God Himself caused this book to be written.

Thereafter there is the refrain in the last verses: **Behold, I am coming soon! The time is near!**

We read in verse 10 that John wanted to seal up the words of this book like the prophet Daniel had to do in the Old Testament. But he was prohibited.

- Nothing is to be sealed up because the time is near.
- It means that nothing written in this book may remain secret.
- Everything written down here is to be made known to the people because the fulfillment of what is written is very near.

The fulfillment of the work of Christ started immediately but all of it was not completed immediately.

- The Lord uses even our times to bring everything into perfect fulfillment.
- When all is fulfilled the Day of the Lord shall arrive.

Verse 11 tells us that certain things must first come to full completion.

"He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."
(Revelation 22:11)

In the time we are living in – between the ascension and Second Coming – the two poles move further apart.

- The evil people must become perfectly evil

- The holy people must become perfectly holy.
- Everybody must know what lies ahead and must continue perfectly doing what they are doing – right or wrong.

To the prophets of the Old Testament the Day of the Lord was something vague and far into the future.

- But in this last chapter the Day of the Lord is depicted clearly and sharply.
- The darkness of world history is lit up. The glory of God shines forth and enlightens everything so that we can see every event and issue in true perspective.

We cannot determine that day, we are unable to put a date to the Second Coming.

- In Mark 13:32 Jesus Himself says:
"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
- This is sufficient to put us on our guard. We must be ready
 - The particular date when the Day arrives is not important – what is important is that you must be ready on that day!
 - This is why we still preach every day: Repent!

That sermon has two sides to it:

- The true believer will be encouraged by it to live a more perfect life.
- At the same time the unbelievers will be hardened by these words. *In their opposition to the Lord they will become more evil.*

Then the time will come when the Lord's patience will run out. He will then come and judge everyone according to their works.

We learn that at His first coming Jesus took the illnesses of the world onto Him.

- He came for the miserable ones, the sick and the sinful. He came to heal them.
- But at the ascension this changed to the opposite.

This is why the angels spoke to the disciples standing there in amazement.

- Do not stand here
- go to work,
- for this Jesus shall come back in the same way you saw Him depart.

Now He comes to judge.

- To reward people according to their works.
- He comes to repay.
- All patience is gone.
 - Those who persisted in their evil shall receive the wages of sin.
 - Those who did right shall be rewarded with godly holiness.

We must now reflect. What do we think about when we remember the ascension? We who are so tolerant of evil? Some of us even want to justify the wrong!

The time we live in is one of absolute decisions.

- You must absolutely choose for or against evil.
- We must live a life in which all evil is removed completely – no matter whatever the cost!

The Lord Jesus is coming soon. This last chapter tells us what will happen, so that we, who do right, may be encouraged to persevere.

- Than all the miseries that befall us will not be strange to us and will not have the power to bend or break our faith.
- But the wrongdoers learn from it that their false belief that they rule over history and are able to determine their destiny will perish with them.

This passage speaks about reward.

- The one reward is mercy
- The other is punishment
- There is nothing in between, only death or life.

At that time there will be no more time to repent.

- In fact, this last chapter tells us that time is so short that there is hardly any time left for repentance.
- The time is near for the Lord to come!

By three statements the Lord tells us how mighty He is and how surely the end is in His hands.

- He is the “Alpha” and the “Omega”.
 - These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.
 - Of everything written God is the First and the Last.
- Thereafter He says: I am the beginning and the end!
 - Of course God is the beginning and the end – He was there prior to creation.
 - Then He created the heaven and the earth – and time.
 - Now He will apply the judgement that will finish this earth and it’s time.
- Again He says: I am the First and the Last!
 - God was there first of all.
 - Before the earth or even the angels were created.
 - But He is also the Last – because He exists eternally.
 - There is nothing that can terminate His existence.

The beginning and the end are here, joined together. In verse 16 Jesus says that He is the bright Morning Star.

- He is the change from darkness into light.
- The Lord Jesus saves the chosen from a night of sin and miseries.
- He takes us up into His glory where we shall live in the glory of God.

Here the image becomes reality – in the hereafter the light of God’s glory shines like daylight over us. Now we are living in the time of the dawn of the hereafter.

Before His ascension the disciples asked Jesus whether He was going to establish His kingdom in these times.

- His answer was that they need not know the time but that with the guidance of the Holy Spirit they must continue working until then.
- There is little time left.
- Let us not be found idle.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm: Psalm 68:9

The Lord bless and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord turn His countenance to you and give peace.

Amen

Dr MJ Du Plessis
Helping Reverend
Reformed Church Clanwilliam
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