

# REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 21 OCTOBER 2012

## MORNING SERVICE

### **Sing before:**

*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**

Psalm 8:1

### **Confession of faith:** Apostolic

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.  
And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into Hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy universal Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting

**Amen.**

*After the reading of the Law we confess our guilt and pray for forgiveness and a new life before God with Psalm 40:4*

Law

Psalm: 40:4

### **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

**Scripture reading:** Zechariah 5

**Scripture text:** Zechariah 5:3

**Then he said to me, "This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth: 'Every thief shall be expelled,' according to this side of the scroll; and, 'Every perjurer shall be expelled,' according to that side of it."**

Zechariah 5:3

In life one often has to take the bitter with the sweet. In this night vision we also see it. The Lord promises that He will rebuild His church but in this night vision He also says that He will purify it. The Lord purifies His church through His Word.

1. **The excitement about the reconstruction of the temple**
2. **The contents of the purifying process.**

### 1. **The excitement about the reconstruction of the temple**

Imagine how excited the returnees were on hearing that the Lord had forgiven their sins.

- Especially when they learned from Zechariah's night vision that they were like a piece of firewood snatched from the fire.
- The Lord takes their unrighteousness from them and henceforth will be with them.

Thereafter a vision came in which the Lord revealed that the Holy Spirit would keep the light of the church burning.

- The Holy Spirit would rebuild the temple. The only question was – how would the Holy Spirit do it?

The answer is given in this night vision:

- The Holy Spirit shall rebuild the Lord's church by purifying it first.
- He is going to remove the wrong elements from it.
- How this will happen is told clearly: the ungodly shall be removed from the church by the curse of the Holy Spirit.
- This purifying process will be violent and final.

One wonders whether the scroll has any significance for the temple. The answer is:

- Yes, it has, because the night visions deal with the reconstruction of the temple by the Lord – and those exiles who had returned from Babylon were busy rebuilding it.
- They had stopped rebuilding it for all sorts of reasons and these night visions had come to spur them on to continue their work.
- At the same time the Lord reveals that he shall rebuild and purify the living church, meaning the people.

The measurements of the scroll are significant, for the measurements of this gigantic scroll are the same as those of the Holy Place in the tabernacle and in the temple of the Lord.

- The measurements refer to the place where the people of God gather – there where they with their sacrifices and preaching are purified.
- There where the Lord of Hosts confirms His grace for the people of his covenant.

Put differently:

- The measurements are those of the place where the men gather to offer sacrifices to the Lord.
- There where the full church gathers the Lord will start His purification.
- There, in the sanctity of His church, He shall test with His Word how much of it has sunk into His people and remains there.

The preaching of God's mercy results in obedience in the true believer. See for example Psalm 40:7:

**"Then I said, "Here I am, I have come – it is written about me in the scroll".**

I obey because in His Word God commanded me to do so. The New Testament confirms that the Lord has written that we shall do His will:

**"Then I said, 'Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, O God'." . Hebrews 10:7**

This night vision is thus not about unbelievers.

- It is about people who are gathered where the Lord is worshipped.
- Amongst them are people whose worship is false and whose motives are false.

The Lord's sifting was already in process among the people of whom we read in Zechariah.

- Many of them had been killed and abducted in wars.
- Eventually all were taken into exile in Babylon where many were absorbed into other nations or had lost all interest in returning to Palestine when the time came.
- Of those who returned not all believed in God and that they would with God have a new life in the land of their ancestors. Some returned for other reasons.

Therefore this vision reveals that a Godly curse rests on people in the church who despise the covenant and who live openly and continually in rebellion against the Lord.

- The curse of the Holy Spirit comes over the sinners in Judah who continue to sin but deceive themselves with a hope of salvation.
- This night vision will show these people that they are deceiving themselves.
- This vision advises them to break with sin with the power of the Lord and the knowledge contained in the Word of God.

The flying scroll is a warning: God reveals His will to the church.

- This same revealed will that tells them of salvation will be the measure against which their deeds will be tested and with which their disobedience will be shown.

What was this scroll seen by Zechariah? He saw the Word of God – the Bible.

- The people of that time did not know a book in the shape that we have it today.
- Their books were a piece of parchment rolled around a stick.

The book as seen by Zechariah was not neatly rolled around the stick for storing.

- It was unrolled – to show that it was being used.
- The Word of God was at work in the church of the Lord.

There are a number of passages in the Bible where the Lord says that His Word for the people is to be written down so that they can keep it with them.

- Every time He emphasizes that it is His Word.
- What is written in the scroll are not human thoughts. Take, for example, the words of the Lord to Jeremiah:

**2 "Take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel, against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah even to this day.**

**3 "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."**

**4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah; and Baruch wrote on a scroll of a book, at the instruction of Jeremiah, all the words of the Lord which He had spoken to him.**

(Jeremiah 36:2-4)

The scroll scared Zechariah because it came flying to him like a giant bird.

- The scroll announces God's judgment. - Hence the angel says that it is a curse that is going over the whole land.
- The Word of the Lord flies over the land like a giant bird and will devour all unrepentant sinners.

The message is clear. The Word of the Lord is not tender like a lamb.

- It affects every person who hears the Word of God.
- It means everyone – nobody remains unmoved after having heard the Word of God and experienced it.
- Nobody leaves the church unaffected.

He who hears the Word disrespectfully or refuses to obey it incurs the full force of God's wrath.

The Bible is not a lifeless piece of paper it is the living Word of the living God.

- It preaches comfort to those who embrace the law and the Lord's counsel.
- At the same time it preaches judgment to those who let it pass them by and who ignore it.
- It is foolhardy rashness not to bow unreservedly before the Word of God.
- On the other hand, for those who hear and cherish it the Word of God is an immeasurable blessing. For that reason unrepentance cannot be permitted to lie undetected in a quiet corner in the church so that it may sneak into the hereafter.

The problem is that to some extent these returnees appear to be conceited in their faith.

- They believed that because they had returned to their land they were particularly blessed.

- They did not see God's mercy in it which should have made them even more grateful.
- They were no longer standing on the shores of the Red Sea as their ancestors who still had little understanding of the Lord's law.
- They had experienced more of God's mercy.
- And they had felt His saving Hand more often.
- Accordingly their responsibility was so much greater.

The same applies to us. This is the importance of Zechariah 5. Our church is long past Exodus 20 and the covenant of works. We are part of the covenant of grace. **The covenant of grace is a much stronger covenant than the previous covenant – but also a more dangerous one because it demands more of our responsibility.**

## 2. The contents of the purifying process

The contents of this purifying process is clear:

- This is the curse that is going out over the whole land; for according to what it says on one side, every thief will be banished, and according to what it says on the other, everyone who swears falsely will be banished.
- This is exactly according to the Word of the Lord. The curse is complete excision out of the church according to the Word of the Lord.

The two sins mentioned, theft and perjury represent all sin.

- They represent the two sins most prevalent in the church at the time.
- Swearing falsely represents the first table of the law.
- Theft represents the second table.

The Lord seriously admonishes these people remaining in Jerusalem!

- These people to whom the Lord wants to be merciful again lived in rich houses - but they did not rebuild the temple.
- For this they did not have time and money to spare. But they themselves prospered.
- The prophet Haggai was a contemporary of Zechariah and he too preached against the people's falseness.

Yet they remained pious and religious.

- They easily swore an oath by the Name of the Lord.
- But these oaths were false for they lied to God and their neighbour while swearing it.
- So the communion with God and with their fellow man was destroyed.

But do not overlook God's mercy!

- The fact that Zechariah came to make this pronouncement is proof of God's mercy.
- With it the Lord calls on his church to repent.

It will not prevent or postpone the purification.

- It will cause the saints to improve their lifestyle and worship so far above that of the false believers that everyone will understand why they are banished and long for it to occur.

This announced chastisement was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

- He Himself obeyed God's Word in every respect. Hence it is written of Him that He was in all matters equal to his brothers excepting sin.
- The Lord Jesus preached forgiveness of sin, but He also preached that the forgiveness of sin is enmeshed with obedience to the Word of God.

The Lord Jesus did not die for an undefined group of people who worship as it pleases them and are saved. It is written in Revelation 13:8 that it was fore-ordained by God and written into His counsel:

- "All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the World." (Also compare John 17)

The fulfillment of this night vision lies therein that Jesus fulfilled every promise of salvation announced in the Word.

- He bore the punishment for the sins of each of the chosen.
- The chosen have the characteristic that they do their utmost to obey the demands of the Word of God.

But because they are sinful people it is clear that they cannot succeed perfectly but because their intention and faith is pure the Lord Jesus Christ dies for their sin. In this way we all obtain redemption and forgiveness.

After His ascension the Lord Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to his church.

- He now guides us with His Spirit and his Word – exactly as the Lord promised in Zechariah's night visions.
- But it will all come to an end for each Sunday we confess that we expect the return of the Lord Jesus as the Eternal Judge.

What will be the yardstick with which He will judge when pronouncing the final judgment?

- The Lord Jesus will not judge people arbitrarily.
- He will not decide by their faces whether He likes them or not. He will judge according to what God's plan contains. **"If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."** (Revelation 20:15)

He will judge according to His Word. As it is written in Revelation 20:12.:

**And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.**

(Revelation 20:12)

We shall never be rid of the flying scroll and its contents as seen by Zechariah

- The Lord sent it to us as a roadmap to the life eternal. We must know the contents of this book well and submit to it otherwise we shall call God's judgment on us.
- People who reject or alter the contents of this book will be in great trouble with the Lord. The last words of this book reveals the following:

**18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;**

**19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.**

(Revelation 22:18, 19)

For the true believers the last judgment will not be an act of punishment. For them it will be an act of mercy with which they shall be freed from falsehood and enter the full richness of God's grace.

- The Lord reveals that in this life these people carry a heavy burden of responsibility.
- It is not easy but they shall overcome:  
**"He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels."** (Revelation 3:5)

Do you hear the mercy?

- We, whose names are written in the book of life, believe. The Lord Jesus prays for us.
- Our names are heard in heaven every moment.
- It means that Jesus is praying for us – but at the same time this prayer is an announcement that we are on the way to the eternal throne of God.

**Amen.**

Closing prayer.

Closing Psalm

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**

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 21 October 2012  
 Scripture Modern King James Version

**Revelation 1:11**

**"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."**

**Revelation 21:27**

**But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.**

**Revelation 22:7**

**"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."**