

WELL DONE

A Christian Doctrine of Works



D. James Kennedy, Ph.D

John B. Sorensen, D.D.

GreenTree Press

Fort Lauderdale

Copyright © 2010 by John B. Sorensen

All rights reserved, including translations. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the author.

Edited by Jerry Newcomb and Hannah Sorensen.

Published in Fort Lauderdale, Florida by GreenTree Press.

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture Quotations noted KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2010910810

ISBN: 978-0-9828721-0-9

Printed in the United States of America

9

The Church in the 21st Century (Know Your Church)

“Who is she who looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?”

Song of Solomon 6:10

As we continue to consider God’s guidance in our lives and what He would have us do, we want to step back and take a look at what He is doing right now at this present time in the world. Despite all the bad news that seems to hit us regularly, the worldwide picture of the Kingdom of God is actually quite encouraging. Much of this is behind the scenes. It is quite evident that “Aslan” is on the move!⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Aslan, the “Great Lion”, is the central character in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The author, C. S. Lewis, described Aslan as an alternative version of Christ—that is, as the form in which Christ might have appeared in a fantasy world.

We begin our look by considering a largely neglected book of the Old Testament.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

The Song of Solomon is a marvelous book. It is beautiful, poignant, tender, and touching—the story of a love affair. On the surface, it is the story of a love affair of a man and a woman—of Solomon and the Shulammite woman. And yet, those who know the Scripture know there is a higher meaning as well, though there are many great lessons in that aspect of it. But it is also, ultimately, the story of the relationship of the Heavenly Bridegroom and His earthly bride—the Church.

It is an astounding book in many ways because we see much blessing and praising on either side. The Church praises and blesses her Lord, and the Lord praises and blesses the Church. He says He cannot see how He could live without us. He goes to and fro throughout the earth looking into the hearts of believers to find that which is excellent, to find that which is spiritual, to find that which is sincere Christianity, to find that love—that true love of Him. When He finds it, He does not hesitate to praise it unstintingly. I guarantee you that a study of this book will make you realize, perhaps more than ever before, how much you are loved by Christ. Hopefully that will result in a greater love on your part for Him.

How marvelous is His praise. That praise is found in our text: *“Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?”* (Song of Solomon 6:10). That, I think, is one of the most, if not the most, glorious pictures the Church (you and me) to be found anywhere in the Scripture.

Note what it says: *“Who is she...?”* We are the bride of Christ. *“Who is she that looks forth as the morning?”* In the midst of the blackness of night of hopelessness, despair, and death, it is the Church that brings the hope of the sun rising. The Church even in the most ancient of days was the morning star that gave some hope of the coming morning to those who were lost in that darkness.

Even in the Old Testament, when darkness still covered most of the earth, she was that fair moon that gave, though borrowed, light to a needy and hopeless world—a world that could see nothing beyond that hole in the ground where life had little meaning and no hope. There was the Church, even back then, that was fair as the moon. That is, of course, an idealized picture of the Church. Unfortunately, there are many who would be seen merely as pockmarks on that moon. Nevertheless that is the picture He draws of the Church.

WHEN CHRIST AROSE

And yet there came a glorious day when the night was to fade away, and in that bright and marvelous morning when

Jesus Christ walked out of the tomb and the darkness of death faded away forever, the Church became clear as the sun and cast its light into the darkness and into the sadness and weeping of the bereaved who stood beside the tombs of their lost loved ones. It cast its light even into the midst of the idolatrous temple of the heathen and brought into that darkness the wonderful light of Christ, the true God and Savior. The light it cast illumined the hovel and the palace. That light spread, first from Jerusalem and then all around the world. That light brought about the establishment of this nation. That light has pierced every continent, gone into the deepest jungles, brought light to the darkness and to the most benighted heathen, the cannibals and headhunters in the depths of New Guinea. That light has taken away that fear of death, that bondage to sin. That light has set men free. That light continues to spread across the widest oceans and through the densest jungles and over the widest deserts to bring the light of Christ to men everywhere.

Just through the ministry of Evangelism Explosion alone, millions of people are being touched in our world today by that light of Jesus Christ.

The Church is to be “...*awesome as an army with banners*” (v. 10b). As that light has covered the whole world, the Church is seen again in this final revelation as an army. And we are that army of Christ. We sing, “Onward

Christian soldiers, marching as to war.”⁴¹ We are Christian soldiers in the army of Christ. He is the Captain of the well-fought fight that goes on before us. We are called to a great battle with the forces of darkness, with principalities and powers of the air.

It is interesting to note that the great Church statistician, David Barrett, has pointed out that at any given point in Christian history—in the beginning, in the middle, and even now—about one in every two hundred Christians has been martyred for his or her faith. He said the reason that anti-Christian persecution seems to be accelerating in our time (in the remnant Communist countries and in the Muslim countries) is a result of the growth of the Church. Persecution is part and parcel of the spread of the Christian Gospel. It is the enemy of our souls fighting back. As the book of Revelation notes, the devil is full of fury for he knows his time is short.⁴²

We are called to go forth “*awesome as an army with banners.*” We have a banner, Isaiah says. It is the Gospel. The Church has many banners. “Jesus Christ is Lord” was one of the earliest Ones. “He will never leave us” is another. “He always leads us forth in victory” is yet another. “He is King of kings and Lord of lords,” is yet

⁴¹ Words by Sabine Baring-Gould, *Church Times* (1865). Arranged by Arthur S. Sullivan (1871).

⁴² Revelation 12:12.

another. “He goes forth upon a white horse conquering and to conquer” is yet another of the banners of Christ.

As it is with the armies of this world, when we see the flag, our national emblem, lifted up, even soldiers who are fatigued will renew their strength. So we, as the army of Christ are to go forth in that way. We should strike fear into those who are the enemies of God and the enemies of righteousness and godliness. I believe that we have seen the Church do just that down through the centuries—from a thousand years before Christ, when this Song of Solomon was first penned, down to that glorious resurrection morning after the passion at Calvary, down through the centuries of church history, on until today. And we should look forward to the Church as the 21st century unfolds. What will that be like? I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet.

One theologian has said that the future turns on so many tiny ball bearings that no one can prophesy it accurately who is not divinely inspired to do so. Yet, I believe there are some trends which, we trust, if they continue, will indeed result in the 21st century having a Church the like of which has not been seen before.

Through the depths of the Dark Ages the Gospel was almost hidden. Then, in the 1500s, through Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and others, the Gospel was brought to light again, and a glorious spiritual transformation took place. It grew somewhat slowly until

200 years ago when the modern missionary movement began. Then the Gospel for the first time went out from Europe into the East and the West until it traveled all around the world. The 19th century was the century of world missions, which took the Gospel everywhere. We have seen the enormous conquests that have been made by that missionary movement.

Tremendous change has taken place over the past century as a result of the Gospel traveling around the world.

In 1900, Christians (of all varieties) in the Third-World countries numbered about 87 million (15.6%), while Western countries reported over 470 million (84.4%).

By 1980, that figure had radically changed to 631.8 million (out of 1.433 billion Christians) in the Third-World (44.1%). The Western world slipped to 546.6 million (38.2%), while the Communist world grew to 254.1 million (17.7%). By that point, nearly half of the world's Christians now lived in the Third-World.

By the year 2000, 983.9 millions Christians (out of 2.01 billion) lived in the Third-World (48.7%) while 592.1 million (29.3%) lived in the Western world. The Communist world grew to 443.8 million (22%).

So Christianity is no longer a Western religion. Christianity is no longer a white man's religion. It is a world religion. During the 20th century, Christianity has

become the most extensive and universal religion in history.⁴³

AN EXPLOSION OF CONVERTS AND LAYMEN

Christianity has grown with increasing acceleration and rapidity in an incredible way. Dr. Kennedy had a set of statistics that he loved to quote when challenged for his optimism about the future. He called them the most encouraging statistics that he ever heard in his entire lifetime as a Christian.

In 1900 there were 943 converts to Christ per day worldwide.

That increased to 4,500 by 1950.

By 1980 that grew with incredible speed to 20,000.

By the end of 1994, that figure had grown to 92,000.

It reached about 100,000 per day worldwide during the mid-1990s.

And at last estimate, it was up to 150,000 per day by the end of this decade.

Dr. Kennedy told me he derived these statistics from the research of Dr. David Barrett, the great church statistician, who says there are 55 million new Christians per year (not counting losses through conversion to false

⁴³ David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A comparative study of churches and religions in the modern world, AD 1900-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 3-4.

religions or through death). 55,000,000 divided by 365=150,000/per day. ⁴⁴

Dr. Ralph Winter, Chancellor of William Carey International University and past General Director for the U.S. Center for World Mission, published some amazing facts about the growth of Christianity worldwide. He states that in A.D. 100, there was one Christian for every 360 people on earth. By 1900, that number dramatically changed to 21 people for every active believer. In 2010, he lists the number as 7.3 people for every Christian believer.⁴⁵

Thus, we see there has been the most incredible explosion of converts to Christ that the world has ever seen. Unfortunately, for us that is, most of this has taken place in other parts of the world. In Africa there were 10 million Christians in 1900; today there are roughly 400 million Christians there.⁴⁶ Similar kinds of things are happening in various places in Asia and other parts of the world.

God is at work in a tremendous way. Indeed, the Church is going forth today as an army—*“awesome as an*

⁴⁴ David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Trends: Interpreting the annual Christian megacensus* (Pasadena: CA: William Carey Library, 2001).

⁴⁵ Ralph D. Winter, Phil Bogosian, Larry Boggan, Frank Markow, and Wendell Hyde, “The Amazing Countdown Facts” published by the U.S. Center for World Mission. They define a “Christian believer” as those who have been born again into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They list Christian believers as 800 million.

⁴⁶ David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A comparative study of churches and religions in the modern world, AD 1900-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 4.

army with banners.” That, I think, indeed, portends great things for this century.

For example, David Barrett and Todd Johnson report that 2 billion people on the planet listen to or view Christian broadcasting at least once a month. That’s almost one-third the world’s population. Given the present trends, Barrett and Johnson anticipate that number to climb to 2.4 billion by 2025.⁴⁷

Barrett and Johnson also note that the percentage of Christians in the world in contrast to the world population has increased from 22.7% in 1800⁴⁸ to 33.2% in 2010. They report that 2.172 billion claim to be Christians, and they anticipate that number to rise to 2.583 billion by 2025.

They also report that the distribution of the Scriptures, in whole or in part, has exploded. In 1800, they estimate there were 500,000 Bibles being published per year. By 2010, that number had jumped to 71.4 million.⁴⁹ Indeed, the world’s #1 best-seller has no true rivals.

We, in EE, have seen in the last 50 years another phenomenon. It has been the peculiar time of the layperson. An increasing tens of millions of lay people around the world have begun to share their faith in Christ. They have been equipped, trained, emboldened, and encouraged to go

⁴⁷ David Barrett and Todd Johnson, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 34, No. 1.

⁴⁸ David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Trends: Interpreting the annual Christian megacensus* (Pasadena: CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 384.

⁴⁹ David Barrett and Todd Johnson, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 34, No. 1.

out and share the Good News with others. This is one of the reasons for the great explosion of converts around the world.

I believe that as the twenty-first century progresses, the Church is going to do things people never dreamed she would do. For one thing, we are going to continue to see the enormous growth of large churches. About 140 years ago Charles Spurgeon was considered the greatest preacher in the world. I read in the back of one of his commentaries, that that year they had received the 4,225th member into the church, making it the second largest church in Christendom. Did you grasp that? One hundred forty years ago, the second largest church in the world had 4,225 members.

Today, that would not be the second largest church in Fort Lauderdale. We have churches with tens of thousands of members here in the United States, and in some other countries they put us to shame. There is a Presbyterian church with as many as 80,000 members in Korea and another church there with 800,000 members. God is doing some incredible things.

We often hear about churches that are closing. Many of these have not been proclaiming the Gospel; they have not been winning people to Jesus Christ. So they are just withering away. But those which have been faithful to the Gospel, which have been proclaiming the Good News and training their people to do so also are going to grow. It is

not going to be uncommon in the near future to see churches that have 10, 20, 50, 75 thousand members. Just a caution—church growth is not always a sign of real Christian growth, but I do believe in the growth of the true Church. Nonetheless, most of the churches that are growing so well are churches where the Gospel is being preached.

FATE OF MAINLINE CHURCHES

It is also interesting to see another change which, if things continue, will take place by the middle of the next century. The mainline churches in America will mostly have disappeared. They will be discovered to be back alleys, dead-end streets. These are those mainline denominations which have, by and large, become liberal, whose seminaries turn out ministers who do not believe the Bible—the kinds of people you have heard about in the Jesus seminar who do not believe Jesus said three-fourths of what is attributed to Him and who now reveal they do not even believe He rose from the dead.

This kind of liberal unbelief is a negative, withering, dying sort of thing. It is a plague—a blight upon the Church—and it is going to, by the grace of God, fade away.

RESURGENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

So, I believe that there will continue to be a tremendous growth in Bible-believing Christianity in this century. We saw an increase in missions in the 20th century with an

increase of the number of people who have been trained and have learned to witness. I pray that soon we will see 21st century missionaries traveling all over the world, and Christians who do not witness for Christ will be the strange ducks, the rare birds. Whereas 50 years ago, when Evangelism Explosion began, it was common to find as many as 95 percent of the church members in America did not witness to anyone. By the middle of the next century, I pray that figure may be drastically altered as Christians more and more realize that it is their responsibility and their privilege to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others.

While we in Evangelism Explosion tend to focus on the proclamation of the Gospel (the evangelism mandate), there is a second responsibility that all of us, as Church members, are called to. We have not only been called to be light, but also salt. Light illuminates and salt preserves. Dr. Kennedy was famous for his Biblical stand for both the evangelism mandate and the cultural mandate (found in Genesis 1:28).

It's a bit alarming that many churchmen (even pastors) have no concern for the culture. There was a time when there were many advocates for the cultural mandate here in the United States (not the least of which was Dr. D. James Kennedy), but today the church seems remarkable quiet.

So, while we've seen growth in the Church worldwide, and even here in the states, there seems to be a growing disconnect with the cultural mandate.

I believe that one of strongest voices today with regard to the cultural mandate is Dr. Tony Perkins, President of the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C. Recently, while talking about the growth of the Church and our hope for the future, Tony reminded me:

The Church has been and is growing exponentially, however, during this time of expansion the cultural and political influence of the Church has decreased almost in inverse proportion. What is missing?

Perhaps the missing element is the persecution of the Church, which will prune and purify the Church making it strong and leading it to solid growth. A purified Church will be a prophetic Church, that will not just hold up the light of the Gospel but will bring the preserving power of the truth to the culture by being salt.⁵⁰

I pray that the Church will wake up after many, many decades of lethargy and sleep. As Tony said, it might take persecution which leads to pruning and purification for that to happen. You can already feel that in the wind.

I sincerely hope that we will understand it soon and rise from that sleep to be a responsible power. Then we can reverse many of the most unfortunate and godless decisions that have been made in this country in the past few decades,

⁵⁰ Family Research Council is a wonderful organization located in Washington, D.C. They work diligently to preserve our Christian liberties, the family, and promote Godly government. You can find out more at: <http://www.frc.org>.

and America will be restored again to a Godliness which is what made us great. That is my hope and prayer.

Remember the great words attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville, but traced back to an Eisenhower speech-writer (but true, no matter who said it): “America is great because America is good. If America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

Well, we have come very close to that, but there is hope in the coming days. It isn’t going to happen overnight. There are still forces of evil, godlessness, and immorality entrenched in the institutions of this nation because Christians have abdicated their responsibilities. But that, I pray, even if it requires persecution, is already beginning to change.

I’m speaking here about the United States, but I also believe and pray that same awakening will happen for the world Church.

I think that overall, the 21st century will be the most exciting time ever to be a part of the Church of Christ. It will, indeed, be fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and it will have become “*awesome as an army with banners.*” And that banner over her is the love of Jesus Christ that we carry forth to a needy world. It will be a Church where members see that it is, indeed, their privilege and their holy and Godly responsibility to not merely be spectators in the pews, but to be active participants in the life of the building

of the kingdom of God throughout this world. I trust that you will be a part of that glorious Church.

I hope you will think about that Heavenly Bridegroom who even now is looking for those who are truly sincere in their faith, who truly seek after holiness, who seek His face in prayer, who study His Word, and who endeavor to live for Him. To those believers, He will be unstinting and generous in His praise, and they will be those that He dearly loves. May those people be you and me.

CONCLUSION

God has great plans for His Church, and we are privileged to be a part of those plans. It is His desire that He utters those words, “Well done,” to us. May God help us to live in such a way that He makes us worthy to be His Heavenly bride.