

IS THERE HOPE FOR THE CHURCH?

By Richard Oostra

Is the church of Jesus Christ on the rocks? Most certainly not! The church of which Jesus is the Architect, Builder, and Controller will stand the test of times.

The book, *Church on the Rock(s)*, however, speaks of man-made churches competing against each other. Do these churches reflect the church that Jesus intended us to have? We all know the answer. Churches as we see them today are in need of restoration, repairs, and reform, because most of them are no longer based upon the Rock. Our hope for the church is a return to the Bible and its message:

“Cry out, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet and tell my people their transgressions...” (Isaiah 51:8).

Realizing the Truth

The truth is that most Christians today are in defective churches that are not built by God’s design. They still carry within themselves pre-reformation, man-made, and unbiblical practises. The book, *Church on the Rock(s)*, brings out these errors.

In the twenty-first chapter of Luke, Jesus describes the conditions on earth for believers before His return. In verse nine, we read that we will be living in an age of deception, and this is where we are today.

Responding to God’s Commands

Most church-goers are told that they are Christians, yet they have never experienced the transforming power of Jesus in their lives. They have never been told that Christ expects them to live distinctive lives apart from those of this world, or that there is such a thing as spiritual maturity and a growing into discipleship. This lack of understanding is the result of their having been given the wrong concept of salvation. The Bible is clear in stating:

*Sow for yourselves righteousness,
reap the fruit of unfailing love,
and break up your unplowed ground;
for it is time to seek the Lord, until He comes (Hosea 10:12).*

Returning to the Father

Like the prodigal son who had gone astray, so we are invited to return to God and receive a biblical salvation. Jesus told Peter, “If I wash thee not, you will have no part in me.” That statement clarifies that only by our coming to Him in repentance can we be cleansed by Jesus’ blood. He then will restore us unto Himself and give us His indwelling Spirit so that it becomes possible to live by His teachings.

“My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge because [your church leaders] have rejected knowledge” (Hosea. 4:6).

Relying on God’s Protection

Many churches are like the foolish virgins in the Bible. They have neglected Bible prophecies and the warnings of Jesus that in the end-times we will suffer persecution (Luke 21:12). At the

same time, our Lord encouraged us to have no fear but to have faith, for He would enable us to endure to the end. But you may ask, “Why persecution?” It is the end-time persecution that will bring back many to God and will purify the church. When Jesus comes, He will come for a purified church, not the commercial church as we know it today.

Remembering Israel

Throughout the Bible, we are encouraged to keep our eyes on Israel (Luke 21:20-33). Israel was meant to be God’s people, and by His preserving and gathering them again as a nation, we see God’s unfailing love. By His bringing them together, we see a fulfillment of God’s covenant with David and His promises with the Patriarchs.

Israel has already become the focus of world attention and the central point for obtaining world peace. The Bible tells us when the Anti-Christ makes a peace treaty with Israel (Isaiah 28:16-19), the end-time will be near, and when men will say “peace, peace,” sudden destruction will fall upon them (I Thessalonians 5:3).

Refusing Anxiety

Jesus cautions us to be careful and not become anxious as those of the world by living merely unto ourselves. This promise is true for the church as well as for all believers who have remained loyal to Him.

*“Because you have kept my commandments
I will also keep you from the hour of trial” (Revelation 3:10).*

Jesus has promised to be with us to the end (Matthew 28:20) and told us not to fear. Yes, Jesus gave us many warnings, especially relating to the end-times. Even as a church, we can rely on His word of not being troubled because of these things; for just as did His hour of trial come to pass, so also will our hour come to pass.

*“Be always on the watch and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about
to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 2:36).*

Rejoicing in the End

Yes, when Jesus comes to gather His own, He will come for a purified church. He will not call for denominations by name, but He will call for those believers who have received His grace and followed Him. He will give them their reward and will allow them to sit at the communion table with Him. For this let us say:

*“No” to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live
self-controlled, upright and Godly lives in this present age,
while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of
our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for
us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself
a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good”
(Titus 2:12-14).*

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