

## **Session 4 The Convincing Power of Heroic Love (Jn. 15:13)**

*“Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures as I delight in Your beauty” (Ps. 36:8; 37:4)*

### **I. LAYING DOWN OUR LIVES FOR LOVE**

- A. Jesus identified laying down one’s life for another as the greatest expression of love (Jn. 15:13)  
*<sup>12</sup>“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. <sup>14</sup>You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” (Jn. 15:12-14)*
- B. Jesus’ love for us was manifested by laying down His life for us on the cross to satisfy God’s justice (Rom. 3:26) to demonstrate that He desired that His Bride be with Him forever (Jn. 17:24) and to model the extravagant love that the Church would display for Him and for others at times throughout church history, even in a profound and unprecedented way in the final years of this age.  
*<sup>8</sup>God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that...Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)*
- C. The end-time Church will love extravagantly as Jesus did. The most extravagant kind of love is described in 15:13. The most convincing evidence of love is that love makes sacrifices for others. The issue of blood shed magnifies the reality of love to others and awakens heroic love in many.  
*<sup>34</sup>“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you... <sup>35</sup>By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Jn. 13:34-35)*
- D. *All will know*: The people displaying heroic love will clearly be identified as Jesus’ disciples. That does not mean that all who witness it will become born again, but they will recognize that the signature trademark of believers in the end time is to walk in extravagant, heroic love.
- E. Jesus’ prophetic prayer gives us the assurance of the love and unity of the end-time Church.  
*<sup>22</sup>“And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one ...<sup>23</sup>that the world may know that You have sent Me...” (Jn. 17:22-23)*

### **II. JESUS PROPHESED A TIME OF UNPRECEDENTED CARNAGE (MT. 24:22)**

- A. In Matthew 24:15-22, Jesus gave an important “interpretative grid” for understanding the biblical narrative of the end times. He emphasized the unprecedented death toll (24:22).  
*<sup>7</sup>“For nation will rise against nation...there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes... <sup>9</sup>Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake... <sup>14</sup>This gospel of the kingdom will be preached...to all the nations, and then the end will come...<sup>21</sup>For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been... <sup>22</sup>And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved [physically]...” (Mt. 24:7-22)*
- B. The context for the display of extravagant love in the end-time Church will be the multi-faceted crisis in society resulting from food shortages caused by war and famine, or the need caused by earthquakes and tsunamis, or the suffering related to human trafficking, orphans, and persecution against Christians and Jews. Jesus highlighted these troubles earlier that week on Tuesday (Mt. 24).

### III. THE UNIQUE POWER OF BLOOD SHED & ITS PROMINENCE IN GOD'S END-TIME PLAN

A. The shedding of blood is offensive, yet it has the most powerful social impact because it is so costly. Laying down one's life for love is one of the most powerful weapons in the kingdom (2 Cor. 10:4).

B. In the Scripture, blood is an emblem of life. It was never to be consumed as food.

<sup>23</sup>*Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat. <sup>24</sup>You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water. (Deut. 12:23-24)*

<sup>10</sup>*And He said, "...the voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." (Gen. 4:10)*

C. There will be unprecedented bloodshed at the end of the age.

<sup>9</sup>*He opened the fifth seal; I saw...the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held...<sup>11</sup>it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants...who would be killed as they were, was completed. (Rev. 6:9-11)*

<sup>5</sup>*And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT...<sup>6</sup>I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. (Rev. 17:5-6)*

<sup>4</sup>*Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers...and they became blood...<sup>6</sup>They have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. (Rev. 16:4-6)*

D. The subject of Christians and Israel enduring persecution in end-time prophecy is a sober reality.

1. The New Testament describes *Christians* suffering persecution and even being taken captive (Rev. 13:7, 10; cf. Mt. 10:21-22, 28; 24:9; Lk. 12:4-7; 21:16-19; Jn. 15:18-16:4; 2 Tim. 3:12; Rev. 6:9-11; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 16:5-7; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4).

2. The Old Testament addresses *Jewish people* being scattered, persecuted, and/or taken captive—in over 30 verses—in context to the final 3½ years of this age and Jesus' return (Ps. 102:20; Isa. 11:11-12, 16; 14:2-3; 27:12-13; 42:7, 22-25; 49:9, 21-26; 60:14; 61:1; Jer. 30:3, 8-10, 17-18; 31:16-17, 23; 33:7, 11; Ezek. 34:27-29; 39:23-29; Hos. 11:10-11; Joel 3:1-3; Amos 9:14; Mic. 4:6-7; 7:12; Zeph. 3:19-20; Zech. 9:11-12; 10:10-11; 13:8; 14:2; Lk. 21:24).

### IV. THE WISDOM AND PRIVILEGE OF BEING PERSECUTED FOR JESUS' SAKE

A. When the apostles were beaten, they consider it a great privilege to know the fellowship of suffering.

<sup>41</sup>*So they departed...rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:41)*

<sup>10</sup>*...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings ...<sup>14</sup>I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God... (Phil. 3:10-14)*

<sup>24</sup>*I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church... (Col. 1:24)*

- B. Being persecuted for Jesus' sake results in great blessing for the ones being persecuted.

<sup>18</sup>*I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Rom. 8:18)*

<sup>22</sup>*“Blessed are you when men hate you...for the Son of Man's sake. <sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven...” (Lk. 6:22-23)*

<sup>4</sup>*... saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus...[they] had not received [the Antichrist's] mark...they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4)*

- C. The spirit of glory will rest on those who are persecuted (1 Pet. 4:14).

<sup>12</sup>*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you...<sup>13</sup>but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. <sup>14</sup>*If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you... let him glorify God... (1 Pet. 4:12-16)**

<sup>22</sup>*“The glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one...” (Jn. 17:22)*

- D. Satan and the Antichrist will overcome the saints physically by killing them (Rev. 13:7), but the saints' destiny is to overcome Satan spiritually by remaining loyal to Jesus in love (Rev. 12:11). The final 3½ years of this age will be the pinnacle of this epic war between good and evil.

<sup>5</sup>*And he [the Antichrist] was given...authority to continue for forty-two months...*

<sup>7</sup>*It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. (Rev. 13:5-7)*

<sup>11</sup>*And they overcame him [Satan/the Antichrist] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. (Rev. 12:11)*

- E. God planned to display His wisdom through the Church to principalities (Eph. 3:9-10). He will be glorified through the Church before all creation—this happens in a highlighted way in the end times.

<sup>8</sup>*To me...this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles...<sup>9</sup>to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God...*

<sup>10</sup>*to the intent that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. (Eph. 3:8-10)*

- F. Paul defined the wisdom of God as including the message of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18-27). God's wisdom that was modeled by Jesus was seen at the cross. This wisdom will also be demonstrated through corporate Church at the end of this age.

<sup>18</sup>*The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us...it is the power of God...<sup>23</sup>*we preach Christ crucified...<sup>24</sup>the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men...<sup>27</sup>God has chosen the foolish things...to put to shame the wise... (1 Cor. 1:18-27)**

<sup>9</sup>*He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

<sup>10</sup>*Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities...in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:9-10)*

## V. HEROIC LOVE IS AWAKENED MOST IN TIMES OF CRISIS

- A. When crisis comes, many retreat in fear or freeze in indecision, while others arise in heroic love to act in a way to help others, even when it is very costly and risks their own lives.
- B. We show the world what we think about Jesus and His leadership and who we are to Him by extravagantly giving our time, money, and possessions, and even risking our life for one another as well as for people we do not know but who are in great need and at risk (human trafficking, the fatherless, refugees, those starving due to famines, etc.) The sacrificial sharing of money or the world's goods is a significant display of love.

***<sup>16</sup>By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. <sup>17</sup>But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1 Jn. 3:16-17)***

- C. Many Christians read the prophesies of the significant increase of martyrdom in the end times and become fearful, but when it actually happens they will see it as a great gift and privilege that causes love to abound in and through them in a way that glorifies God (makes Jesus look attractive), while leading to great rewards for them in the age to come—rewards that will last forever.

## VI. THE GREATEST SOCIAL MIRACLE (JN. 17:23): GOD'S GRAND FAMILY PLAN

- A. God's grand family plan has always been to lead history so that His people love each other and walk in deep unity (Jn. 17:21-23). God's grand family plan is that His people relate as an ***international family of affection*** as "One New Man" made up of Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:15).
- B. Zechariah prophesied that half of the ***Jewish people*** living Jerusalem (in final 42 months of this age) will be taken into captivity. Currently, nearly 600, 000 Jews live in Jerusalem. The healing of Abraham's family is at the epicenter of God's end-time plan to unify His people (Jn. 17:21-23). The end-time hostility against Israel is the setting in which many will see "***greater love***" (Jn. 15:13) and "***greater works***" (Jn. 14:12; cf. Mic. 7:15) about which Jesus spoke and prophesied.

***<sup>15</sup>...so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace. (Eph. 2:15)***

***<sup>21</sup>I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken...half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant...shall not be cut off from the city. (Zech. 14:2)***

- C. God called the Church to stand with Israel in persecution as part of His plan ***to provoke Israel to jealousy by the love of God*** shown to them through Gentile believers (Rom. 10:19; 11:11). Israel will desire to have *what Gentile believers possess spiritually*. This will happen as Gentile believers show love for Israel as they risk their lives to *provide refuge* for Jewish people in flight, *perform miracles* reminding them of their prophets, and are *fearless* in the face of death. The Lord requires the end-time Church to stand with Israel like Corrie ten Boom's family did in WWII.

***<sup>11</sup>...to provoke them [Israel] to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles...<sup>25</sup>blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. <sup>26</sup>And so all Israel will be saved...<sup>33</sup>Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! (Rom. 11:11, 25-33)***

- D. Israel's national salvation is connected to the fullness of the Gentiles in the end times (Rom. 11:25).