

Qua Vadis?

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A Church must confess

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" . . . on this rock I will build my church; and the
gates of hell will not overcome it."

(Matthew 16:18)

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The foundation of the New Testament church

Whenever the foundations of a new building are dug in our vicinity, we watch with great interest. We watch the progress carefully. And we wonder what the building will look like when it has been completed.

As time passes God is busy erecting His spiritual building:

- A building of God in the spirit
- A building to be completed for eternity
- A building that will never pass away
- A building without end.

Dear Reader,

It is about the foundation of that spiritual building that I want to talk to you about. That foundation was laid by the Lord Jesus Himself.

Let's read it together:

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16)

However, before Peter pronounced this beautiful confession which the Father had revealed to him (Matthew 16:17), Jesus asked his disciples what people said about his identity.

The disciples replied that some thought him to be John the Baptist, or Eliah, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. (Matthew 16:14) After Jesus had listened to the other disciples, he asked them all directly:

"Who do you say I am? (Matthew 16:5)

This is what I too want to ask you.

Who do you say is Jesus Christ? It is of the utmost importance for you to formulate a clear and precise answer, because your answer will determine whether or not you will be a stone built upon the foundation of eternity.

Do you believe that Christ is the Son of the living God, who was sent to the world to

- Bruise Satan's head?
- Save you from sin?
- Conquer death?
- Bring salvation?

This spiritual building is being erected around you and you are not aware of it.

You don't experience it. You don't participate in it.

No building can be erected without a foundation. And with the answer to the question as to the identity of God for you, Christ lays the eternal foundation. If you have the answer ready, like Peter, then you know that God says to you what Christ said to Peter:

"You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell will not overcome it." (Matthew 16:18)

But if you are not part of the church of the Lord, the powers of hell will overwhelm you.

It will be of no avail that your name is written on the church register: YOU must be there. YOU must confess. YOU must believe. YOU must worship.

The rock on which the eternal church is built, is also eternally firm and immovably strong. It will never change.

The winds of temptation may blow and the storms may come. The rock of my confession . . . is a God-given fortress whereto I can escape in life for eternity. **Do you form a part of the Church with this confession?**

A.H. Mulder

The consequences of being Church

Some day . . . maybe not even as far off into the future as we might think . . . some day everything will pass away. Then God's voice will be heard:

"It is done." Read Revelation 21. Then it will be the second coming ... the final judgment . . . the total and eternal destruction of this world.

Only the church will not be destroyed, says Christ in Matthew 16. And who is this "church"? It consists of those who believe in Christ . . . the church members . . . the reborn, converted Christians. They alone will live eternally!

Do you realise the advantage of being church? It gives you the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. And just think: When God pronounces these authoritative words, where are you? Do you form a part of His church? If so . . . you will live eternally. If not, then . . .

Yes, remember . . . in the course of world history we hear God pronouncing *authoritative words* only three times:

- The first he said after the creation: *IT IS GOOD!* The creation, man, everything was created good . . . perfect . . . wonderful. But afterwards sin blemished and destroyed God's golden creation.
- As a result of this, God had to pronounce a second authoritative word, when Jesus Christ called from the crucifix on Golgotha: *IT IS FINISHED.* God recreated His fallen creation in Christ ... it is good, perfect. But godless humanity rejected Christ . . . despised His atonement . . . mocked His church.
- Therefore He will have to pronounce a third authoritative word. Revelation 21 reveals what it will be: *IT IS DONE.*

Then it will be done finally and eternally. God's time of mercy will be over. There will be no more sin or destruction ever afterwards. You and I are living between the second and third authoritative words. This is the time for the fruits of faith in Christ — the time during which the church is called upon more than ever to testify.

May you and I and everybody who lives through the Holy Spirit be *adorned as adornments* in God's church. The result will be inexpressibly wonderful:

Eternal life!

N.W. Ligthelm

The Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit

(2 Peter 1:21)

"Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Have you thought about the question: Where does the Bible come from? In any case, the Bible didn't suddenly fall from heaven!

Written by people

The Bible was written by people. Ordinary people who took their pens and wrote on paper that which we know today to be the Word of God.

But the most important fact to remember about these writers is this: They didn't decide to write of their own accord. And they did not write down their own words and thoughts.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit

In Acts 27:15 we read:

"And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive." —

It was the ship in which Paul was on his way to Rome and which was driven on the rocks.

Just as the wind drove the ship before it, so the Holy Spirit filled people and drove them to write down the Word of God.

The prophets and the apostles and the other authors of the Bible did not write down their own thoughts. No, the Holy Spirit showed the way.

About the false prophets we read in Jeremiah 23:16:

"They speak visions from their *own* minds, and not from the mouth of the Lord."

God speaks through people

God uses these people to tell us what He wants. God speaks through them.

2 Corinthians 5:20:

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God."

That is why the prophets in the Old Testament at all times say:

"So sayeth the Lord God."

Jeremiah expresses it well in Jeremiah 1:9:

"Then the Lord reached out his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said to me: Now, I have put my words in your mouth."

Authors no puppets

The Lord didn't use these authors like puppets.

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, while they were filled by the Spirit, they were fully in control of what they were doing.

A beautiful example of the activity of the authors themselves, is Lucas. This doctor, this fine scientist, did systematic research before he started to write.

Luke 1:3:

"It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus."

Research! Sweat! In this way you are used by the Holy Spirit — even today.

The Holy Spirit interprets the Scriptures

We cannot interpret the Word of God, which was given to us by the Holy Spirit.

The real Author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit. And who else but the Spirit can be the real Interpreter of the Bible?

Even today He opens your heart and ears so that you can hear the voice of God loud and clearly. He explains the Scriptures to you.

Luke 24:

"Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures."

Today you hear His voice through Amos.

Tomorrow He will speak to you through Paul.

But it is still God who speaks to you.

Therefore: When you hear His voice, listen to Him — and do what He tells you to.

Luke 16:31:

"If they don't listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

A.H. Grove

Like a thief in the night

Especially young people often say it . . . maybe you have heard it or you have said it to yourself:

"Some day when I'm older ... I will put things right between God and me."

And in the meantime such a person does exactly as he pleases. God's will and the Bible are of less importance. After all, one is young only once . . . enjoy yourself . . .live life in full — and when you are older "then I will put things right between God and me."

Do you realise, dear reader, that this is folly? For . . .

- do you control your own life and death?
- are you able to make the sun rise?
- or to make the rain fall?
- or to control sickness and health?

No!

God controls life and death . . . you have no say in your birth or death. Therefore ... put things right between God and yourself and His church now because tomorrow it might be too late! For "of that day and hour, no one knows ..." (Matthew 24:36) "Therefore, you must also be ready." (Matthew 24:44)

And now Christ says in Matthew 24:43:

"If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch ..."

Of course, you say.

"Therefore you must also be ready." (Matthew 24:44) If therefore you haven't yet put things right . . .

- will there be another day to do it?
- will there be a tomorrow?

Nobody knows. Neither you nor I. Therefore we must always be ready.

How?

Study the Word of God . . .

Read the Bible . . .go and listen when it is preached . . .

Then you will be ready. Jesus Christ will see to it through His Holy Spirit.

How?

If you pray to God . . .confess your sin . . .beg His forgiveness . . .ask for mercy and the will to live a better life . . .then you will be ready.

Jesus Christ will see to it through His Holy Spirit.

Therefore you must always be ready.

God will be merciful towards you.

N.W. Ligthelm

Jesus must go to heaven

What would you do, dear reader, if Jesus was still on earth?

- would you attend church twice every Sunday?
- would you turn off the TV if He came to visit you?
- would you give a considerable subscription to the church?
- would you feel comforted if He came in person to comfort you in your illness or while you were dying?

Our answer would naturally be:

Of course ... it would be wonderful if Jesus could preach in person . . . could come to visit me . . . could comfort me while I am in hospital!

But . . . unfortunately it cannot be . . . Jesus has gone to heaven. In John 14 He says:

"I (must) go ... "

Because he had to go, Jesus uses men — sinful men — to preach His gospel.

Yes . . . Jesus had to go to heaven . . .

- there was no other way.
- on earth He was despised and rejected by men. (Isaiah 53)
- on earth He was a fugitive who had no place to lay down His head. (Matthew 8)
- He was cast out like a stranger. (Isaiah 53)
- He was tortured; He wept; He grieved; His blood flowed!

Yes, He fulfilled His task — it was done ... He had to go.

Someone else will have to continue His work:

Sinful people . . . you and I ... but thank God: He sent us His Holy Spirit to help us. Therefore we can do it with zeal and enthusiasm;

- we can tell of His gospel of redemption
- we can be part of His church
- we can visit people in need
- we can bear the fruits of conversion . . .

Solely because *we* have the Holy Spirit!

It is therefore by God's grace that Christ went to heaven . . . because . . . He had to go to fulfil His next task:

To prepare a place for you and for me in His Father's house! (John 14:2)

Therefore . . .

- Jesus is in heaven — where I also *want to* be.
- Jesus is in heaven — where I *have to* go.
- Jesus is in heaven — where I *will* be.

Believe this, friend.

N.W. Lighthelm

As He has gone to heaven, so He shall come again.

(Acts 1:11)

Are you afraid of the second coming of Christ?

Judgement-day!

Doomsday!

Eternal life or eternal death.

You and I

It is very often said that the last days are at hand. There are many indications to prove this. Preachers of doom take advantage of the intense anxiety to preach their self-invented way to salvation.

They make us fearful and they say that they alone have the answer.

But after all, it is Jesus Christ who will come again. Let us therefore listen to what He tells us about Himself:

"And whoever lives and believes in Me will never die." (John 11:26)

Do you believe this?

The main point is therefore

THE LORD JESUS

and

OUR BELIEF IN HIM

These are such comforting words in anxious times.

Let's read some more:

"My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give them eternal life; and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27, 28)

Dear Reader, do you also believe this?

If you truly believe this, then I invite you to come with me and see what

happened on the Mount of Olives where the Ascension took place:

"And He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them, and was taken up into heaven." (Luke 24: 50, 51)

And then the two men in white clothes said to the disciples who were still looking up at heaven:

"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."
(Acts 1:11)

He was taken up while He was blessing them. Those hands that He extended over them while He was taken up, still bore the marks of the nails of the cross.

He paid for our sins. We must believe it. We must know it. And He shall come back visibly:

Blessing us.

He won't scold us because our faith is not perfect or because we are not perfect.

He'll return, blessing those who believe in His going away.

The Word of God tells us this.

We believe in God rather than that we believe in those who tell fearful tales.

Confess your sins, but also **CONFESS YOUR BELIEF IN CHRIST.**

The marks on His hands tell us that the judgement we should have had, was on Him on Golgotha. There He was deserted by God so that God will nevermore desert us.

His Advent will be a blessing to those who believe in Him!

There is no reason to fear!

A.H. Mulder