

The Church Will Endure!

Isaiah 65:1-9

Introduction

The church is under attack today; that is no secret. Then again, the church has always been under attack, from its very beginning almost 2200 years ago. First, it was Judaism, the religion of Israel that tried to snuff out the followers of the Way. Then it was Rome, with all the power of its mighty military, that persecuted the Christians for not bowing down to Caesar. Even during the Middle Ages, which some historians refer to as the Golden Age of the church, she was under attack by heresies from within and Islam from without, as the Turks took over the Mideast, North Africa, and parts of Europe. Through the years, Satan has orchestrated attacks using heresies within the church, and different ideologies, such as Communism, which have led to the attack today, coming from the government and the private sector, spurred on by the religion of "Wokeism." Some may call this an ideology, but, with the fanaticism and zeal it has been embraced and the way it permeates all of life: education, big business, the media, government, military, and even the church in some cases, it qualifies as a religion. This may be the greatest attack the church has faced in its history, yet I can say unequivocally, "The church will endure!" How can I make such a bold claim?

Jacob's Offspring

Isaiah 65:9 says: *"I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, and from Judah possessors of my mountains; my chosen shall possess it, and my servants shall dwell there."* Luther says of this verse in **LW vol.17**, *This is a promise that the church will endure. Where the Word of God is, there is a proper knowledge of ourselves and of God, there will be a threat to the world and Satan, and so the church will endure.* By faith, we are the offspring of Jacob and Judah through Christ. The promise of occupying God's mountains is ours today.

Jesus Says So

In **Matthew 16**, Jesus calls Peter's confession of faith the rock upon which He will build His church, *and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18)*. Peter's confession is that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16)*. Wherever the Word of God is proclaimed, and this confession is held, there is the church. Notice in Jesus' promise, He doesn't say the church will withstand the assaults of the devil, but the gates of hell shall not prevail against the attacks of the church. While we are under attack, the church is also to be on the offensive.

Sealed by Baptism

We read in **Revelation 7** (read **Revelation 7:2-4**). The 144,000 stands for the complete church of Christ on earth through the ages, the Church Militant. The seal protects this army from total annihilation. That seal is Baptism. Later, this same group of people is referred to as a great multitude who have *come out of the great tribulation, washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14)*. The seal of Baptism protects us for all eternity. I've read the back of the Book and we win!

Endure

To endure means to suffer patiently, to last or abide. It doesn't mean the way will be easy or we're going to win every battle. But that doesn't matter. Jesus Christ has already won the war for us on the cross. In His death and resurrection, He won the victory over sin, death, and the devil. To endure means to claim that victory and cling to the hope we have in His resurrection. Then, even in death, we can rejoice with St. Paul in **1 Corinthians 15** because of the salvation, which is ours in Christ, *O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? (1 Corinthians 15:55)*.

Experiencing the Victory

Even amid the attacks and persecutions, we can participate in and experience that victory today. At the Sacrament of the Altar, when we receive the body and blood of Christ, He forgives our sins and strengthens our faith. We once again receive the gift of His sacrifice that won our victory. And we realize once again that no matter what, **THE CHURCH WILL ENDURE!**

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
