

The End of the Age



**Antichrist, Apostasy, and
God's Witness in Christ**

by David A. DePra

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We are rapidly approaching the end of this age. How will it end? This age is going to end in a great apostasy. When the name of Jesus Christ was honored, and the church was His temple, the forces of evil were restrained. But in our day, that has changed. The name of Jesus is no longer honored by nations, and the church has compromised the faith. The forces of evil are therefore reestablishing themselves in this world, and in the church.

God will never fail to have His witness through His people. Thus, despite the great spiritual shaking that is going to take place in these last days, and despite the fact that many of the standard teachings about the events leading up to the Second Coming are going to be proven wrong, Christian people need to keep their eyes upon Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1

The Ultimate Issue

***What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
Or the son of man, that thou visit him? Thou
made him a little lower than the angels;
thou crowned him with glory and honor, and
didst set him over the works of thy hands:
Thou hast put all things in subjection under
his feet. (Heb. 2:6-8)***

***And God said, Let us make man in our image,
after our likeness: and let them have
dominion... (Gen. 1:26)***

God always has a purpose – a deliberate purpose for everything He does and for everything He allows. The purpose for which God created human beings was for us to have fellowship with Him – to experience Him. God wants humanity to be recipients of all that God has, and everything that God is.

But there was a related purpose for which God created humanity. From out of the fellowship for which God created humanity, God desires that human beings manifest God and be expressions of Him. By extension, that would mean that God would have dominion over His creation through humanity. Of course, God does not need human beings. But He has created us to be vehicles through which His kingdom would be expressed and executed.

Jesus Christ is Lord

The ultimate purpose of Redemption is the restoration of all things back to Himself through Jesus Christ as Lord of all. But again – this is directly related to God’s purpose for humanity. God does not intend to bring redemption in the outward -- and then to impose it upon humanity. Rather, He intends to bring redemption WITHIN – and then manifest it through humanity into the outward. This inward redemption is nothing more than, “Christ in us.” Jesus Christ IN His people is the embodiment of God’s redemption. As Christ becomes Lord within His people, He will then reign and rule THROUGH His people.

We see from the above passages that right from the beginning God created humanity for DOMINION. But once Adam sinned all the dominion that God had freely given him was forfeited. But God sent His Son to be the Redeemer – THE MAN -- who would both recover, and then have that dominion. And then all who are IN CHRIST as new creations will sit with Him in His throne – and become expressions and extensions of Christ; they will reign and rule with Christ.

God’s Eternal Purpose

God’s purpose for humanity has been either minimized or lost in our Christian teaching. So often, we simply think in terms of going to heaven or hell. Or perhaps we think in terms of reigning and ruling with Christ in the millennium.

But the purpose of God for humanity is so vast and so incredible that it is beyond our ability to grasp. Paul knew this and said so:

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God....because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Rom. 8:18-21)

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (I Cor. 2:9)

This incredible purpose of God is wrapped up in the Person of Jesus Christ. That is why Paul declares, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27) It is the presence of Christ in a person that is that person's entire hope. It is through Christ alone that we will experience HIS glory – and fully realize God's eternal purpose.

Clearly, God's eternal purpose in this present age is centered upon humanity – but more specifically – it is centered upon His Son, Jesus Christ, IN His people. He is the Son of God – but the saints are sons and daughters of God IN HIM. It is through the Son that the Father will bring His ultimate purpose to full realization in the eternal ages.

The Enemy

Long before the creation of Adam, Satan sought to be equal to God. Satan sought dominion and rebelled against God. Thus, because it is the desire of Jesus Christ to rule His creation as Lord through humanity, it means that humanity is the target of the enemy. God's creation of humanity, and His purpose for humanity through Christ, is in direct opposition to Satan's desire.

Human beings are redeemed FOR this purpose. It is in humanity that God intends to glorify Himself, express Himself, and to have dominion over all. And that is exactly why Satan hates humanity. It is why Satan wants to destroy, not only God's purpose for humanity, but Satan wants to destroy humanity as a race.

Once you realize what that God's purpose for humanity is the ultimate issue of this universe, this begins to shed light on the history of this world. It explains why false religion has literally dominated all people and nations throughout history. Behind all of this are spiritual forces we cannot comprehend. There is incalculable evil on the one side that will stop at nothing to destroy humanity; to destroy God's purpose. But there is the eternal victory of Jesus Christ on the other side that has, and is, the means of the restoration of all of God's purpose.

The Battle is Won

The battle is already WON. Jesus Christ IS Lord of all. But once that battle was won through the

Redemption, the battle shifted onto another level: The battle of faith. The issue for humanity is not how we can defeat the enemy. Rather, it is whether we will turn to Christ and enter into His victory. Jesus Christ has already done everything that needed to be done to make Redemption possible. But Satan is going to do all he can do to usurp it – to blind people to it – to deceive people into a false purpose.

God is going to permit Satan freedom to take his best shot at destroying God's own purpose in Christ. That is the only way in which the finished victory of Jesus Christ can be fully manifested and experienced. Victory is never real until it has met and defeated the best efforts of the enemy.

God is also going to allow Satan freedom to try to destroy God's purpose so that human beings might have a choice. God is not out to create robots. He wants human beings who voluntarily, and through their own choice, choose God. Just as God planted TWO trees in the Garden of Eden, so the principle of human choice will always be in place. Jesus Christ will be Lord – and those in and through whom He lives will fellowship with Him because of grace and love – fully by free choice.

The Build up to the End

There is a tremendous spiritual battle going on in the spiritual realm. It is a battle that is evidenced in this natural realm. The battleground is for humanity. The choice by humanity is either Jesus Christ, or ANYTHING ELSE other than Him.

As we progress towards the end of the age, evil is going to be brought out into the open more and more. Likewise, it will be made clear as to the choice to turn to Christ. It is going to become more impossible for people – including professing believers – to sit on the fence. There will be an unmistakable distinction between good and evil, truth and lies, right and wrong. Christian people will need to decide what they believe – and whether they will stand without compromise in Christ. That choice will separate the wheat from the tares – it will be the difference between revival and apostasy.

The battle is not with flesh and blood. It is with the spiritual forces of evil – forces that have already been defeated – yet only IN CHRIST. Thus, we must CHOOSE and live in Christ.

We need to see that these forces are NOT yet eradicated from this world, which is outside of Christ. Satan remains the god of this world, and that remains his domain. Thus, it is only by faith in Christ that we can stand or remain free of the spiritual influence of Satan.

We have reached the crisis point of this evil age. There is no going back, but only forward towards the end of this age. Thankfully, Jesus Christ is going to return.

Chapter 2

Fundamental Christianity

If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? (Ps. 11:3)

Before we begin to further discuss more about where this age is headed, we need to lay a foundation. This is vital – especially since where this age is headed is unto the destruction of that foundation. We cannot stand in the Truth unless we know the Truth. We cannot live in and from out of Christ – as apostasy spreads – if we are already deceived. Thus, we must begin upon the ONLY foundation that God lays: Jesus Christ.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of this for believers. While it is possible, if we fall into deception, to turn back to Christ and be delivered, we need not travel that difficult path. The Christian life is one of knowing Him, and walking with Him, and experiencing Him – therefore it is all the more incumbent upon us to have Jesus Christ as our life NOW. We MUST have the Person of Christ as our personal foundation.

The Person of Jesus Christ is the foundation of Christianity. But we may be apt to think of this in terms of doctrine ABOUT Jesus Christ. And certainly, true Christianity is going to express the true Biblical doctrines of Christ – it would not be true Christianity otherwise. But even the doctrines of Christianity are intended to lead us unto one end: That we may know and experience the PERSON of Jesus Christ.

All through the Bible – through doctrine and teaching -- God's desire and purpose is revealed: That we might know and experience the PERSON of Jesus Christ. The inward realization of Jesus Christ by the spirit of God is the foundation upon which God builds the believer.

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know... (Eph. 1:15-18)

To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood. (Gal. 1:16)

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. (Gal. 4:19)

Galatians 4:19, above, is especially profound. The word translated, "formed," in Galatians 4:19 means, "to inwardly realize and express." Thus, Paul's great travail for the church at Galatia -- which was under a false gospel – and his desire for all of the church -- was that we would inwardly realize and express Jesus Christ. This is exactly what the doctrines of the Bible tell us to do. And as we realize Christ we will find that we will begin to experience in Him exactly what the Bible teaches we will experience.

But there are millions of professing Christians who know Biblical doctrine about Christ – but who do not know the Person of Christ. Knowing the doctrine is necessary. But that will provide us with very little power against the wiles of the enemy. The weapons of our warfare are not debates about Biblical doctrine. Rather, the weapons are out from the resurrection life of Jesus Christ – the Christ who lives in the believer. He is the life and the foundation of all things for the saint.

Christ in Us

At the core, Christianity is, “Christ in us.” A Christian is a human being in whom Christ dwells. Or, if you prefer, a Christian is one who is IN CHRIST. The presence of Jesus Christ in His people IS the foundation of Christianity. Everything else that God does is built upon the foundation; the ROCK, of Jesus Christ in the believer.

To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col. 1:27)

But HOW does Jesus Christ dwell within the believer? Paul very clearly states how in I Corinthians:

He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (I Cor. 6:17)

A Christian is one who is joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him. THAT is how Christ dwells in us. And if we are one in spirit with Christ, we are one in spirit with the One who said, "I AM the Life." That is why WE are alive – we are alive with HIS life – which is salvation.

Christ, our life. (Col. 3:4)

Furthermore, if we are one in spirit with Christ – if Christ is IN US – then we have a personal, one-on-one, individual relationship with God solely through Him as our only Mediator. We belong to no one except HIM.

Additionally, if Christ is in us, then we are in resurrection union with Him – meaning that IN HIM is victory over all. To the extent that we believe, stand, and live from out of Him as our life, we can live in victory over sin, our own natural man, heresy, the world, and the enemy.

Read Colossians 1. According to the apostle Paul, the reality of Jesus Christ in His people is the great mystery that had not been revealed to generations past, but in His time IS revealed. He says that it is the reality of Christ in His people that FULFILLS THE WORD OF GOD. (see Col. 1:23-27)

Do we realize the immensity of that statement – that the reality of Jesus Christ in His people FULFILLS the Word of God? That means, "Christ in us," is the purpose of God for humanity. It is the reality toward which God was working in the OT, and it is the reality upon which God is

building in the NT. Jesus Christ in His people IS the core and foundation of Christianity.

Jesus Christ is ALL

God has not given us THINGS in addition to Christ. Rather, God has given us Christ -- in Whom are all things. This is another fundamental Truth.

Christians everywhere are looking for the things of God in other experiences -- by doing this or that; finding the right group; or by begging God. But God has wrapped up everything He has for humanity in His Son. God has spoken all He has to say to humanity in His Son. There is nothing God has for us, or will say to us, that are outside of Jesus Christ.

Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly [places] in Christ. (Eph. 1:3)

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Rom. 8:32)

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (I Cor. 2:12)

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That,

according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord. (I Cor. 1:30-31)

Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col. 2:2-3)

Take note of this last quote from Col. 2:2-3. "In Christ is HID ALL the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Have you ever asked as to why, if all things are freely given in Christ, why you don't see them or experience them? It is because they are HID – they are IN HIM and OF HIM. In other words, to experience the treasures of wisdom and knowledge you have to experience Christ. Again – God has given us all things IN HIM.

Christ is the LIFE of the believer – and ALL is within life – except death. Thus, we need not seek what God has for us from another source. We need not seek another experience. We simply need to discover and realize Christ – which Jesus said would be the purpose for which the spirit of God is given.

These are foundational Truths. But for so many Christians, they are forgotten or hidden Truths. This fact alone paves the way for apostasy. For unless the foundation of the Living Christ is laid IN CHRISTIAN PEOPLE -- that which is built cannot stand. Christian people will more easily fall before the wiles of Satan. Unless we know Jesus Christ we will have no one upon which to stand by faith. We will more easily be deceived.

So much today is built upon other foundations – foundations of dead religion, or worse, foundations of heresy. These houses of cards are

going to collapse under the forces of evil and the father of lies. They are already OF apostasy and will be swept up in the great end time apostasy.

Paul said:

Christ in you, the hope of glory: WHOM we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily. (Col. 1:27-29)

Note those words: Christ...WHOM we preach. The gospel is a PERSON. The gospel of that Person includes all of His redemptive work, and the invitation to come to Him for salvation. It also includes ALL of the Truth of Christ. The Person of Jesus Christ -- "Christ in you, the hope of glory" -- is the foundation; is the Rock upon which God builds ALL.

Chapter 3

Joined to the Lord

The purpose of God is to birth sons and daughters in Christ who will be expressions and extensions of Jesus Christ now, and throughout the eternal ages. This will result in those sons and daughters reigning and ruling with Christ. And that is something that enrages Satan as nothing else. He has been the god of this world. He lusts after dominion. Jesus Christ has not only usurped him -- but will continue to do so through the sons and daughters of God who are in Him.

In this we see why the present battlefield is the purpose of God for the saints. Jesus has already defeated Satan. But the saints must now, by faith, come into the victory and the purpose of God through Christ – and Satan will do everything possible to blind people to that purpose, and deceive them into that which will abort that purpose.

Soul vs. Spirit

Satan has no power over the believer's resurrection union with Christ. But Satan does retain the power to deceive. All through the NT we are warned about this fact. The only protection is to personally know the Person of Jesus Christ.

How can Satan deceive a saint if he has no power over the believer's spiritual union with Christ? To discover the answer, we must recognize another primary Truth: Despite the fact that believers are united with Christ in spirit, those same believers

are NOT united with Christ physically, nor are those believers united with Christ in their natural soul.

That means that the physical body and the soul life are OUTSIDE of spiritual union with Christ – and thus, the only point of access for the enemy. It is through these dimensions of natural man that Satan makes his approach in believers.

The physical body and the soul -- or psychic makeup of believers -- is NOT saved in this age. It is only at the resurrection of the body at the return of Christ that the body and soul will be saved. Until then, we are united with Christ only in spirit. Despite this, it is the will of God that as believers we grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, and the natural man becomes governed by our life in Christ. This will never be perfect, but it is nevertheless the direction in which Christian growth will take in God's purpose.

Losing Our Lives to Find His

How does a believer grow in Christ? How does a person come to the place where their natural man comes under the government of their life in Christ? Only one way: Through the personal Cross.

It is through the personal cross that the natural man – which is not united with the Lord is spirit – is put under the death of Christ. That results in a greater release of Christ in and through the believer – unhindered by that natural man.

This is an essential if we are to follow Jesus Christ:

If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matt. 16:24-25)

In the above passage, we find one of the primary Truths of Christianity. We are told HOW to both find and continue to live in resurrection union with Christ – how to live with Christ in His life. You must continually pick up your personal cross and DIE to self-ownership.

You will note the word, "IF." We must do what Jesus says or the results He promises will not follow.

How do we die to self-ownership? We can make an initial commitment by asking God, "to do whatever it takes to bring us into the fullness of Christ." And what will it take? We must pick up our cross. If we will make this commitment to God then HE will bring the cross – the cross that He knows that we need. And then we must follow up our commitment by picking up that cross.

Note that we do not die as a thing unto itself. We die by relinquishing ourselves into the hands of Jesus Christ.

The crucifixion of our old nature will begin to break the power of the soul man and the body. In addition, if we will lose our self-life then the sins that are rooted in that self-life will begin to

lose their power. And parallel to this, we will more and more experience of Christ as our life.

Again -- notice what Jesus says: LOSE our life. If we do, we will FIND life – and since, as a believer, Christ IS our life -- we will find HIM as our life. There is simply no other way to follow Jesus. And there is no other way to come to experience Him.

This is about an actual experience of Christ. Doctrine tells us we must do this. But we must do it. We cannot experience Christ by merely holding to a doctrine. We must actually lose ourselves to Him if we expect to find Him as our life.

Life from Out of Death

It is clear that there can be no resurrection in Christ unless we are crucified with Him. That is why above all else Satan will seek to hide, distort, or deny the necessity of the personal Cross. Indeed, how often is the personal Cross preached today? The death of Jesus on the Cross is preached in many places – and ought to be – but how about the necessity of the believer picking up the personal Cross? You don't hear it much. And yet, according to Jesus Himself, there is NO OTHER WAY to follow Him.

Paul, the apostle, gave further teaching on this matter of the personal Cross:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by

***the faith of the Son of God, who loved me,
and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)***

Note that the full expression of the life of Christ in us is dependent upon being crucified with Christ – not just believing Christ died for us – but by actually be crucified with Christ. Only then will there be a full expression of the Living Christ in and through us – and only then will we have, “the life,” which is, “by the faith of the Son of God.” This is vital to see. It is not maybe. It is the Truth.

But let’s ask: What happens if the believer does NOT become crucified with Christ – what happens if our natural man is not under the Cross? Well, natural man remains strong – in fact, it is inevitable that natural man will try to become a Christian. Natural man will seek to duplicate what only the new creation in Christ can experience. Religious flesh – self-righteousness, ritual, and even psychic phenomena will prevail.

Isn’t this what has happened? Sure. And because the natural man is the access point for Satan, anyone who is an uncrucified person is going to be vulnerable to deception based on natural man.

Can we see why there is so little expression of Christ in the church today? Satan has succeeded in blinding believers to the reality of Christ WITHIN, and has blinded believers to the necessity of the personal Cross. He has gotten access through natural man and natural thinking and has deceived many. This blindness and deception has positioned millions for an even

greater end time apostasy. For where Christ is not known, error and heresy will find a home.

The Treasure in Earthen Vessels

One of the best descriptions of the work of the Cross – leading to a greater release of Christ within – is found in II Corinthians:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. [We are] troubled on every side, yet not distressed; [we are] perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. (II Cor. 4:7-11)

Christ is the treasure in our earthen vessel. But in order for, "the life of Jesus to be made manifest in our mortal flesh," there must come a death through the work of the personal Cross. We must, "bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" – that is – we must be crucified with Christ.

How does that happen? Well, as noted earlier, it begins once we ask the Lord to do whatever it takes to crucify us with Christ – that is an unconditional surrender to Him – we do this by faith. Then as God DOES do whatever it takes we

continue to lose our life to Him. And as we have seen, if we lose our life to Him – fully relinquish ourselves to Him – we will find Christ as our life.

Believers are joined to the Lord in a spiritual union. But we are joined to Christ in His death and likewise in His resurrection. Thus, if we want to experience Christ, we must experience both. This is not bad news, but great news. It is unto God's purposes for all eternity.

Chapter 4

The Living Word and The Written Word

Despite the fact that there is much disagreement among Christians as to what constitutes true doctrine, it remains a fact that there is only ONE TRUTH. What IS this ONE TRUTH? Really, the question is: WHO is this ONE TRUTH? Jesus Christ said, "I AM the Truth." (John 14:6) Indeed, the purpose for which, "the spirit of Truth," was given was to guide us into all Truth – to reveal Christ, testify to Christ, witness to Christ, and glorify Christ. God's revelation of Jesus Christ is to be TO His people, but more importantly, IN His people.

Now, once we realize that there is only ONE TRUTH – and that it is personified in the PERSON of Jesus Christ – Who IS the Truth -- then we will also realize that TRUE DOCTRINE must represent Him – must convey that same ONE TRUTH. Otherwise, it is false doctrine. The moment we begin to speak of, or write of, Christian doctrine, we are pointing towards Jesus Christ. All doctrine must be taken back to what it says about God, His Son, and His plan for humanity.

In this, we have our definitions of true and false doctrine – true doctrine is a verbal or written representation of God and His Son Jesus Christ. It rightly conveys His nature, character, and purpose. False doctrine misrepresents the same – verbally, or in written form. Therefore, whether a doctrine is true or false is determined by whether it conveys the Truth about the nature, character, and purpose of God Himself as revealed in Christ.

But where does the Bible fit in? Does not all true doctrine have to agree with scripture? Absolutely. But again – there is only ONE TRUTH. Thus, all true doctrine will agree with the Bible – but the Truth in the Bible is the same ONE TRUTH that represents the Living Christ. The Bible is the written Truth. Jesus Christ is the Living Truth. These are the ONE TRUTH – meaning the two will always agree because both rightly represent God.

This is why ALL that God speaks to His people will always agree with scripture. There is ONE Truth. God is speaking to us in His Son – by revealing Christ in us -- but it is the same Truth He has spoken in scripture.

Herein we discover why there is so much disagreement among professing believers regarding doctrine. It is because there is disagreement with regards to the nature, character, and purpose of God Himself in His Son. If a person does not know Jesus Christ they are left to their own resources to interpret scripture – they may read error INTO the Bible. And all of these disagreements are the result. But if people would come to know Christ, then as they do, the Bible would come alive. They would find the ONE TRUTH that is found in Christ.

Christian Doctrine

In the first century, Christianity did not emerge from a list of doctrines. Rather, doctrines emerged from Christianity, that is to say, doctrines about Christ emerged from experiencing Christ. As the early Christians experienced the reality of Christ within, they discovered that this

Truth was in the OT the entire time. And of course, epistles were written by the apostles about the Christ they were experiencing.

But as time progressed, a problem emerged – and that problem continues today. With the background of two-thousand years of Christian history and doctrine, it is easy to simply adopt traditional doctrine and assume that this is what makes you a Christian. It does not. The only way to be a Christian is to have CHRIST IN YOU – which is exactly what Christian doctrine states.

Christian doctrine eventually replaced the Living Christ. A Christian was redefined as one who affirmed the established statement of faith. Of course, once the Living Christ was lost as THE TRUTH and THE LIFE – once Christianity was no longer defined as, “Christ in you” -- this opened the door for great doctrinal error. It opened the door for differing doctrines in the church – and continued to do so even after the Reformation. Thus, we have dozens of denominations, each of which have doctrinal distinctions.

There are those who would accept this condition of disagreement – saying that it is fine as long as we all agree on, “the basics.” But if you examine the doctrinal disagreements among Christians -- and remember that all doctrine goes back to the Jesus Christ it represents -- there is really less agreement upon the basics than it might appear at first glance.

So, yes, it is good to agree on basics. But ultimately, this is about agreeing on Jesus Christ – but not just doctrinally – but agreeing to the

point where we could all walk in the same Truth, in fellowship with Him in His life. Again – the Truth is a Person. If, “MY truth,” differs from, “YOUR truth,” then we may NOT have a walk with the SAME Person – we may not have our faith in the SAME JESUS. Thus, there IS division – admitted or not.

Christianity today has become more or less a doctrinal construct backed by the traditional interpretations and practices of the particular narrative in question. The tragedy is that the Living Christ is no longer the Person we experience. He is simply the central figure of our theology.

The Commandments of Men

But in vain they do worship me, teaching [for] doctrines the commandments of men. (Matt. 15:9)

If a teaching is NOT the Truth, then it is NOT of God. Indeed, if it is not the Truth then it is error, which is to say, it is a LIE. True doctrine tells the Truth about God. False doctrine lies about Him. It is just that cut and dry; just that simple.

As we have noted, Jesus Christ IS the Truth. But we are also told that Satan is the FATHER OF LIES. That is cut and dry. Again – this is serious business.

The commandments of men – which Jesus condemned -- come from religious, natural man. But if they are LIES then they ultimately come

from the father of lies – even if the people who live in those lies don't realize it. Deception means to believe or live in lies – thinking it is the Truth. And deception is what Satan desires.

The commandments of men are often the result of religious human beings who develop a doctrinal construct from their own understanding, bias, and experiences. Sometimes these men and their teachings become popular – and then the teachings become established and normalized as DOCTRINE. Then these are handed down from person to person; generation to generation. They eventually become the only accepted narrative. To break rank will get you, “cancelled.”

This has been going on for two-thousand years. It was certainly the case within the Roman church. But it now continues both in the Roman church and in many Protestant churches. What is believed and taught – including many true doctrines – is dead religion about Christ that has been handed down and perpetuated. The same goes on regarding much false teaching in the body of Christ.

Is my Christianity personal – a personal experiencing of the Person of Jesus Christ – or is it borrowed; nothing but a tradition I've adopted. I need to ask this question even if my doctrine is true.

It is possible to establish error as doctrine and for it to become so popular and normalized that entire movements or denominations are established around it. Seminaries are created wherein people study these traditions and get

doctorates in the commandments of men. Churches are formed and these ministers teach the narrative. Members begin to increase and teach as Truth the commandments of religious humanity. It gets to the point where what is happening is not even questioned.

It is possible to do much the same with regards to correct Biblical doctrine. We can become experts of scripture and yet not have LIFE within us – not have Christ in us.

The only solution to this is for ALL to discover the Living Christ, and to come into a Living relationship with Him. Then there will be agreement in doctrine. This is never going to happen, of course, but it does not change the fact that this is the solution.

The Essential of Truth

As noted, it is not only possible to hold to false doctrine, but it is likewise possible to hold to true doctrine but WITHOUT life in Christ.

Jesus spoke of these possibilities to the Pharisees:

And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. (John 5:38-40)

Note the key: Have HIS WORD living in you. Today, His Word in us is CHRIST IN US, and a

growing revelation of Him; learning to live out from HIS LIFE. This does not negate sound doctrine – indeed, sound doctrine TELLS US to do this.

The Pharisees knew the OT. But despite knowing the doctrines of the Bible they did not do what it commanded – repent and believe on the ONE Whom God sent. Indeed, they continually prayed for the Messiah. But when He came they refused Him – said He had a devil.

If you and I have our faith in Christ and are coming into a revelation of Him we WILL believe and hold to Biblical Truth – because our knowledge of Him will affirm scripture. But if we do not know HIM we will, at best, hold to dead religion, and at worst, whatever doctrine we have will eventually degenerate into error. Only if we read scripture in the light of Christ can we truly grasp it. Indeed, if we do not know Christ, or are in error about Him, we will READ INTO scripture that error. It is inevitable.

But their minds were blinded: for until this day remains the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which [vail] is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. (II Cor. 3:13-16)

What was true for Israel is true for any human being: If you do not know Christ you will not be able to understand the Bible – it will be like there is a veil blocking your understanding. Obviously,

anyone can tell you what the Bible says. And the brain power of natural man can figure out some basic doctrine – enough to be accountable for it. But it is only through a knowing of Jesus Christ that we can truly grasp what the Bible MEANS by what it says. The veil is then removed.

The Continual Exhortation

Jesus Christ is the Truth. Therefore, to teach anything other than the Truth is NOT acceptable, and is NEVER of God:

I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. (I John 2:21)

For we can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth. (II Cor. 13:8)

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God [is] a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23-24)

If we turn to the epistle of Paul the Galatians, we see the seriousness of this matter of Truth. Do we realize that if Jesus Christ IS the Truth -- and we walk in error -- that we are under ANOTHER GOSPEL? We are not fully walking in Christ; living in fellowship with Him.

The Galatian church had knowledge of the true gospel of grace – Paul said that they BEGAN well. But they had been deceived into error:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any [man] preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (Gal. 1:6-9)

At what point is what we believe a FALSE gospel? It is when we believe a false Christ – one Who does not exist -- One Who authored a redemption that does not exist. A false gospel is a false Christianity – lived under a false knowledge of God – leading to a false faith and a walk that is contrary to the Truth.

The bottom line is that true doctrine is essential because it tells us what we must believe about God, His Son, and His plan and purpose. But true doctrine also tells us that we need to actually experience Jesus Christ. The two go together – they are the ONE TRUTH. True doctrine will always teach us to abide in Christ as our life, and will show that Christianity is “Christ in us, the hope of glory.” The spirit of God will affirm that doctrine by actually bringing us into an experiencing of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 5

The Cross of Jesus Christ

"Christ in you, the hope of glory," (Col. 1:27) is Christianity. "Christ, our life," (Col. 3:4) is the Truth upon which Christian reality depends. But Satan has always offered a substitute for life in Christ – he has offered life in Adam – not necessarily as openly opposed to Christ – but he has offered life in Adam **INSTEAD** of Christ. He has done this by presenting a false Christianity based upon the Adam life.

Satan is able to do this through deception – really by blinding people to the meaning of the death of Christ, and the reality of Christ within. Once we are blinded to the reality of Christ in us – and to the means whereby we can be those in whom Christ dwells – we will easily accept a religious substitute. We will remain, "in Adam" – but perhaps have a religion **ABOUT** Jesus Christ. There are millions in just such a deceived condition.

Of course, there are many others who have simply refused Christ. And there are others who have gone the way of rank heresy. But regardless, there are only two kinds of human beings on the planet: Those in Adam, and those in Christ. Adam is the old man. Christ is the new man. In Adam all die. Only in Christ are we made alive. We must be clear about the difference.

False Christianity

On the Cross the Adam race died in Christ. Note that Jesus Christ did not repair Adam – in Christ

Adam DIED. Through His resurrection, Christ ushered in a NEW creation; a NEW man in Himself. But since this is the basis of Christianity itself, any distortion of this Truth is a false Christianity.

A false Christianity that is based upon natural man – the Adam race – is a denial of the Cross. It is a denial of the NEW creation in Christ. It creates a Christianity that is based upon a completely false nature – the old creation in Adam in which there is only death. And that is exactly what has happened. The impacts have been devastating.

There is no way to overstate the importance of this Truth. It is more than a doctrine Truth. It is a living Truth that stands behind any real faith. In Christ, Adam died – our personal Adam nature. But in Christ we are new creations.

Most everyone would easily agree with this Truth. But the real question is whether we are living in Christ, or living from out of Adam. And that is where the deception of the enemy comes in.

Anti Christ

Herein we see the essence of ANTICHRIST. The term, "antichrist," from the original Greek does not simply mean, "against Christ," although it does amount to exactly that. But the term actually means, "instead of Christ," or, "along side of Christ."

Thus, a false Christianity – one without the personal Cross – that is based upon the Adam life – is the essence of ANTICHRIST.

There are numerous pictures, terms, and prophetic revelations in scripture that are all pointing to this same antichrist. “The man of sin; the son of perdition” – sitting in the temple of God, the church -- is one. “The abomination of desolation,” set up in the holy place, in the temple, is another picture of the same antichrist. The beast of Revelation 13 – with 666 -- the number of man in complete rebellion against God – is yet another. All of these speak of the SAME antichrist – which is man in Adam substituting as the new creation – the new humanity – in Christ.

The Essential of the Personal Cross

Almost every ministry will preach that Jesus Christ died for humanity on the Cross. They will rightly state that He died as our substitute – and that His death satisfied the penalty for sin. They will add that this is the basis for God’s forgiveness.

But so often, it is at this point that things get off the track. If this is the entire story of the Cross then what exactly is its impact upon God’s relationship with humanity? If Jesus died in our place so that God could merely forgive us – lifting from us the death penalty -- then this means that believers do not have to die – but are nevertheless forgiven for sin. That SOUNDS right, doesn’t it? But wait. If we do not have to die then we are alive – we remain alive in Adam. Does that do ANYTHING AT ALL to change the

fundamental problem with humanity – namely the sin nature? Does it make human beings a new creation? No. What it does is create forgiven human beings who are in Adam as much as before.

Of course, there are those who simply interpret what Jesus did on a purely legal basis. We are legally forgiven. We are legally new creations. But is that REALLY the entirety of the Christianity of the New Testament? No.

The NT reveals, and describes, believers who have died IN Christ because they have been crucified WITH Christ. Thus, rather than say because Christ died that we do not have to die, it is more correct to say that because Christ died for us that we can DIE IN HIM. And that being the case, we can likewise be raised IN HIM. That is how we are new creations in Him. It is the fullness of salvation in Christ. This is the NT teaching and the Truth.

Note that the Truth on this matter is not merely a LEGAL Truth. It is not merely doctrinal Truth. It is a living reality. The believer EXPERIENCES what this Truth describes.

We have seen that the believer is joined to the Lord in spirit. This is only possible because we are joined to Him in His death – baptized; planted into His death. We are then raised in Him. This is CHRIST IN US – resurrection union with the Son of God.

Any other description of the Redemption, in one way or another, leaves the believer IN ADAM.

And once the believer in Adam is accepted as Christianity, then we will have a Christianity that operates in and out from natural man. This is exactly what has been the case throughout Christianity. It is a deception of Satan.

Of course, few realize the real nature of these things where they are practiced. Certainly not. This is deception. Deception always presents the counterfeit for the real. And unless people see the real they will never know the difference.

The essential here is to see that man in Adam – the natural man – is not salvaged, fixed up, Christianized, or spiritualized, through death and resurrection in Christ. There is only ONE destiny for man in Adam. God said it: “In the day you eat thereof you shall surely DIE.” Thus, by His Cross, Jesus did not provide a way for man in Adam to escape death. No. Jesus died a death we do not have to die – but did provide a way in Himself whereby man in Adam could die, and then be raised as a NEW creation.

The Cross Ended Adam

The Truth reveals that in Christ the Adam race died. On the Cross, the Adam race ENDED. But through the resurrection, Jesus Christ ushered in a new race of human beings – for if any person is in Christ he is a NEW creature. A Christian is one who has both died and been raised in Christ. The old is passed over – all things are new in Christ.

Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away;

behold, all things are become new. And all things are out from God. (II Cor. 5:17-18)

Again: This is NOT a matter of God fixing up, repairing, or resuscitating the old man in Adam. No. Rather, it is matter of putting our old man in Adam forever under the Cross, and of birthing us anew as a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Any suggestion that it is God's will to fix up the old Adam life – whether it be in doctrine or practice – whether it be through direct teaching or subtle inference – is a denial of the Cross of Jesus Christ. And that makes it a denial of the Truth of the Redemption.

This is not simply a matter of doctrine. It is a matter of LIFE. Christ is our life. He is our ALL. Thus, once this great reality is undercut we no longer have Christianity. We are no longer in the Truth of the new creation. What we have is the old creation – the Adam race – offered as a substitute for Jesus Christ in us. And that is exactly what Satan desires.

One great denial of the Cross is the notion that through the death of Christ God has lifted the judgment of death from Adam, and in doing so, Adam has been brought back to life – and that God intends to build His purpose upon a fixed up and repaired Adam race. Again – this would never be directly taught. But it is everywhere today in Christian teaching in many subtle ways.

This is a denial of Jesus Christ. It is a denial of the redemption. It is a denial of the purpose of

God – and an attempt by Satan to deceive even believers into his own purpose.

The Truth is, Adam is dead. And if we are to be delivered from the death of Adam, we must take our place in the death of Christ. And then our Adam dies. What is then raised is not a fixed up or repaired Adam, nor an Adam that has religion. Rather, what is raised is a new race – a new creation in Christ.

The Personal Cross

Blindness to, or the refusal of, or neglect of, the personal Cross is perhaps the number one reason why the church – or any individual – gets off the track. Believers have been crucified with Christ. But according to Jesus Christ, this must now be worked out in experience:

If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matt. 16:24)

Jesus died once and for all. It is finished. But now we must not only believe, but we must enter in and experience our deliverance from the Adam nature. We must LOSE the Adam life under the work of the Cross. ONLY THEN can we come into a realization of Christ. Indeed, Jesus states directly that only IF we lose this old life can we come after Him. Sure, for only then will we be walking in HIS life; walking in the Truth.

Where do we begin? We begin by asking God, "to do whatever it takes," to bring us into the reality of His death and resurrection. Then God will bring our personal cross. We then must pick it up by unconditionally abandoning ourselves to Christ.

We have to get it settled: There is NOTHING in us that God intends to salvage from the old creation. This means death to self-occupation, even in the things of God. It means death to all self-righteousness. It means death to owning ourselves. All of this must come under the Cross – and God will bring experiences where we will have the opportunity to LOSE all of these things that we might find Him as our life.

If we do not pick up our personal Cross then our natural man – our Adam life – is going to continue to govern us. And we could go on for years thinking we are a great Christian – deceived by our own religiosity.

The Original Lie

In Genesis 3, we find recorded the first lie ever told by Satan. As is the case in many other first occasions in the Bible, there is a primary principle illustrated. This first lie that Satan ever told is, in fact, the greatest lie ever told.

There we read:

The serpent said unto the woman, "You shall not die."

This is the first lie that was ever told in the Bible. It is also the greatest lie ever. Now, why

do I say that? Well, I say that because indirectly, and in a subtle way, Satan is really saying, "God is NOT the source of life for you. God is not your life at all. YOU have life within yourself. You cannot die."

Now, notice what the real temptation is here. The real temptation is that Adam and Eve, instead of finding all life in God, could find it in themselves. In effect, the real temptation was to choose SELF before God rather than God before SELF. Satan is telling them that they don't need to eat of the tree of life -- or need to abide in God for everything as their life -- they could eat of this forbidden tree and put themselves before God. This is what is wrapped up in that lie, "You shall not surely die."

In the New Testament, this lie is repeated. It is the lie upon which ANTICHRIST is based. It is slightly reworded but it is the same lie. In Genesis, Satan was lying about what would happen in the future if Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree: He said they would NOT die. However, in the New Testament era, this lie is stated as a past event once Adam did eat of the tree: The lie is now, "Adam did NOT die -- Adam need not die."

Note again: Today the lie is not, "Adam you will NOT die. No. Today the lie is, "Adam you did not die -- you need not die." The continual lie of Satan -- the lie upon which all of his purpose and wiles are based -- is that Adam did NOT need to die in Christ.

The lie, "Adam need not die," is a denial of the Truth of the Cross. It is a denial of the very definition of Christianity – which is, "Christ in us." For if Adam did not die, then Christ in us is not our life. We remain in Adam – and it does not matter what theological terms are attached to say otherwise.

Serious Business

The refusal of the Cross is the refusal to see and confess that I need to be delivered from myself; from the Adam race. This one issue is the pivot point for the salvation of each human being. As John wrote:

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hates the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. (John 3:19)

The way into true fellowship with Christ is through the personal Cross. We must see what we are in Adam and come to a full abandonment to Christ. If we will not see what we are in Adam, we are refusing the Truth – we are choosing darkness rather than light. And there is no other option God has for us.

Can we see that all of this is God's deliverance for us from the Adam race? Jesus died that we might die in Him – to Adam – but be raised in Him in resurrection union. That is salvation.

Chapter 6

What is Man?

God does not merely have an interest in human beings. No. He created human beings for His own purposes. God's great purpose extends far beyond this age.

And hath raised [us] up together, and made [us] sit together in heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in [his] kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:6)

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. (Rom. 8:18-19)

Here we see the purpose for which God created human beings: To be sons and daughters of God in Jesus Christ. Of course, it is necessary to realize what that MEANS. But there it is -- as a fact.

This is the purpose that is wrapped up in the simple description of God's creation of Adam:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God

created man in his [own] image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. (Gen. 1:26-28)

And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Gen. 2:7)

Here we see God's original design for humanity -- a physical being with spiritual capacities that made oneness with God possible. In addition, it is stated that the purpose for which God created humans was for DOMINION over God's creation. We see the purpose of God for humanity also stated in the NT:

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visit him? Thou made him a little lower than the angels; thou crowned him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. (Heb. 2:6-8)

The great purpose of God for human beings is why human beings are the target of Satan and his evil minions. Satan wants to abort the purpose of God.

When Satan succeeded in tempting Adam and Eve to sin it seemed as if he had aborted God's purpose. But God sent His only Son to be THE MAN who was THE SEED – through Whom and in Whom God's purpose for humanity would come to pass.

The passage just quoted is a declaration of God's purpose for humanity. But it continues:

But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. (Heb. 2:8-9)

Note the wording: "we do not yet see all things put under him (man).....but we see Jesus." Jesus is the SON OF MAN – God become man. The Son of God became man so that IN HIM man could become one with God. IN CHRIST is all the purpose of God realized. He is THE SEED of the woman who would defeat Satan.

The Last Adam

Jesus was the LAST Adam in that He was the fullness of what God intended Adam to become – the fullness of what God wanted humanity to become. When that was accomplished, there was no need for, "another Adam; another man; another SEED." All of God's will for humanity was gathered up in Him – for He lived a sinless life.

But Jesus was likewise the Last Adam because He laid down his perfected, human life for us all. In

other words, when Jesus died, Adam died – and so the Adam race ENDED in His death.

Note that Jesus did more than simply offer God a legal satisfaction for sin – He did more than just bear the judgment of God for sin. He did that. But on the Cross, Jesus bore SIN itself – indeed, Jesus bore the Adam race on the Cross. And then He died. In short, the Adam race died in Christ – the Adam race ended in Christ. The entire Adam race was gathered up and placed in Christ on the Cross and brought to an end. That is why Jesus is THE Last Adam.

Thus, the death that God pronounced upon Adam because of sin was never lifted because of Christ – rather, it was fully met in Christ. Adam died in Christ. The Adam race was finished when the Christ died.

This is proven by the fact that through the resurrection of Christ we never find any suggestion of a, “fixed up Adam race.” No. We find a brand new race – a new creation in Christ. The new creation IS new because the old Adam race is finished. Indeed, unless the Adam race was finished at the Cross, there can be no new creation in Christ Jesus.

Once we understand the meaning of Jesus as The Last Adam, and what He accomplished, it becomes clear as to why The Son of God had to become a human being in order to make human beings one with God. This was a full restoration of God’s original purpose for humanity – all accomplished IN CHRIST. It is also why a person

must come to Christ by faith and be united with Him in spirit in order to be saved.

John, the apostle declared, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." (I John 3:8) The works of the Devil were destroyed because the Adam race – in which those works were vested – died in Christ. And then through His resurrection, Christ ushered in a brand new race – a brand new creation.

Victory in Christ

Resurrection in Christ has overcome death. The father of lies – the one who kills, steals, and destroys -- Satan -- cannot overcome that which has already overcome him. He cannot touch the believers union with Christ. But this resurrection victory is found ONLY in Christ – it is NOT found outside of Him. Outside of Christ, Satan continues to be the god of this world.

Satan continues his plan to destroy the purpose of God by perverting and corrupting the mind and personhood of natural man. And he desires to deceive and abort God's purpose for the redeemed with lies. He will use all that is available to him to destroy what a human being is, so that what God wants a human being to become in Christ can never take place.

Chapter 7

This Age Ends Only One Way

We have laid a brief foundation for the rest of this book. We have spoken of God's purpose through Christ, and how God has begun this purpose. We can now proceed to discuss the course this age has taken in relation to that purpose. And we can discuss the direction which the Bible reveals this age is going, and how this age will eventually end.

***Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they [also] which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.
(Rev. 1:7)***

That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. (II Thes. 2:2-3)

Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron. (I Tim. 4:1-2)

There are many today who are preaching that there is going to be a great end time revival whereby hundreds of millions are going to come

to Christ. In fact, some are preaching that it is the job of the church to get to work making this happen so that Jesus can return. But there is no such indication in scripture. The revelation of scripture is that there will be a great end time apostasy and deception.

Despite this terrible fact, God will have His witness to Christ. Parallel to this great end time apostasy there will be an end time manifestation of Jesus Christ – through His people. Indeed, it is the rejection of this manifestation of Christ that will fuel the end time apostasy. The majority of people will NOT respond to Christ. They will either be deceived, or simply be indifferent.

Since the sin of Adam, the world has been in bondage to darkness. But that bondage is not simply ignorance. Rather, it means that this world has been greatly influenced by evil spirits, deceived by evil spirits, demonized, and even possessed by these wicked beings. Indeed, the Truth of God in Jesus Christ – or the knowledge of the one true God -- was virtually unknown until the last two-thousand years. It was only when Jesus came, worked the Redemption, and the gospel was preached, that the grip that the powers of evil had on this earth began to be pushed out or restrained.

Of course, there have been ebbs and flows. There have been times of great spiritual darkness and times of world upheavals. Many human beings continued to sin and ignore God. Yet through it all, the name of Jesus Christ was made known. And that alone was enough to restrain

most evil, and keep it from being normalized on a wide scale.

However, over the last 60 years or so, things have taken a drastic turn for the worst. God and His Son, Jesus Christ, have been slowly and progressively abandoned. Even the church has compromised with the Truth. As a result, the evil that had been pushed back and restrained has once again gained the upper hand. Today the powers of darkness are invading the world and the church in a rapidly accelerating matter. And there seems to be no answer. Indeed, deception and perversion has become so normalized that many are not looking for solutions – they are at home in what is happening. To them, it is freedom and enlightenment. Evil and perversion is becoming normalized and even celebrated.

What has happened is not merely the rejection of the Truth in Christ. No. That rejection has happened before to varying degrees. There have been long periods in the history of the world and church where false religion has prevailed, tyrants have ruled, and evil has reached new lows. But what has NOW happened is something entirely new – it is something that has NEVER happened before on such a universal scale. Rather than the refusal to receive the Truth of Christ – there is now a forfeiting of the Truth once received. It is apostasy to a shocking degree of depth and scope.

It is one thing to practice evil in secret. That has always been going on in this world, and to a degree in the church. But today that is no longer the case. Today evil is out in the open – it is

being NORMALIZED and CELEBRATED more and more. Moral good, and certainly Christianity, is being vilified. It is being labeled, at best, as judgmental, but at worst, it is being called bigotry and hate speech.

No one needs to be caught up in this evil. Jesus Christ will always be present, inviting people to turn to Him – to turn away from evil, or to turn to Him for the first time. But many, if not most, are not going to turn to Him. The fact is, this age is going to end only one way: In widespread apostasy. What we see and witness now is going to get much worse.

If human beings were doing all of this by their own initiative and unbelief, it would be bad enough. And make no question, anyone who is caught up in this evil IS responsible for themselves, and will answer to God. But behind all of the human sin is unspeakable spiritual evil. There are forces of evil – once cast out – that are now moving back in. And the state of humanity, as bad as it once was in centuries past, is going to be worse. It is already well on the way.

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, then, after they have known [it], to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. (II Peter 2:20-21)

It is simply NOT possible to receive the Truth and then forfeit it – but then to return to your prior spiritual condition. No. Once you receive light you SEE. And you can never be the same again. The choices are to either continue walking in the light as He is in the light, or to deliberately close your eyes to the light you received. But if you do, the result will be an INNER darkness. The latter state will be worse than the first because you have rejected light. And that is a recipe for the judgment of God.

***And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.
(John 3:19-20)***

The basis for the judgment of God upon any person, church, or nation, is that, "light IS come." At that point, the choice is either to love light rather than darkness, or to love darkness rather than light. The important word here is RATHER. There would be no choice possible unless light had been given. But once it is given it is not possible to go back. You must choose one RATHER than the other – light rather than darkness or darkness rather than light.

This is exactly the case not only with the church, but to a great extent, the Judeo-Christian nations. Light was given. The gospel was preached. Nations were founded on the basis of that light; on the basis of the Bible. But it is now being forfeited.

How does God judge people, churches, or nations for rejecting the Truth? For rejecting LIGHT? He gives them exactly what they have chosen: Darkness. And everything that goes with it. But when God gives up a person, church, or nation to darkness, they will be left susceptible to their own lusts of the flesh. Worse, they will be left vulnerable to the power of that darkness. As terrifying as this might sound, it is what is happening right now on a scale never before seen.

Evil is being brought out into the open as never before. But along side of that, God will continue to manifest Christ. As we progress, it is going to be impossible to sit on the fence. The choice will be clear – good from evil, right from wrong, light from darkness, revival from apostasy. Most are not going to turn to Christ. This age will end with the Second Coming of Christ. But as Jesus asked: “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8)

Chapter 8

The Abandonment of Truth

Despite all of the false religion that has attached itself to the name of Jesus Christ, and despite the sometimes false witness that has emerged from professing believers, God has nevertheless had a witness unto Christ over the last two thousand years.

The witness of Christ has had a spiritual impact. For example, there has been a general trend towards freedom over the last centuries – especially since the Reformation. Nations, especially the USA, have been founded upon Biblical principles. The name of Jesus Christ, and the name of God, had been proclaimed and honored. And despite the fact that this alone does not eradicate sin, it is nevertheless something that God honors. There has been a significant impact upon the forces of evil – the forces of evil have been restrained or pushed out by the name of Jesus Christ.

In times past, especially before Christ, demon worship – including demon possession -- used to be the norm in this world. Proof of that has been discovered everywhere by archeology. Human behavior used to be barbaric. But laws and government – usually through much war and trauma – became more and more based on Christian principles. Human behavior and thinking became much more sane and moral. Of course, this did not happen everywhere. But GENERALLY -- it did happen in those nations where the gospel of Jesus Christ – where the name of Jesus Christ – was honored.

But in this day and age all of this has changed. As we approach the end of this present age, there has been a renewed and rapid infiltration of evil into every aspect of human life. That evil is waxing worse and worse – descending to depths never seen before. Millions of people are being swept up in it. What used to be morally unthinkable is more and more becoming normalized.

There are many people, including many in the church, who hope that this will pass and that there will be a return to some semblance of the way things used to be. Many believers are praying for God to intervene – and to restore morality and reverence for Truth. But the reality is, there is no possibility that this is going to happen – not on any wide scale. This world, and in fact, the church, has crossed a line -- and there is no way back.

This is not to say that individuals cannot repent. They absolutely can repent. But most won't. In general, churches, governments, and society as a whole, will never be the same.

A Turning from God

What has happened? Well, that which served as a restraint against the forces of evil – the honoring of Jesus Christ; the presence of Christ in His people – this has more and more been FORFEITED. And as it has been forfeited, the forces of evil have infiltrated.

We have already quoted one scripture from the NT that describes the consequences of giving away Truth once received. We repeat it here:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known [it], to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. (II Peter 2:20-21)

You will note that the damage that is done by such sin and unbelief is only secondarily OURWARD. The real damage is INWARD. It is damage to person's mind, and to their spiritual life. There is a spiritual corruption and a moral perversion that takes place. This is because human beings are MORAL creatures that not only must make moral choices, but we are creatures upon whose very being those moral choices register. In addition, every one of those choices have spiritual implications. These choices are ultimately a choice for Satan, or a choice for Jesus Christ.

The forfeiting of light received is a choice FOR darkness. But darkness always carries horrible consequences. We could turn to any number of passages in scripture to prove this, but one that applies – at least in principle – is found in Matthew 12:

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he finds [it] empty, swept, and garnished. Then goes he, and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last [state] of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. (Matt. 12:43-44)

In the above passage from Matthew, Jesus states a spiritual principle. He was most definitely applying that principle to the nation Israel – that is seen with His words, “so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.” But the spiritual principle Jesus states applies to ANY nation, ANY church, and ANY individual. It is the Truth about the nature of things. If we read the passage this is clear – Jesus speaks of an individual MAN but applies the principle to the nation.

Jesus talks about a person who had been possessed by a demon. That person, however, had been delivered. We can be sure that this person had at least turned to God and wanted deliverance, since he would have not gotten free otherwise. The fact that Jesus says that, “the house” – which is this person – initially became, “empty, swept, and garnished,” one he was delivered, suggests a person who had turned to God and gotten his life in order. They had seen some Truth and had responded to it.

Jesus' description of what had happened to this person applies to the nation of Israel. Israel had been in captivity in Egypt – in bondage, yes, to Pharaoh, but actually in bondage to, "the gods of Egypt." Again and again in the account of their deliverance, "the gods of Egypt," are said to be the real power that held them captive. Yet Israel was delivered, and given the Promised Land. They were given the Old Testament scriptures. They were given a revelation of the one true God. They were given the Messiah Himself. In one sense of the word, in comparison to what they were in Egypt, the nation had become spiritually, "empty, swept, and garnished."

What Jesus goes on to say in this passage is of vital importance. We are apt to think that a delivered life, which is now, "empty, swept, and garnished," is a wonderful thing – and initially it certainly would seem so, at least in comparison to the condition from which that person or nation had been delivered. But it is actually a very precarious condition. Why? Because an, "empty, swept, and garnished," life – as Jesus means it in this passage – is a life that is NOT yet filled with God and His Son.

It is one thing to be delivered FROM evil. But it is entirely another thing to be delivered UNTO Jesus Christ. According to Jesus, if we are merely delivered from evil, but do not go on to fill our lives with HIMSELF – the enemy will come back and seek to fill the void.

Jesus is NOT describing a VICTIM. No. There is great accountability here. This person, and it is certainly the case with Israel, knew enough to at

least TURN TO GOD. The deliverance itself would provide at least that much light, if not more. Read the gospels, noting the rebukes spoken by Jesus to the Scribes, Pharisees, and the nation as a whole. It is clear that He knows they are accountable – they have enough to turn to God; enough to recognize HIM as the Messiah. But they did not.

So, we see that being delivered from evil, darkness, ignorance, sin – you name it – is a wonderful mercy of God – but it is all UNTO a greater purpose. Our house -- now empty, swept, and garnished -- must be filled with the Person of Jesus Christ. We must not neglect the Truth. We must not, having been delivered, live on our own terms. If we do, we are going to be deceived. The last state will become worse than the former.

In this we see a great and terrible Truth: When a person or nation hears the Truth and rejects or resists it, there are going to be consequences. But what Jesus is describing is something else; something worse. He is describing a person or nation who did not initially reject the Truth – but in fact embraced it. Yet now they are forfeiting it. They are pushing away, suppressing, evicting, neglecting, diminishing, and despising the Truth once received. The result is not that they return to the condition from which they were initially delivered. Rather, they descend into a much WORSE depravity and darkness. They become all the more vulnerable to the spiritual forces of evil.

In this we see accountability to God. The human race is accountable only for the light which God gives. But make no mistake, for the light which

God gives, WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE. Light rejected results in darkness, but light embraced, and then later rejected, results in a greater inward condition of darkness, resulting in sin and depravity that is much worse.

We need to be clear about this: Darkness is the result of refusing light. It is the nature of things. And if a person does that then God will judge them worthy of their choice and give them over to that darkness and everything that goes with it.

God will send a strong delusion upon those who choose to love darkness rather than light. Why? Because God must allow them to fully experience the choice they have made. At that point, it is the only option – indeed the only possibility that they might even yet turn back to Christ.

This illustration given by Jesus is a precise description of this world today, this nation, and the church. It is a description of apostasy – at least the beginnings of the great end time apostasy.

The issue here is not politics, foreign policy, economies, or world peace. Rather, the issue is man's relationship and accountability to God. That is now being refused, neglected, and forfeited at an alarmingly rate. This is a direction that is NOT going to be reversed in this age. We have crossed a moral and spiritual line into a new dimension of evil not seen since the days of Noah -- and humanity, as a whole, not going to turn back.

This world and the church once had the Truth – at least enough honor God and to turn to Christ. But it has been forfeited. That has opened the door for the evil that had once been driven out. It is coming back and will be much worse than we can imagine. However, God will seek to salvage willing individuals from out of this apostasy to Christ. Many, perhaps most, will reject Him – but He is always faithful to raise up a standard. He will maintain a clear witness to His Son and invite all to come to Him.

The End Game

We are apt to think that the goal of Satan in all of this is to keep human beings out of heaven and to get them into hell. But that isn't the real end game. The real end game is to destroy what a human being IS – for to destroy what a human being IS would destroy the purpose in human beings that God has in Jesus Christ.

God has destined humanity to have dominion in and through Christ. Satan got Adam to forfeit that dominion and today he remains, "the god of this world." He is not going to relinquish this position quietly. Thus, having failed to destroy, "the seed of the woman," Satan now desires to destroy all who would come into the fullness of God's purpose through Him.

Chapter 9

The Invasion of Satan

To be able to fully realize what is happening -- and where we are headed in this age -- it is necessary to discuss from where we have come. This requires that we rehearse some more of the spiritual history of the world and the church.

Note that term: Spiritual history. It is one thing to focus upon natural history. By necessity, that will be brought into this discussion. But there is an entire realm – an entire history – that has been taking place in the spiritual realm. It is in that realm that the real battle takes place. It is in that realm that the ultimate issues of the universe are settled.

In the first verses of the book of Genesis, we find suggestions and indications of the fact that there is infinitely more to this creation than we can presently see.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Gen. 1:1-2)

There have been much discussion and argument over whether there is a long period of time between verses 1 and 2. We read in verse 1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void. And darkness was upon....." So, verse 1 directly states that in the beginning God created the

heavens and the earth -- but then in verse 2 we find that the earth – not the heavens – was enveloped in darkness. The words, “without form and void,” mean, “in chaos and confusion.” Surely this is not the earth God created. God is not the author of confusion. God is not darkness – God is light. Thus, God DID create the heavens and the earth IN THE BEGINNING. But something happened that plunged the earth into darkness; into chaos and confusion. This means that verse 2 – where God says, “There there be light,” is a RECREATION. The original was destroyed and now God comes upon the scene to restore the earth according to His purpose.

Now, if that is true – and it is really the ONLY explanation that fits all of the rest of scripture – then it would explain much. It would mean that the earth could be billions of years old – while humanity is merely six-thousand years old. And it would also explain why, when we look outward into the rest of the universe, we see the same destruction everywhere. Something happened that brought great destruction to the physical creation – we can see it with the moon and other planets in our solar system. God came and apprehended only the earth and restored it. That is the creation account of Genesis.

So, right away we find that there are issues – and an incredible history – that go far beyond our limited perspective. God has restored this earth, and put humanity here, for great eternal purposes – purposes that go beyond people going either to heaven or hell. He has created humanity to become the sons and daughters of God – to be expressions and extension of Himself throughout

all eternity. But from the start, the enemy has sought to abort this purpose.

This great destruction that happened to the creation between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 is suggested by the fact that there was NO LIGHT in this creation starting at Genesis 1:2. God would have originally built light into all that He created – because God IS light. But something happened between those verses to bring only darkness. Thus, in Genesis 1:3, God had to say, “Let there be light.”

So what happened to create such darkness and chaos? Almost certainly -- the rebellion of Satan. We cannot fathom the magnitude of such an upheaval. We cannot grasp the relationship between the spiritual realm and the physical realm which would cause such calamity. But we must remember that we are talking about, “something other,” than what we presently know. God originally created a heavens and earth with a relationship between them that we don’t know anything about – this was destroyed by the rebellion of Satan.

Yet God began His plan of restoration in Genesis 1:2. God’s plan of full restoration will be realized only when there is a, “new heavens and a new earth” – made possible only in Christ. But in Genesis 1:2 we have the beginning of what we presently know as the heavens and the earth.

Throughout history we see one attempt after another of Satan to destroy what human beings ARE – to destroy the seed of the woman – to destroy the purpose of God for humanity. But

each time God brings redemption and restoration. The final victory will be a new kind of humanity – new creatures in Christ – over which death has NO power.

The Garden of Eden

God created, or restored, the heavens and the earth. But Satan never relented in his attempt to kill, steal, and destroy God's purpose. The first incursion of Satan after the creation of Adam was in the Garden of Eden. What was the goal of Satan in that temptation? Clearly, to destroy the purpose of God for humanity – by destroying humanity. Satan could not destroy God. Thus, he has always tried to destroy humanity.

Satan tempted Adam and Eve to declare independence from God – by deciding for themselves good and evil. That is what, "knowing good and evil," means in the Hebrew text. Thus, Adam could no longer have fellowship with God. He could no longer be united with God for his life. Rather, he had decided to find life in himself. The magnitude of Adam's sin is beyond comprehension. We only get a sense of it once we see the greatest of Jesus Christ.

Because of Adam's sin, the entire human race – which can rightly be called, "The Adam race" -- became corrupt and spiritually dead. By choosing SELF over God, Adam became conformed, and thus vulnerable, to the forces of evil that were at enmity with God. What Satan was spiritually, Adam had become as a human being. In addition, Adam now belonged to the realm of darkness.

We know this for a fact because of what Paul wrote to the Colossians:

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated [us] into the kingdom of his dear Son: (Col. 1:12-13)

This verse tells us from where we have been delivered – but the realm of darkness is not merely a place we are IN. It is a spiritual condition that is IN US. It is the ONLY option outside of Christ.

More about our condition in Adam later. But in the years following the sin of Adam, human beings descended into unimaginable evil. That set the stage for another great evil. Angels left their place in the heavenlies – and came down and produced offspring with human women.

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they [were] fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also [is] flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare [children] to them, the same [became] mighty men which [were] of old, men of

renown. And GOD saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. (Gen. 6:1-7)

There have been many attempts to interpret what is recorded here in other terms. But none of them work, or harmonize with the rest of the Biblical revelation. The fact is, angels came down and produced hybrid offspring. These offspring were the Nephilim, or giants. They were evil beings. How was that possible? We cannot say. But it happened.

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. (Jude 1:6)

The human race, in and of itself, had become wicked. But now it was polluted further by an evil race of hybrid creatures.

Now, what was the goal of these evil beings? Did these evil beings simply want offspring? That doesn't seem likely. What they wanted to do was corrupt the human gene pool.

Do we realize that once these evil beings produced the Nephilim – who were NOT human beings – that the Nephilim likely continued to procreate? And there is no reason to believe that those evil angels did not continue to do so as well. Thus, we are talking about an entire race of evil, hybrid creatures. The plan was to so pollute the human race that the promised Messiah – the seed of the woman – could not be born into the human race to save humanity.

The real goal of these evil beings was the SAME as the goal of Satan in the garden – to destroy humanity as a race; to destroy what a human being IS. And in doing so, to destroy the purpose of God. Again -- this was an attempt, now that Adam had sinned, to destroy, "the seed of the woman," through whom redemption from that sin was promised.

The human race was already deep in darkness – but this was much different. This was the corruption of the race itself. And since human beings lived many hundreds of years during that age, the evil had ample time to multiple and be practiced to an unimaginable depth. There could have been thousands or more of these evil beings populating this planet. Either way, their influence upon fallen man would have been devastating. It was so bad that God had to wipe out humanity and start all over with Noah and his family.

The Flood

The flood that God brought was more than just a rain storm. The firmament that was above the earth was brought down. All of the water

underground came forth. Earthquakes and volcano eruptions broke forth everywhere. In effect, the earth was turned inside out and upside down. Old mountains collapsed and new ones were formed.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. (Gen. 7:11-12)

So much of that ancient world was buried – much of it deeper than it will ever be possible to reach by digging. But even still, it is most probable that the incredible structures that are unearthed or discovered today – structures we could not build today with our technology – dates to back before the flood. That was a much different world; based on other technology. And it was a completely EVIL world.

After the flood, the human race – still governed by the realm of darkness – continued to degenerate both morally and spiritually. This was slowed by the destruction of the Nephilim, and also by the reduced lifespan of humanity. God also scattered humanity from Babel. This was His mercy. But there is no evidence given in the Bible that there was any significant knowledge of the true God. Satan continued to govern this world.

In every single case where we have unearthed or discovered ancient civilizations – both those

before and after the flood – there is one consistent theme: Devil worship. The occult. False gods. And in many cases, human sacrifices. There is no question about it – after Adam sinned, this world all those who lived upon it came directly under the influence of Satan and the realm of darkness. God put an end to the world that existed before the flood. But even though after the flood, Satan continued to be the god of this world, and the spiritual and moral environment that prevailed before the flood began to develop all over again after the flood.

There are also Biblical accounts that verify the fact that demonization, the occult, and devil worship were everywhere. For example, when Moses appeared before Pharaoh and God did miracles, some of the magicians of Pharaoh did the same – this was the occult and it was treated like it was business as usual. There are likewise magicians mentioned in the story of Joseph and Daniel. But even more, every tribe and nation that Israel encountered had demon worship. Indeed, one of the great sins of Israel was when they likewise worshipped these false gods, to the extent that they even sacrificed their children.

During the ministry of Jesus, it is obvious that demon possession was common. We find Jesus often casting out demons, as did the apostles after Him. And the heathens of that time were clearly into the occult and demon worship.

***When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with [his] word.
(Matt. 8:16)***

***Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away
unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.
(I Cor. 12:2)***

***But [I say], that the things which the
Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils,
and not to God: and I would not that ye
should have fellowship with devils. (I Cor.
10:20)***

In this day and age it is easy to assume that these people were merely superstitious, and that other than the nonsense of it, there was really little harm. But this was not the case. These were very real and active demonic powers. That is why God always addressed these false gods as the powers that stood behind those nations and its leaders.

In our discoveries of ancient civilizations we find an overwhelming emphasis upon RELIGION – false, demonic religion. There are carvings and pictures of social life; of governmental life. But all of these civilizations are dominated by false religion, demonism, and the worship of other gods. Thus, humanity never lacked religion – we are cursed with it. We are cursed with false religion because where God is not present Satan will be present. All the time -- and every time. Man was made FOR God. Empty man OF God and Satan will move into humanity and make himself at home.

In the ancient civilizations of Egypt, South America, Mexico, India, China, Africa, and even in the British Isles and America – before the invasion of the gospel – we find devil worship.

Statues, structures, carvings, and writings – all of which are obsessed with the occult, the afterlife, and false gods – govern all. The world was filled and governed by these terrible realities – on a level we can hardly imagine. And in many parts of the world that continues today.

Despite all of this evil, God preserved, “the seed of woman.” He did so through the lineage of Seth and then through Noah. He then called Abraham. In Abraham, we find, “the seed of woman,” preserved and matured as to purpose – now referred to as, “the seed of Abraham.” God was going to have HIS witness and HIS purpose in humanity through this, “seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ.

Chapter 10

This Scope of Evil

Satan is the god of this world. (II Cor. 4:4) That means that outside of the life and light of Jesus Christ, Satan governs. Of course, there are cases of demon possession, insanity, and horrible human evil in this world -- these find their root in the kingdom of Satan. But often, Satan is content to simply keep people blind to Jesus Christ. Humanity is spiritually dead and Satan is happy to keep it that way.

We live in a realm that, to us, is reality. We have access to this realm with our five senses. But do we realize that there are dimensions of this physical realm that are outside of our reach? We get a hint of this in the study of animals. Many can hear sounds we don't know are there, and see dimensions of light to which we are blind. But how about the physical universe that is outside of this planet? It is physically endless – or at least it would seem so. There is no way to even begin to measure it.

But wait. If this is the case with the physical realm, then how about the spiritual realm? The spiritual realm is endless – but it is eternally endless. And within that spiritual realm there are spirit beings. Aside from God and His Son, Jesus Christ, there are angels, and there are the forces of evil: Satan and his demons.

Now, when we say that the spiritual realm is eternal we mean more than the fact that it is endless as to span. It is eternal as to nature –

the nature of the spiritual realm is OTHER THAN what we presently know.

What this ought to do is make us aware that there are forces and issues we are dealing with as those in Christ that are far beyond us. God and His Son are far beyond our understanding as to love and goodness, but Satan and his demons are beyond our understanding as to depth of evil. Within the human experience we see good and evil. But when talking about the spiritual realm we are talking about the fullness and the extreme of each.

A Universal Evil

Adam forfeited his dominion over this world to Satan. But central to that was the fact that Adam forfeited humanity as a RACE – humanity as a RACE was now in bondage to the realm of darkness. And as noted, the evidence of this universal evil is everywhere in ancient civilizations.

We cannot imagine such a condition because we have lived during a time where the evil has been pushed back and restrained by the name of Jesus Christ. Demon possession and demonization is today more the exception than the normal in our Judeo-Christian countries. Back before Christ it was more the normal.

Take note: This world is NOT basically good – the human race is not basically good. Satan is not being who, “occasionally,” finds place to do mischief. No. The Bible paints Satan and his demons are looking for any avenue given to them

to exert their influence. The ancient world was fully immersed in evil. The human race, by nature, is evil. It was only the infiltration of Jesus Christ that has brought any light, Truth, or deliverance. But today that light and Truth is being forfeited.

What do we think is going to be the outcome of such terrible unbelief? It is already happening. There is going to be a return of the forces of evil. We already see that happening everywhere. The house that was once swept and garnished – and to a degree filled with light – has now been left empty. We have only begun to see the evil that is coming to fill the void.

The NT writers do not mince words about the condition of the human race without Christ – how much more evil will human beings be as the forces of evil press in:

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (Eph. 2:2-3)

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not. (II Cor. 4:4)

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of

Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. (Eph. 2:12-13)

Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (II Cor. 13:5)

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated [us] into the kingdom of his dear Son. (Col. 1:13)

But [I say], that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. (I Cor. 10:20)

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. (Gal. 1:4)

The whole world lies in wickedness. (I John 5:19)

When most of us look at the world around us, and look at ourselves and other people, we assume that what we are witnessing is NORMAL – although we will admit that things are getting bad. So our usual response is to pray that God would bring a restoration from out of the bad back into the normal. But this perspective is ignorant of the Truth. Nothing about this world, or about the human race, was EVER normal since

the sin of Adam. It has been utterly and completely ABNORMAL and EVIL.

Because this ABNORMAL world is all we have ever known, and because fallen humanity is all we have ever known, to us, the abnormal is normal. We all look alike and act alike and think alike, and so, to us, this is normal. But it is ALL abnormal, fallen, and governed by the realm of darkness. Only if there is light brought in from the outside, and only if there is the NORMAL brought in from the outside, will the Truth become evident – and will the evil be exposed.

If you had a tape measure that was inaccurate – let's say the inch marks were all $7/8$ of an inch apart -- and you folded that tape measure over on itself -- those inaccurate marks would perfectly match. Sure. But could you then assume that your tape measure was accurate? You probably would. But you would be wrong. The tape measure you are using is in error – it is abnormal. It is simply affirming itself. Yet, isn't that how the human race measures itself? Sure. This is how the entire human race functions – in blindness and error -- and it is the ONLY way it CAN function without Christ.

But that is really the best case scenario. Reality is much worse. The spiritual and moral condition of the human race in this world is not, and can never be, STATIC. No. Because without Christ the direction of the human race is always DOWNWARD – into worse and worse evil, and worse and worse spiritual and moral decay. Satan wants to destroy the human race – not by wiping it out of existence – but by fashioning it

according to himself. And that is what has always happened throughout human history. As noted – this is evidenced in all ancient civilizations.

Unless we realize the story behind what has happened throughout history we are not going to realize what is NOW happening. Satan has never given up his plan and intentions. And in this present day he has once again broken through into the human race in ways not seen since before Christ.

Chapter 11

The Prince of the Power of the Air

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (Eph. 2:2-3)

In reading the above passage, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that Satan is continually active in the world. As Peter says, he is as a roaring lion that roams about, seeking who he might devour. (I Peter 5:8) In other words, Satan is seeking openings – vulnerable access points – whereby he can come in and destroy lives.

One of the primary ways in which Satan works is by BLINDING people to Jesus Christ – by blinding people to their need for Christ. This, in itself, will insure their spiritual destruction.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (II Cor. 4:3-4)

Satan has always blinded people to the Person of the Living Christ by substituting religion ABOUT Him. Of course, this ultimately becomes false

religion. Look at the Roman church of the middle ages. It was of Satan. Most of the people governed by it had no idea that they were blind.

In this we see that blindness is just as much of a deception as unbelief or the practice of error. Sure. That is because blindness opens the door to error. Where there is a blank space Satan comes in – and where the house is empty, evil can come to govern.

Demon Possession

There is no question that right now, in numerous high positions in governments, there are people who are actually demon possessed. There are also many others -- “regular,” people -- who have given themselves over to the enemy. If someone is not demon possessed, it is possible they are demonized.

There are people like this, yes, in government, but there are such people who are also operating within the body of Christ. They are not born from above – they are not Christians. Somewhere along the line they have opened themselves up to the enemy – and they are so deceived that they do not recognize the spiritual consequences.

Don’t think of such a condition as being like what you see in the movies. Many demonized people are very religious, very intelligent, and sometimes very nice. When a person is under the influence of Satan they probably do not realize it. They are responsible for being under that control – because they will not turn to Christ. But their

consciousness may be blind to their condition – this is part of what it means to be demonized.

A common way is for a person to be demonized is that they are so occupied with themselves, and with their lust for power over others, that they destroy everyone around them. They do this even if the people they destroy do not realize they are being destroyed. Does that sound crazy? Well, we are talking about spiritual deception. How else would it work?

Now, as noted, such people have always associated themselves with churches. Of course – because Satan is the enemy of God. He wants to corrupt Christians. Thus, those who do his bidding are naturally going to gravitate toward God's people. Indeed, Paul warned outright if this very possibility.

For such [are] false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore [it is] no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (II Cor. 11:13-15)

An angel of light is one that brings illumination – that brings Truth. Thus, Satan can appear to bring illumination and freedom by the Truth. It won't be real Truth, of course, but a lie that is offered AS the Truth. You will also note that the ministers of Satan will, "transform," themselves to appear as, "ministers of righteousness." This is

someone who preaches righteousness – but within a false gospel. This is what was happening in the Galatian church. It is happening today in many false Christian movements.

If we think that we give Satan too much credit for the sins of false teachers, we need to read the above passage, and many others like it. Human beings are capable of much evil without the help of Satan. But when such ones begin to practice evil, error, and falsehood – and then DEFEND it -- especially within the church -- you can be sure that at the very least, Satan will be pleased. But he surely will be seeking a way to use such ones for his goals.

There are millions right now who are following false teachers. There are millions who have accepted, “another Jesus,” and, “another gospel.” They are walking in a delusion; mesmerized by spiritual deception. What ought to be clear error is accepted as Truth; as the NORM. Do we really believe that all of this is just people straying off the track? No. Behind it is the father of lies. And all of this present deception is nothing more than a foretaste for that which is to come.

Vulnerability of Natural Man

The Adam race is not, by nature, demon possessed. Rather, the Adam race is, by nature, an earthly being – a psychic being – with a corrupt spirit. But the Adam race is in bondage to the realm of darkness – vulnerable to the forces of evil. That is the condition in which all who are in Adam begin through natural birth:

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated [us] into the kingdom of his dear Son. (Col. 1:13)

If we gather up the many passages that speak about the relationship between fallen man and Satan, it becomes very clear that Satan's point of access to human beings is through the earthly or psychic dimension of our natural man. But he cannot just enter in and possess a person. Rather, he will seek to deceive people into opening themselves on that level to him. Many professing believers today are having psychic experiences that they believe are of the spirit of God. This is a recipe for disaster.

Satan has NO access to our union with Jesus Christ in spirit – he cannot possess a born again believer. But even a born again believer continues to have the earthly nature. It is there – in the natural mind and the emotions – that Satan will try to deceive in order to get the Christian walking in error.

Unbelievers are not joined to Christ in spirit. Thus, they are fully earthly in nature. They continue in bondage to the realm of darkness, and as Paul states, are susceptible to, "the spirit that works in the children of disobedience." This results in a life that is, "according to the prince of the power of the air" – a life that is lived, "in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind."

Now, if the gospel were preached in Truth, unbelievers would have revealed to them their condition, and the way out in Christ. But where the gospel is absent, this condition of unbelievers will become THE NORMAL – and eventually be celebrated. And this is exactly what has taken place. As Christianity has been abandoned, and the church has forfeited its responsibility, Satan has come in unrestrained. And people are more and more living in the lusts of the flesh – also unrestrained. Indeed, there seems to be no limited to how low human beings can sink.

The Coming Evil

Most of us have no idea, indeed, no frame of reference, as to the depth of evil possible once Satan has unrestrained access to humanity. Of course, we can look back in history and see manifestations of this in Hitler's Germany, and the atrocities of other tyrants throughout history. But in this day and age the potential is all the more possible, indeed, inevitable.

As we progress towards the end of this age, we are going to witness more and more unspeakable evil. It has already been going on in secret in many places, but will eventually break out into view on a scale not seen before. And many will either celebrate it, be caught up in it, or be harmed by it.

Look at what Hamas did to Israel. Pure evil. Yet so many college students sided with Hamas. They did so without even realizing the evil. When thousands or millions get swept up in evil in a mindless fanaticism – just as was the case in Nazi

Germany – you know Satan is at work. This is going to become the norm.

There is going to be much more political unrest – and hate, and turmoil. There are going to be national and worldwide upheavals. Jesus said, “Because iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold.” (Matt. 24:12) This is going to happen in the world, but it is going to happen in the church. It means that people will begin to resign themselves to evil. Normal human love will become corrupted. Christian love will be exposed as fake – and many professing believers will forsake faith in Christ.

This is Satan. It is the result of the church corrupting the gospel. It is the result of both professing believers and the world abandoning Jesus Christ. Thus, Satan has begun to enter into all areas of human life unrestrained – with more intensity at an accelerated fashion.

We must get this settled: We have crossed a line into a moral and spiritual realm from which there is NO return. This world, this nation, and the church is NEVER going to return to any sense of healthy normalcy. There is only going to be a corrupt and advancing NEW NORMAL – and that is the best case scenario. For the church that NEW NORMAL will be apostasy. For the world, it will be the acceptance of greater open evil. That is how this age is going to end. And that is why our great hope needs to be the Coming of our Lord.

Chapter 12

The Subtlety of the Enemy

The goal of the enemy is to destroy what a human being IS – so that God's purpose for humanity will likewise be destroyed. That is why, where Satan acts upon humanity in an unrestrained fashion, what emerges is utterly INHUMAN. Human beings doing INHUMAN evil to other human beings -- that is Satan.

There are signs of this potential everywhere today. The inhuman acts are always preceded by inhuman thinking. More and more people today are filled with hate, animosity, and murder – and the only restraint is their fear of what is left of the law. Yet we have seen the abandonment of the rule of law on many levels. So many people today are governed by corrupt thinking, insane thinking, and what amounts to spiritual and mental illness. It is like an infectious disease. Again, this is Satan.

Now, make no question about it: Satan cannot normally, "take over," a human being. Human beings, whether it be intentional or unintentional, provide the access. An abandonment of, or refusal of, the Truth, is sufficient. Where people refuse the Truth the house will be empty – and eventually there can be only darkness and ultimately, reprobation.

Satan is Always Active

Satan is NEVER passive. He is always looking for access points, both in the world, and in the

church. He will never relent trying to accomplish His purpose of destroying and corrupting what a human being IS. But he will take what he can get. If he cannot destroy humanity, then he will continue to try to DECEIVE humanity. And this will include the church.

Satan is subtle – that was the description of Satan that God inspired right from the beginning in the garden. Satan is obviously not going to announce his intentions. Rather, he will present the path to destruction as being good. He will do this, on the one hand, by corrupting the way of deliverance in Christ. But he will also appeal to the emotions, mind, and lusts, of natural mind.

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or [if] ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with [him]. (II Cor. 11:3-4)

Paul wrote this warning to the Corinthian church – a church which had been deceived through the soul or psychic realm – to the point where they were embracing terrible immorality – as shown in the first epistle that Paul wrote to them. They were living in the emotional realm; the sensual realm – rather than in Christ through the spirit.

Notice the warning: “Receive another spirit.” That ought to make us take notice. Indeed, this

is right in line with the warnings of the apostle John:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (I John 4:1)

This warning to, “test the spirits,” would be a waste of space if it were not possible for OTHER spirits to get into a church. That possibility not only exists, but you can be sure that Satan will take any avenue opened to him by a church, or in an individual life.

It is both alarming and amazing – despite all that is happening in both the church and the world – that there continues to be preachers who stand up and continue to preach such heresies as, “The Word of Faith.” You would think that such heretics would wake up. But then again, it is the nature of the deception that binds them that they do not. Some are even appealing to believers to send them even MORE money – to insure protection from the evil that is invading this world.

All of this is the fulfillment of what the Bible said would happen. As evil invades the world and the church, it makes it more difficult, if not impossible, to sit on the fence. The distinction between good and evil, light and darkness, right and wrong – these are going to become more and clearer – at least to anyone who WANTS the Truth. People are going to have to choose – they are going to have to decide what they believe.

Herein we will see the continuing separation of the wheat from the tares, the division of light from darkness, and the separation of revival from apostasy. This is happening right NOW. We are approaching the end of this age.

The Battle

Christian people need to get it settled that the battle is NOT with flesh and blood. The battle is with the forces of evil that are USING flesh and blood. Thus, we must resist the temptation of getting carried away with fears and emotions. Rather, we must stand by faith in Christ.

But we must also get something else settled: Standing in Christ and realizing His victory is NOT going to change this outward world. God wants to first change US – which will change the church. God works from the inside out. That is where the battle resides and must be won.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the WILES of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places]. (Eph. 6:10-12)

The Greek word translated, “wiles,” means, “a cunning device.” If you read this passage, it becomes clear that the necessity that Paul describes is ongoing – it is a continual need.

Satan is never passive. Believers must never be passive. We need to be alert.

Christians do not wrestle to win the victory that Christ has already won. No. We wrestle to HOLD that ground by faith. One of the most common devices of Satan is to deceive believers into trying to win the victory that Christ has already won. This is unbelief and is, at best, a spiritual dead end.

Standing in Christ against the Devil does not mean we should be devil-obsessed. But it does mean that we need to be Christ-obsessed – so that when Satan makes his cunning approach we can recognize what is happening. But unfortunately, in today's church these matters are taken lightly, or people have already come under the deception of the enemy.

Read Paul's description of what we wrestle against. It ought to be clear that this is not a game. It is not just a doctrine. It is the reality of the spiritual world. Believers need not fear – but we must keep our faith in Christ.

Remember again – the deception of Satan is not limited to doctrinal deception. His is a spiritual deception – working to alter a person's frame of reference and perception of God and His Son. Once that is achieved, everything else will follow accordingly.

The Impact of Ministering Christ

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to

make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and [from] the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:16-18)

This is what Jesus said to Paul on the Damascus road. You will note that front and center is the promise that revelation of Jesus Christ will, "open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." That being the case, what do we suppose will happen – HAS HAPPENED – where Jesus Christ is NOT preached?

The prince of the power of the air continues to function as the god of this world. This means he is god of the earthly realm. To the extent that people, including the church, live on an earthly basis – rather than on the spiritual basis of Christ – Satan will have access.

If there is one continually repeated error of the church over the last two-thousand years it is to try to turn Christianity into a religion that is experienced and practiced on an earthly level. This, in itself, is deception – but opens the door for conditions that become worse and worse.

Where the earthly takes prominence in the lives of religious people – what eventually follows is bondage to the earthly. Self-righteousness, or

the opposite, license, will become the normal. In time, religious tyranny may emerge. Sensual immorality and perversion will creep in. Fables, superstition, false signs and wonders, false apostles and prophets, and lying gifts of the spirit – the false spirit – will begin to become the normal. Just as the Roman church that emerged in the second and third centuries barely resembled the church of the apostles, that pattern has been repeated. But this time there will be no reformation – until Christ returns.

Chapter 13

The Seed of the Woman

After the sin of Adam, God promised that He would bring forth a Savior – Who would be, “the seed of the woman.” In this, we not only have the promise of the Messiah, but we have the promise of the One Who would be The Son of Man:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Gen. 3:15)

It is significant that this promise was announced – yes, as a promise FOR the human race – but more directly was included a judgment AGAINST Satan and his kingdom. It certainly indicates that Satan did, and does, have the goal of destroying the human race. God promises to SAVE the human race through, “the seed of the woman.”

Note that the, “seed,” or, “offspring,” of the serpent, who is Satan, would be defeated by, “the seed of the woman,” Jesus Christ. This declaration reveals that the battle is over the human race. God would not have made the declaration as He did if it were otherwise.

Who, or what, is, “the seed of the serpent?” Some speculate that this is in reference to the attempt of the fallen angels to corrupt the DNA of the human race. But God destroyed that attempt through the flood. Yet some suggest that there was yet another incursion of fallen angels that

created even more hybrids. There is even the suggest that these hybrids are the aliens that we mistakenly say are from other planets. At this point in time, there is no way to know the answer to this with any certainty. But there is one thing that we can know: "The seed of the serpent," is ALL that the serpent PLANTS into this world and into the human race – error, unbelief, hate, lies, and animosity towards all that is Christian. "The seed of the woman," Jesus Christ, is going to make manifest His victory over all. He will indeed bruise the head of the enemy – which in picture form – indicates total dominance and victory.

The Victory of Jesus Over Satan

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became a human being – He became, "the seed of woman" -- in order to destroy the works of the devil – in order to destroy the goal of Satan to corrupt the human race and abort God's purpose for humanity. Genesis 3:15, quoted above, is the first promise of the Messiah in scripture.

The final judgment of God is always said to be upon the father of lies – Satan and the kingdom of darkness. Satan is the father of death and death will be the final enemy to be swallowed up by the victory of Jesus Christ. This is a fact despite the fact that we are each responsible for what we choose – for what side we take – and despite the fact that each human being will stand before the judgment seat of God.

Scripture is filled with the promise that Satan is a defeated enemy – and that it simply needs to be worked out into experience:

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (I Jn. 3:8)

He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Heb. 2:14)

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev. 12:9)

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set [him] at his own right hand in the heavenly [places], Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion. (Eph. 1:20-21)

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly [places] might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. (Eph. 3:10)

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places]. (Eph. 6:12)

[And] having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. (Col. 2:15)

God's Judgment in the OT

Even God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt was a judgment, not simply against Pharaoh, but against the evil spirits that controlled Pharaoh and that ancient kingdom. This shows just how immersed the world had been in darkness.

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I [am] the LORD. Ex. 12:12)

And when God brought Israel to the Promised Land, it was not only inhabited by heathen tribes, including giants, but it was fully governed by demonic spirits.

For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. (Ex. 23:23-24)

"False gods," are not gods that do not exist. Rather, they are demons who DO exist – but who are not THE TRUE GOD. These, under Satan, continued to govern the entire world at that time.

The Seed of Abraham

The One who would become, "the seed of the woman," was the same One who is, "the seed of Abraham," Jesus Christ.

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seed, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. (Gal. 3:16)

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal. 3:26-29)

Jesus Christ was the Word become flesh – He was The Last Adam – who would not only die as the substitute for the entire Adam race, but who would bear in Himself the entire Adam race on the Cross, and die. Satan controlled the Adam race, and therefore Christ would thus undercut all of the purposes of Satan for the Adam race – by bringing an end to the Adam race through His death -- but also by ushering in a new creation, or new race, through His resurrection.

Chapter 14

The Preaching of the Person

Satan began his attempts to destroy the seed of the woman almost immediately after God gave the promise of a Redeemer. Adam's first born, Cain, became a murderer. It was Adam's second born, Abel, that Cain murdered. But God preserved His seed through the lineage of Adam's third son, Seth. Satan later attempted to pollute the human race through the fallen angels. But God preserved the pure lineage through Noah. Fast forward to God's call of Abraham, and the birth of the nation Israel. Satan tried to destroy the seed when Pharaoh sought to destroy all of the firstborn males. God saw to it that Moses survived, and that Israel survived. Then Satan tried to destroy the newly born Christ – "the seed of the woman" -- by inspiring Herod to kill all of the babies at the time of Jesus' birth.

Interesting to note that Satan is not all-knowing. He only has general knowledge – otherwise he would have known where the specific Christ child was. But instead, the edict was to kill all male children less than two years of age in the general region. There was no personal attack on Mary and Joseph.

If we read the gospels, we read several instances where Satan tried to kill Jesus through evil people. But despite the fact that Jesus did come to die at the hands of evil men that were inspired by Satan, it was not going to happen until His life as a human being had satisfied God – it would only happen in God's will, God's way, and in God's time.

The Roman Empire during the time of Christ was evil. But it nevertheless had brought a certain amount of law and order into the world. As was the case throughout the world, they did not acknowledge the one true God – but simply perpetuated demon worship with their many false gods. Thus, even though there was more law and order under Rome – and things were more, “civilized” -- this meant only a more, “civilized,” world of the occult and darkness and godlessness.

The Gospel

It was into such a world that Jesus Christ was born. He came – not to reform the world – but to usher in a new creation. Primary to this would be a new humanity. Under Christ, this new humanity is to govern a world -- in the ages yet to come -- that is free from the realm of darkness.

God did not – and could not -- if He were to maintain free will – simply wipe out evil and impose the new creation. Rather, He would work a full victory over that evil – yet ONLY IN CHRIST. Thus, it was the responsibility of those in Christ to, first, give themselves to Christ, and then from out of Christ, to preach the Person of Jesus Christ, and salvation that is in Him alone.

The gospel of Christ is the preaching of the PERSON Who not only worked the means of deliverance, but Who IS the only means of that deliverance. Salvation is not a THING. It is a PERSON to Whom we are joined in spirit if we come to Him by faith.

There are a couple of passages that summarize the impact of the gospel – that summarize the impact that turning to Christ is to have upon a person, or a nation:

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and [from] the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:14-18)

The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

Of course, all that is mentioned here is WITHIN salvation. It cannot happen apart from coming to Christ. But not only do we see the wonderful and positive impacts of Christ, but we also see the terrible condition from which humanity can be

delivered. In Christ, there is provision for deliverance OUT FROM all of the terrible evil that has found a home in human beings, but there is deliverance UNTO an eternal oneness with God Himself.

The Impact of Christ

In the first century, we see that two things happened when Christ was preached. First, there were the freedoms promised in the above passages. But second, there was great opposition and animosity from the enemy – and from those who gave him place. That ought not to be surprising. For the preaching of Christ was a matter of God – through His church – taking practical and living possession of that which Christ had already won – taking possession of the spiritual and moral territory that had been forfeited into the hands of the enemy by Adam himself.

We are apt to think that since Christ has won all victory that there is nothing for us to do. Well, there is no victory left to win. But there is the responsibility – similar in spirit to that of Israel in the Promised Land – of taking possession of, and living in, and out from, the victory that Christ has already won. This is impossible unless each person FIRST loses themselves to Christ – unless each person is crucified with Christ – unless each person is united with Christ in both His death and resurrection. Unless that happens by faith as the BASIS, we cannot move forward and live in and out from His victory.

The long and short of it is that we must come under the victory of Jesus Christ as our personal Lord if we are to take possession of that which He has won. This is an inward reality – wherein we lose our lives find Him as our life.

The first disciples had power in the spirit of God because they had personally come under Christ as Lord. The power was not a THING God had given them to use. Rather, because they had given themselves to Christ, the Person of Christ – Who IS the power of God – was able to operate through them unto God's purpose. And initially, this turned the world upside down.

Imagine being assigned the responsibility to preach Christ without the aid of any printed material, internet, television, radio – and without the use of a BIBLE. There were not seminaries, denominations, or other means of support. All you would have is CHRIST IN YOU. And yet what God did in those days, through those first disciples, is a foundation upon which we continue to live today.

God's Witness

God has always had a witness in this world. But not merely a witness in the sense of those who preach Christ – that is included – but a witness in the sense of the Living Christ WITHIN those people. Christianity is CHRIST IN US. And where Christ truly lives in people there is a witness.

Thus, wherever Christ is preached you are going to find that the enemy will arise to rally his minions – those who he can use – to stamp it out.

Where that fails, the enemy will resort to corrupting the Truth. But the enemy cannot win this battle if the people of God abide in Christ and continue to preach Him.

Thus, we again repeat this fact: Down through history, wherever Christianity was known -- and accepted at least in principle -- those peoples and nations experienced a certain amount of outward freedom from the darkness that had encompassed the world since the beginning. Those nations where Christianity was mostly unknown remained in darkness did not. Look at China and India today. They represent half of the world's population -- and remain mostly bound by heathen religion, with all sorts of false and evil gods governing them.

But on a deeper and more important level, there has always been what we can call, "The UNSEEN church" -- those whose names we do not know -- who had the Living Christ within. These were the saints who were God's true witness in the world and in the church. The life within them -- HIS LIFE -- was that restraint.

You will note what constitutes the restraint against evil: His life in His people. So preaching, teaching, and living -- all of that certainly contributes -- but it is the presence of the Living Christ in His people that is the key. Wherever the presence of Christ is in His people the enemy will be restrained.

So the church MUST preach the Person of Christ. And the church must abide in Christ. This is the only way in which His witness can abide.

Chapter 15

The Roman Church

In 70 A.D., Jerusalem, the place where Christianity began, was completely destroyed. The first century church began to be scattered. The apostles, with a few exceptions, were all gone. It was truly the end of that age.

The gospel had been preached and had spread in THAT part of the world – during the 40 years since the ascension of Christ. It was a very small beginning, compared to the inhabited globe. But spiritually, it was a very powerful foundation. In fact, we are told that the body of Christ is built upon the foundation of those apostles and prophets. (Eph. 2:20) There have been NO more apostles or prophets since. Yet God is still building upon THAT foundation today.

As the second century dawned, the world continued to be in bondage to Satan. Except for where the gospel was preached, there was no knowledge of the true God. But where the gospel was preached there began a push back against the forces of evil – because of His presence in His people of that day. This impact was not immediate – not in the outward realm. It began in the spiritual realm where the real battles are always won and lost.

We need to be reminded that we battle NOT against flesh and blood – but against principalities, powers, and the rulers of wickedness in the spiritual realm. (see Eph. 6:10-12) Thus, even though we may not see much immediate victory in outward circumstances or in

people, the battle against those forces – in the spiritual realm – is nevertheless the REAL battle. And to the extent that the church stands by faith in Christ against those evil forces, His finished victory will be made manifest in His people and through His people.

There has always been the visible church – the one in the public eye and the one which is popular. But there has likewise always been the invisible church – Christ in His people – people who are not known and for the most part -- not in the history books. It is this invisible church – Christ in His people -- that is the restraint of evil.

The invisible church – the one that we find in the NT – is the true witness of Jesus Christ. We see it in the book of Acts and in the epistles. But after 70 A.D., it began to disappear from recorded history. In 301 A.D., when Christianity had persecution lifted and started to become the state religion, a false church began to emerge. It is the one recorded in the history books -- and as a result -- is generally accepted as the Christianity of that time.

Herein we see a common pattern in the history of Christianity. Whatever becomes prominent or popular is recorded in history AS Christianity. It becomes accepted as Christianity. That is even the case with the theologians of the time. If a person rose to prominence in the visible church and produced a written work that became popular, it was then, and is today, accepted as orthodox doctrine. But all of what was accepted and established as Christianity is what was produced by the VISIBLE church – and sealed as

doctrine by the leaders of the VISIBLE church. None of that guaranteed that what was produced OR accepted was actually OF GOD; OF the Truth.

What slowly emerged over the next couple of hundred years as the visible church was NOT the church according to the mind of God. It was a false Christianity – governed by ritual, superstition, fables, greed, corruption, and false teaching. Scripture was completely abandoned – in fact, eventually banned for the common person. This was the Roman church.

One of the tenets of the Roman church is that IT is the original church – going back to the apostles – and therefore it is the ONLY church which God affirms. But this is completely false, not only historically, but spiritually. God affirms nothing but His Son. God commits Himself to nothing except Truth. Thus, it did not matter that the second generation of Christians knew the apostles, or that they continued to establish churches. What mattered was the LIFE of Christ – was Christ WITHIN those people? Where He was NOT in those people there was NO church – and it did not matter as to their association with the apostles.

A church, according to the mind of God, is PEOPLE – it is Christ in His people. The church, according to the mind of God, is NOT an organization, incorporation, great buildings, a large clergy, much money, and a great following – none of that makes a church that is of Christ. The church is consists ONLY of those believers who are in Christ.

Herein we see the primary distinction between the VISIBLE church and the INVISIBLE church: The visible church is almost anything BUT the people who are in Christ. The invisible church are people who are IN CHRIST.

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) was the visible church -- recorded in history as THE CHURCH -- for over 1000 years. But it was not the invisible church of those who were IN CHRIST. Much the same thing can be said about many of the Protestant churches that emerged after the Reformation. Again -- the church is NOT a denomination, organization, movement, or a building. The church is Christ in people -- people in Christ.

Of course, because the RCC did not consist of people in Christ -- was not governed by HIS Life and HIS Light -- false doctrine, corruption, greed, and perversion began to invade. Satan had been given access through the absence of the life of Christ in His people. The terrible results are a matter of history.

In fairness, we do have to make a distinction between the corrupt leadership of the Roman church -- governed by evil spirits -- and the average lay person who was in bondage through ignorance. The organization and leadership were evil. The individuals under them may or may not have been.

The Roman church was nothing but an enormous cult. It was spiritual Babylon. But in the minds of most people of that time, it was THE church. Few saw the real Truth. Those that did see the

Truth and sought to reveal it were persecuted, and many were executed.

The Roman Catholic Church was obviously NOT the church that Jesus was building. If there was anything of value, it was that the name of Jesus Christ as Savior – that bare fact – was presented. But the problem was that virtually ALL that was built upon the foundation of Christ was error.

Now, let's note something here: Even though the Roman Church was NOT according to God's mind, indeed, was contrary to it, the one true God of the Bible was at least acknowledged. Jesus Christ was also preached as Savior. THAT ALONE introduced a certain amount of moral and spiritual sanity into those nations where the Roman Church was prominent – and it came to be prominent in all of Europe and Western Asia. Compared to the nations where Christianity remained mostly unknown, those nations where Christ was known began to get free of the rampant demonism and devil worship. There was at least a putting forth of the name of Jesus Christ.

We have to realize that in the context of that age, there were likely thousands of people who – despite being kept in relative darkness -- had turned their heart towards Christ by faith. Maybe some of them did so from within the Roman church – they responded to God based upon the light they had. These individuals are those whom God used as a restraint against the forces of evil. They were part of the invisible church. We have no idea of the impact of such ones. Indeed, there is reason to believe that it was the faith of these few that impacted the forces of evil such

that the groundwork for Reformation began to be laid.

Satan's Contingency Plan

The Roman church is the **VISIBLE** representation of spiritual Babylon thus far in this age. That is why it is used in the picture of Babylon in the book of Revelation. But the spirit behind Babylon is the real issue – and that spirit is still at work today. ANY church – indeed, any individual – can come under the influence of that same spirit of Babylon today.

Just as the true church – the invisible church – is comprised of individuals in Christ, so are false churches comprised of individuals. False churches are people, just as true churches are people. Any place you find a false church you will find false Christians – especially in leadership.

These manifestations are not necessarily **HUGE** – although some of them are quite large. But others are small in comparison. Babylon can exist in a home group. As noted -- even an individual can carry the potential – be governed by the spirit of Babylon.

Babylon – in the NT context – mirrors what happened in the original Babylon of the OT -- at the tower of Babel. Humanity sought to build a tower up to heaven. It was humanity **IN UNITY** seeking – through human effort – and in foolish ignorance -- to ascend into the heavenlies. It was also an act of rebellion – to show God they could escape any flood He might again send; to escape death through human effort. Is this not

the goal – spiritually speaking – of all false Christianity?

Babylon in the NT is a false Christianity fabricated out of the imagination and efforts of humanity – which exalts humanity to a deluded heavenly position. Gather all of that up and you can see every false form of Christianity in it – if not all false religions.

Religious Corruption

The Roman church is, in fact, the prime example of what can happen once true life in Christ is abandoned -- and slowly replaced by human agenda, human efforts, and fabricated spiritual life. Even the doctrine becomes corrupted – and the church morphs into something barely recognizable. In fact, rather than belong to Christ, it comes to be a tool of Satan.

The Roman church is the consummate example of putting church before Christ, of putting position before life in Christ, and of a marriage between church and state. It is what happens when popularity, money, and the pride of man come to govern – with Satan behind the scenes.

Why do we suppose that there is so much homosexuality and child sexual molestation in the Roman church today? We might even say that it is a church that operates systemic child abuse – hides it and affirms it. Where Christ is abandoned, religious flesh will prevail, doctrine will become corrupt, people will become corrupt, and then reprobation – of all sorts – will take root.

This happened in the Roman church – and continues. God's judgment is certain.

With violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. (Rev. 18:21)

But again – Babylon is not limited to the Roman church. Babylon is the spirit of evil that governs ANY false Christianity – the Babylon spirit. The Roman church is the strongest example of this in history – but many Protestant churches are following the same evil pattern.

Now, we must be clear – the evil that is happening in these churches is of the enemy. That evil finds its root in the spiritual realm. But the people – especially the leadership – open the door to that evil to impact human lives. There are many people within these corrupt organizations who are not directly guilty of what is happening there. Some are ignorant. Others are in bondage. But God wants to set free those who have a heart that is open to Jesus Christ. This means that the INVISIBLE church must preach the PERSON of Christ – but just as importantly – the invisible church must personally stand in Christ and allow Him to be their life. Where that is the case, no stronghold of the enemy can stand.

Chapter 16

The Light in the Darkness

God always had a living witness in this world and in His church. That witness was not only a witness unto the rest of humanity, but it was a witness unto the forces of evil:

And to make all [men] see what [is] the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly [places] might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph. 3:9-11)

Herein we see another indication that the real battle is spiritual. When Paul says that the forces of evil are made to know the manifold wisdom of God through the church, he is not merely speaking of knowing facts. "To know," in the NT, always means, "to experience." He is saying that the forces of evil are made to experience the power and impact of Christ through the presence of Jesus Christ in His people. This is the RESTRAINT upon the forces of evil that had been present because Christ was present in His people. That great restraint made it possible for the gospel to spread and be established. But it is now fading away because Christ has been abandoned.

This passage Paul also says that the witness of Jesus Christ will be made known to ALL of humanity. Since that clearly has not happened in this age, it refers to the eternal ages.

Despite the fact that it might seem as if Christianity is a failure in this age – that is not the case. God is allowing this age to take its course. He is allowing people to corrupt the Truth. He is allowing Satan to take his best shot at destroying God's purpose. But He is allowing this to PROVE TO ALL – spiritual beings and human beings alike – that His purpose in Christ is eternal, final, and the ONLY answer. When all is said and done, the glory of God will stand. As Paul says, this is all, "according to His eternal purpose in Christ"

The victory of Jesus Christ is going to be proven. That is only possible if it stands against all of the forces of evil, and against all of the foolishness of humanity. God is going to leave no doubt. Christ is the only answer.

The Unseen Church

We will think that Christianity is a failure only if we assume that Christianity is found in the VISIBLE church. But as we have stated, Christianity is CHRIST IN US – the resurrected Christ in His people. The reality of Jesus Christ in His people cannot be destroyed. It is resurrection life – life that is the product of a finished victory over death; over the enemy.

Because of God's intent to prove the victory of His Son, He has allowed human beings, backed by

Satan, to try to corrupt the name of His Son. This is what we see throughout history. We see demonic religion both before and after Christ. And we see false Christianity after Christ. But through it all, the unseen church existed and survived.

God has never promised that life in His Son would be prominent during this age. Rather, He has promised that the gospel would be preached IN all of the world AS A WITNESS unto all nations. (see Matt. 24:14) That witness would stand through every attack of the enemy, and every sin of humanity. Indeed, it is that witness – the presence of Christ in His people that has acted as a restraint upon evil.

Can we see that God is PROVING something, not only to humanity, but to the spiritual forces of evil? He is indeed making His wisdom and glory known – and the fullness of this impact will be fully released in the eternal ages. In this age, we have Christ in us, the HOPE of glory. In the next age, it will be Christ in us, the REALIZATION of His glory.

The Reformation

The Reformation that began in 1517 was the outcome of the victory of Jesus Christ; as the outcome of the presence of Christ in the invisible church. Resurrection life in Christ cannot be snuffed out. Thus, even though God allowed terrible religious evil to grip the Western world for centuries, in the end, the Truth in Christ could not be contained. It emerged and broke free from the lies and spiritual control of the enemy.

The Reformation had been brewing for at least 200 years. But in the 1500s it broke out into full bloom. The result was a large defection from the false Roman church. The gospel that began to be preached through the Reformation was based upon, "by grace, through faith."

We know that the churches that were formed as the result of the Reformation were far from perfect. They carried forward many of the errors and practices of the Roman Church. The leaders of the Reformation, such as Luther, were people used of God – but that does not mean everything they wrote was of God. God's use of them does not mean that they were to be looked to as figures around which churches were to be formed. God wanted the Reformation to turn people back to the Person of His Son.

Many churches that emerged out of the Reformation eventually became centers for the, "letter that kills." But at least the name of Christ was preached. Salvation through faith that is solely in Christ was made known. There were surely thousands of individuals who turned their heart to the Lord. Thus, the restraint upon evil was fortified. And the gospel of Jesus Christ was able to go forth.

After the Reformation, the spread of the gospel was rapid. The invention of the printing press just 50 years or so before the Reformation was huge. Was this not also of God? There began to arise political revolutions against long-standing dictatorships in many countries over the next 200 years. This resulted in a greater freedom to

preach the gospel both in Europe and eventually in the US. All of these things were made possible because of the spread of the name of Jesus Christ. The grip of the enemy was being restrained and broken by His presence in His people.

Now, of course, this happened with ebbs and flows. There were still dictators who rose up, like Adolf Hitler. There were many wars, plagues, and famines. The human race was just as evil as ever – by nature – and Satan was as active as ever. But as the decades passed, the name of Jesus Christ was heard by millions. Christianity had taken hold in many nations – and had a huge effect on the thinking, policy, government, and lives of those who lived in those nations. Evil was being held at bay.

One of most noticeable impacts of Christianity is that of a SOUND MIND. This is not to suggest that simply accepting the message of the gospel will, in itself, renew a person's mind. But Truth is light. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Wherever Jesus was at least accepted as Savior of the world there came a sound mindedness and more of a moral sanity. This was seen in the USA and in the nations of Western Europe. It translated into forms of government and the rule of law. Because again -- this enlightenment was a restraint against evil, and deliverance out of the darkness that had governed the minds of so many.

The Line Has Been Crossed

The gospel was preached, and spread, with growing freedom -- starting with the Reformation. But in the second half of the 20th century, something happened that has continued – it has continued in intensity and acceleration. Up until that time the Truth of Christ had been preached - - and people either embraced Christ or rejected Him. But what began to change was that nations and people who had embraced the Truth began to forfeit it; relinquish it.

We need to see the difference. It is one thing to hear the Truth of Christ and reject it, ignore it, or attack it. There have always been people that Satan has used to do this. But there has never been a time in all of history where as many people who had embraced the Truth now renounce it. They renounce it in favor of a false gospel, or just renounce Christianity as the Truth altogether. This is, of course, apostasy. And it has spread to the point where it has, to a great degree, become the, “new normal.”

The secular world has begun to reject the Truth once received as never before. Those Judeo-Christian nations – founded upon the Bible, or at least Biblical principals – have now rejected Christianity. Those nations that honored the name of Jesus Christ are now dishonoring Him. But worst of all, the church has compromised the name of Jesus Christ. And THAT – above all else -- has opened the door for the return of the forces of evil.

Greater Evil

The result of renouncing Truth once received is NOT the same as that of refusing Truth to begin with. The result is MUCH worse. And in the church, and in the world, we are now seeing those results. Those results take us back to the passage we quoted earlier:

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he finds [it] empty, swept, and garnished. Then goes he, and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last [state] of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. (Matt. 12:43-44)

The Truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ – indeed, the LIFE of Jesus in His people – has acted as a restraint against Satan. This world had been progressively delivered from evil. It had become, relatively speaking, garnished, swept, and clean. But what was given to fill the void – the presence of Jesus Christ – has either been forfeited or rejected. The result is going to be greater evil than ever. It is already starting to happen.

It is an absolute fact that the infiltration of evil into this world is the result of the church forfeiting the life of Christ in favor of other things. The apostate church consists of those who once accepted the Truth – and therefore

those who forfeit it. As the church goes spiritually, the world goes. We see this all through scripture.

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. (II Cor. 7:14)

This promise of God is directed towards those are, "are called by MY name." Today that is the body of Christ. In this verse, we see that to the extent that the body of Christ turns to God, there will be Godly impacts upon the country. But the opposite is just as true – where the body of Christ has forfeited the Truth, evil will come in and prevail.

Satan is NEVER passive. He is always seeking to keep his territory. Or he is always seeking an entry point; a person or place through whom he can gain access or advantage. But where the life of Christ is present in His people, the victory of Christ is present -- and is a restraint, yes, absolutely in the body of Christ, but more so, even in the world of unbelievers. Of course, this is general. But it is a fact.

God will never fail to have His witness; His light in the midst of darkness. That will be maintained until the end of this age. Indeed, as evil invades and the darkness spreads, the light of Christ will be all the more obvious. This is God's mercy for all who want to escape this evil age through His Son.

Chapter 17

The Gospel is the Power of God

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. (Rom. 1:16-18)

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto SALVATION – to everyone that believes. But have we realized that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto reprobation to everyone who refuses to believe? This is the Truth that Paul is unfolding in Romans 1. Once you hear the Truth – hear and realize it – you cannot go back. You MUST choose.

Of course, there are folks who hear the gospel and neglect to choose. But that is the same as unbelief – it is the same as refusing to believe. There are others who reject it outright. And there are yet others who hear and believe – but later turn away. It is questionable as to whether they really believed to begin with. But that does not negate the fact that they have heard.

In Romans 1, Paul is bringing forth the fact that the same grace of God that God intends for our salvation – if we believe – will be the basis of our

judgment – if we refuse to believe. And as we are going to see, the judgment of God is more than just a sentence passed. Rather, the judgment of God is that He gives those who refuse the light EXACTLY what they have chosen: Darkness – and everything that comes with it.

Romans 1 contains essentially the same principle that Jesus stated in Matt. 12:43-44. If I am delivered from darkness but do not turn to Christ, or if I forfeit the Truth that I had found in Christ, my latter state will be worse than my former state. Thus, once I see the Truth I cannot go back. I am accountable. My destiny will either be salvation and all that is in Christ, or it will ultimately be reprobation and all that goes with it. This is obviously serious business – carrying eternal ramifications.

It is a principle: If I choose darkness rather than light – and keep choosing it over and against the light God continues to provide -- God will eventually have to give me over to the darkness I have chosen. But this will not be merely a doctrinal darkness. Rather, it will be darkness WITHIN – a spiritual condition -- my mind will become darkened; my heart will become dark. But as noted, this will happen only after a persistent and deliberate refusal or forfeiture of the light and Truth of Jesus Christ. And the reprobation will be progressive. But make no question about it, such a condition will be the result.

If I have seen the Truth I cannot go back – I can never be morally or spiritually the same again. I am no longer ignorant. Indeed, the light which I

have seen will remain in front of me forever. God's revelation of Jesus Christ will never be withdrawn. Thus, any refusal or neglect on my part is not a one-time event of unbelief. Rather, it is an ongoing and deepening choice of unbelief. And thus, the impact of it upon my life will be ongoing and deepening.

There is no such thing a NEUTRAL ground when it comes to these matters. Satan is never neutral. God is never neutral. And once God gives light, we cannot be neutral. Each of us, at all times, are either in the process of allowing God to adjust us according to the Truth in Christ, or we are in the process of adjusting the Truth in Christ to fit our self-will, self-righteousness, or other agenda. And ultimately, it will be all or nothing.

God has only ONE purpose and ONE Son. There are NO alternatives. And so when He reveals Christ His revelation will be relentless, ever present, and unchangeable. We will either embrace Christ by faith, or we will spend the rest of our lives, if not eternity, retreating from the one purpose and one Savior.

Paul is going to show in Romans chapter 1 the decent into reprobation and perversion that will come upon one who has seen the Truth, realized that they have seen the Truth, but who have SUPPRESSED the Truth – suppressed it IN THEMSELVES. The result of choosing darkness is that you receive darkness within yourself. Because you have abandoned or refused faith in Christ, you then become susceptible to your earthly lusts and particular patterns of the flesh. Likewise, because you have chosen darkness

rather than light, you become all the more susceptible to the evil powers of darkness.

We can take what is revealed in Romans 1 and apply it as to principle to any person, any church, or any nation. It is an unchanging principle because God is an unchanging God. Truth is Truth. And the consequences for refusing Truth remain unchanging.

This decent into darkness is what is happening more and more in the world today – especially in our Judeo-Christian nations. These nations have heard the gospel – indeed, our laws, schools, governments, and moral framework were established upon the gospel. But now this is being forfeited. Thus, what is true for the individual is true for the nations that are comprised of those individuals. The honoring of the name of Jesus Christ – which was a very real restraint of the forces of evil – has been abandoned. And the evidence that the forces of evil are freely invading is around us everywhere.

But that is the world. What is happening in the world is also happening in the church. In fact, it is BECAUSE it is happening in the church that it is now happening in the world. The church of Jesus Christ is the reason why evil had been restrained. The preaching of the gospel and the faith of those who believed had pushed out the forces of evil and kept them out. But now so many in the church are suppressing the Truth in unrighteousness. Evil has gained access to them personally, and therefore, evil has gained access all around us.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe. But the wrath of God is revealed from heaven AGAINST those who suppress the Truth – and you had to have known the Truth to suppress it – God’s judgment upon such is as sure as His salvation is certain for those who believe.

Paul reveals in Romans 1 the terrible possibilities of unbelief and a refusal of the Truth – possibilities that are becoming a reality in the church and in the world today. But that being said, God continually offers Christ. He continually extends salvation and grace. Indeed, the fact that God does continually extends to us His purpose in Christ is WHY refusing Christ carries such terrible consequences.

The same grace that God intends to soften our hearts towards Jesus Christ will harden our hearts if we refuse Him. Likewise, the Truth that God intends to set us free will judge us if we refuse. Yet none of these consequences need come upon any of us. God never withdraws forgiveness and grace, because He never withdraws His Son.

Chapter 18

The First Steps into Reprobation

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed [it] unto them. (Rom. 1:18-19)

Romans 1 deals with individuals. It is always within individuals that the work of Satan -- or the life of Jesus Christ abides. The corporate church, and the corporate world, takes on the collective character of the individuals who comprise it. This is important to keep in mind as we read these sobering passages.

This passage defines for us the individuals about whom Paul is speaking. He says these individuals are those who, "suppress the Truth with unrighteousness" – that is the Greek reading. These are people who COULD know God – because there has been a revelation IN THEM of God. God has shown them the Truth. But they suppress it in themselves by choosing unrighteousness.

This is clearly another way of saying that such people have chosen darkness RATHER than light. They were given SOME light. But they chose darkness RATHER than light. That is the cause of their darkness WITHIN.

These are people who have received enough light and Truth to turn to Christ. They do not

necessarily know much theology. But God, through His spirit, has convicted them, "of sin, righteousness, and judgment." (see John 16:8) But as we quoted from John 3, the reason why people refuse to come to Christ – come to the light – is because they refuse to be exposed as sinners. Thus, they suppress the Truth – they do not turn to Christ. Instead, they choose darkness rather than light.

Let's read on:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Deity; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified [him] not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Rom. 1:20-21)

Paul is not suggesting that the observation of the physical creation is enough to convert someone to Christ. No. In fact, Jesus said, "No one can come to me except the Father who sent me draw them." (John 6:44) So we are not left to ourselves to find God or make our way to God on the basis of our observation of nature. But what Paul is saying is that once God DOES begin to draw someone to Christ, then creation and conscience will serve as affirmations of the inner conviction of the spirit of God. They will know that they are accountable to God. Again, they will know enough to turn to God through Christ.

Note that Paul says, "they knew God." There was an inward conviction or realization of God – a

beginning that enables them to turn to God through Christ by faith. But they either neglected to do so, or refused to do so. Instead, they forfeited the Truth God revealed to them.

Note the key: They KNEW. But they forfeited the Truth they KNEW – and instead chose unrighteousness. These are not folks who are ignorant. They are not innocent victims. They KNEW enough to at least turn to Christ.

Now, what happens to such a one who knows they are accountable to God, and COULD turn to Him – but does NOT? They become vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart is darkened. In other words, if I refuse light I get darkness. My spiritual condition is darkness. And what characterizes this condition of darkness is, “vain imaginations.”

The Greek word for, “imaginations,” really means, “reasoning,” or, “thoughts.” In other words, once I refuse light, my thinking will become governed by darkness – it will be void of Truth; void of light. My world will be fully within myself – outside of God – and I will be left to my own resources.

There are people who once professed Christ but who are now completely comfortable living in sin and unbelief. The problem here is not theology. The problem is that they have forfeited the light and chosen darkness. The darkness within them is what makes them comfortable in sin.

But that is actually the best case scenario. Because I cannot return to my previous condition

of ignorance or neutrality, my refusal of God has started me on a decent unto reprobation. My thinking and moral perspective will no longer be governed by Jesus Christ. It will be governed by ME – and worse – I will now have given the enemy access. The enemy is never passive. He wants to kill, steal, and destroy.

What Happens in the Darkness

Every one of us is born in Adam as those blind to God. Even if we have theology we may remain spiritually blind to the Person of Christ. For this God does not blame us – He never blames us for being born in Adam. But we are responsible for choosing to stay there – we are responsible for turning to Christ -- once God brings light. For it is one thing to be unable to see. But it is another, having seen enough to turn to God, to then willfully close my eyes. For if I do close my eyes, I am no longer blind. Rather, I am chosen a self-imposed darkness.

This brings us back to something that I said earlier: God never withdraws His light. He never withdraws Christ. But we can withdraw ourselves from HIM. In that case, we will receive within ourselves the darkness we have chosen – and within that darkness we will be both susceptible to our particular lusts of the flesh, and to the powers of that darkness. This will be a one way trip into reprobation and perversion if we do not turn and repent.

Paul describes people who have refused light and pushed away the Truth of God:

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. (Rom. 1:22-23)

This description undoubtedly sounds as if it could not apply in this day and age. But it does. We must realize that Paul is illustrating a spiritual principle. "An image made like to corruptible man," emerges when a person creates God in his OWN image. And it is a sure thing: If I refuse the revelation of Himself that God gives me, I will eventually create God in an image that satisfies myself.

This was stated earlier: Nothing is neutral. I am either allowing God to adjust me to Himself, or I am adjusting God to fit me. When I adjust God to fit me I am creating, "an image made like to corruptible man." The result will be terrible deception, even if it is religious deception that is presented as Christianity.

Deception is certainly a condition where we profess to be wise, but are actually fools. The world today is infected with this deception. The church is likewise infected. But in the final analysis, it is the ONLY possible outcome of pushing aside the Truth of God in Jesus Christ.

Again – we are not reading a description of those who are innocently ignorant. Rather, we are reading a description of those who COULD know – of those who DO know enough to turn to God – but refuse. The impact is they become dark within. This is deception. And certainly one of

the chief characteristics of deception is that we think that we are wise. But in reality, we are fools.

A Corrupt Mind

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all [men], as theirs also was. (II Tim. 3:1-9)

Those of whom Paul speaks in this passage are NOT heathen. They are supposed believers – they have, “a form of religion, but deny the power thereof.” They, “creep into houses,” which is a reference to the fact that church in those days was held in homes. But the pertinent point is that Paul says that they, “resist the Truth, are men of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the faith.” Thus, these are people who were

given light and Truth. But they are exactly as those described by Paul in Romans 1: They suppress the Truth within themselves – within their own unrighteousness.

The word translated CORRUPT in the NT means, “to bring into a worse state.” We could easily substitute the word DECAY. Just as living creatures and plants begin to decay once they are severed from life, so does the human mind and heart – so does the human being as a person – begin to decay and begin to become corrupt – once we are severed from LIFE HIMSELF. The impact is all the worse if we willfully choose to refuse Christ. In fact, there is a continual descent down into worse and worse states of corruption. This is what Paul describes here to Timothy, and it is what he describes in Romans 1.

You will note that here in II Timothy, as also we will see in Romans 1, that such people are, “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” In effect, they love themselves – they indulge themselves in their own lusts. It is as a law of the sin nature – if a person rejects God by choosing darkness they will be subject to their personal lusts; subject to the enemy. They will willfully give themselves over to their personal lusts. They may even do so while remaining religious – while being deceived into thinking they are walking with Christ. But all of this is evidence of a corrupt mind. It is evidence of a mind and heart that has become corrupted by its own unbelief to the point where they are utterly self-deceived.

Unfortunately, there is no depth to which humanity cannot sink. Humanity that is in the

grips of the corrupt nature in Adam, and under the influence of the powers of darkness, is capable of the most evil imaginations and acts. We have seen that this has been the case throughout human history. But we are now seeing a return of this evil in this day and age.

Chapter 19

Sexual Immorality

...Became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened (Rom. 1:21)....Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.... (Rom.1:22)...Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. (Rom. 1:24)

It is here that we must repeat something stated earlier – for it is the underlying theme of Romans 1: If I choose darkness rather than light, God will give me up to that darkness and everything that goes with it. I will be given over to my personal lusts, and I will be susceptible to the powers in that darkness. I will reap what I have sowed – and God has warned us ahead of time.

Note the relationship between choosing darkness rather than light – resulting in a corrupt mind and darkened heart: This results in the judgment of God in giving such people up to the lusts of their own heart. This may not happen immediately. But it will happen – because it is the only condition into which a person can come once they have chosen darkness.

There are many possible, “lusts of the flesh.” But in Romans 1, the primary lust of those who reject God is sexual immorality. That is not the only consequence, of course, as we read at the end of Romans 1. But so often sexual immorality is involved.

We saw earlier that there is an amazing similarity in the many archeological discoveries of ancient civilizations. All of them worshipped false gods -- which were really, demons. There is also much evidence of sexual immorality. There is evidence of human sacrifice, including the sacrifice of children. Do we think that these horrible things are unrelated? No. They are evidence of the SAME evil having invaded these cultures and captivating those individuals.

This is Satan. But it is the unbelief of human beings, and the rejection of light, that gives Satan the power to govern them. In other words, human beings must provide the access to Satan by choosing darkness, but once they do, there is no restraint as to the evil possible.

There is no question that when individuals, and as a result, groups as a whole, choose darkness, that there are always innocent victims. Satan seeks to gain access to innocent people, especially children, through the unbelief and compromise of those who could turn to Him. Their blood is on the hands of those who were given some light.

Of course, in this day and age, despite what is happening before our eyes, people – including some Christian people – would mock at the suggestion that Satan could once again exercise such power in this world. But we are fools if we doubt this possibility. In fact, it is always a device of Satan to hide himself. Yet this is happening right now – on every level.

Paul is telling us that there will come a point where, if people knowingly push away God, that God is going to judge them by giving them up to the darkness – to the sin – that they have chosen.

Take note: There is such a thing as judgment wherein God gives a person over to sin. Because a person chooses the lusts of the flesh God may give them over to exactly what they have chosen. Those lusts of the flesh then come to dominate that person – dominate their thinking, degrading their mind, and pushing them into acting out their sin.

What this means is that much of the sin that we see today is the result of God's judgment along that line. Not in the sense that God makes anyone sin – of course not. But what we are seeing is NOT merely human sin for which God will later judge. Rather, the sin we see today IS the result of God giving people up TO their sin of unbelief. God has given people up to their sin – and the forces of darkness therein. That is what we see.

As we stated earlier, as the church and the world have forfeited the Truth through unbelief, the restraint upon the forces of evil has been removed. Satan is once again establishing sin, evil, and perversion as the NORM. This is the principle of Romans 1, and it can happen to a nation, a church, or a person. Again – if I push God out, Satan and the forces of evil will come in and fill the void. I will be given over to the darkness I have chosen and everything that comes with it. That will be a corrupt mind, sexual

immorality – or whatever is my weakness – and the forces of darkness.

So, here we see what we might call another step downward into reprobation: Sexual immorality. So often – not always, but so often – those who abandon what they knew of God turn to sexual immorality. This is because sexual immorality is fundamental to Satan's desire to destroy what a human being IS. It is fundamental to human identity.

Homosexuality

Why do we suppose that homosexuality, same sex marriage, transgenderism, and even the indoctrination of young children with these perversions, have become such prominent issues over the last few years? Why have these perversions become normalized, and even celebrated? This is happening more and more, not only in the world, but in what used to be mainstream dominations of the church. What is happening?

Again – we have pushed out God. Thus, the forces of evil are no longer restrained, and Satan has infiltrated IN. And Satan has always had as his endgame the destruction of the purpose of God for humanity. Today, Satan continues his attempt to destroy humanity by corrupting the sexual nature of human beings – by destroying gender – by destroying what a human being IS. Homosexuality and transgenderism are his primary attempts.

These perversions are SIN. But they are the further results of the sin of unbelief – they are

the results of God giving a person over to the darkness they have chosen. Of course, such a person will not believe that this is what has happened to them. That unawareness is part of their deception.

The Word of God is clear on this matter:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. (Rom. 1:25-27)

Many professing believers might think that such a judgment of God is harsh – that those who are given up to their lusts don't deserve it – that if they had known the consequences they would not have sinned. That is rubbish. We are reading these warnings from out of Romans. And if the church would preach the Truth of Jesus Christ, instead of trying to be politically correct, people would be faced with the Truth. It directly and clearly states that homosexuality is evil, and that these are going to be the consequences for choosing darkness rather than light. God is not unjust.

A, "vile," affection is a lust that, when practiced, dishonors a person's own body, and of course, dishonors God. But according to scripture, this dishonoring includes the fact that a person is doing damage to their own personhood. And isn't that true about sexual immorality? All sin does

damage to the sinner, but sexual immorality does a greater damage. And homosexuality does the greatest damage of all to those who practice it, because it is contrary to God's design. In accordance to Satan's goals, homosexuality destroys what a human being is – it destroys gender.

In the passage above, Paul says:

Men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

Likewise, Paul writes:

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that commits fornication sins against his own body. (1 Cor. 6:18)

Paul is telling us that it is possible to sin against your own body to the extent that within your own personhood you begin to reap what you have sown. He says this specifically with regards to fornication and homosexuality.

The Wages of Sin

And even as they did not like to retain God in [their] knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil

things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Here we see sexual immorality is not the only result of unbelief – although you have to conclude from Paul's emphasis upon it in this chapter that it is one of the worst. But the principle remains: If a person pushes out God – pushes out the Truth that will renew the mind – the result will be a reprobate mind. And with that, will come darkness and all that is in darkness. There will be deception that will justify even the most horrible sins. As noted earlier, this is not the result of a onetime sin. It is a result of continually pushing away God. And as is always the case, it is always possible to repent and turn to God. Indeed, it is the refusal to do that which is the cause of these conditions.

As horrible as all of this is – and as true as all of it is – we must remember the Truth that began this passage of Romans 1:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

God is just. He has made the Truth in Christ known to all who would turn and open their heart.

Chapter 20

The Destruction of Children

And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through [the fire] to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I [am] the LORD. Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it [is] abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it [is] confusion. Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomits out her inhabitants (Lev. 18:21-25)

There are many commands in the Bible that are directed to specific nations or specific people. But in principle, they apply to all of us. That is true because they are a reflection of God's character and His will. And they are for the good of all. Thus, when we read passages such as this one from Leviticus, which forbids an entire list of abominable sins, we can be sure that God forbids them for all people – and that in principle they apply to all people.

Included in this list of sins is homosexuality. But take note of the first one listed in the quote above: Israel was forbidden to allow their children to pass through the fire to Molech. There are also numerous places in the OT where the same abomination is condemned – it is condemned as one of the worst sins:

Whosoever [he be] of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth [any] of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not: Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people. (Lev. 20:2-5)

But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which [are] in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through [the fire] unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. (Jer. 32:34-36)

Molech was a demon god to whom children were sacrificed. There is a very good chance that

Molech was actually Baal – at least closely associated with Baal. Children were sacrificed to Molech because those who sacrificed them believed that the wrath and destruction at the hand of the false god would be poured out on the children instead of upon the adults. This means that those adults were also selfish cowards – sacrificing their kids for their own benefit – or so they thought.

If you read the condemnation of God against Israel when they sacrificed their own children to Molech, the judgments God pronounced are catastrophic. God hates all sin. He hates all of the sins listed in Leviticus 18. But if it is possible to rate sin as to depth of evil, child sacrifice is one of the worse evils in the sight of God.

We get a suggestion of that in the words of Jesus:

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and [that] he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matt. 18:6)

Can we possibly see the principle in all of this – a principle that defines a great evil? Can we see that today, in principle, that this evil is being practiced?

For example, when women get abortions, it is certain that they do not think in terms of sacrificing their unborn child to a demon god. But what if, in fact, there IS a demon god behind abortion? And when a woman has an abortion, is

it not a fact that she is getting it in most cases for the convenience of herself and the father of the child? Are not many abortions simply an attempt to remove the consequences for sexual immorality?

Abortion has become so normalized that millions are absolutely CALLOUS to what they are doing. Indeed, they demand the right – they say that it IS right. They protest and riot for the right to abort babies. Is this not evidence of human minds that have been corrupted by the spirit of evil?

Some estimates say that there have been 64 million abortions over the last 50 years. In most cases, both the woman and the man who fathered the child were behind it. And recently, when Roe vs. Wade was overturned in the USA, there were great protests. This is going to incur the judgment of God.

But that being said, that fact that abortion is now celebrated, demanded, and normalized is just another evidence that the forces of evil have infiltrated into this realm as never before. The moral sanity and minds of people have been corrupted. The murder of children isn't even defined as that by many. They define it as a right.

Child Sex Abuse

The sexual abuse of children has become a widespread evil in this world. Children are kidnapped and sold. And sexual abuse has also become alarmingly prevalent in families.

This evil is also being practiced more and more in churches. For example, it is a documented fact that the Roman Catholic Church has allowed and covered up systemic child sexual abuse. Thousands of priests – who are mostly homosexual – have sexually abused thousands of children. But this is also being discovered more and more in Protestant churches.

Think about the moral lines that must be crossed in a person's mind to sexually abuse children. That requires an abnormal, perverted mind. But then to cover it up? To do this as a member of the clergy – even if it is the Roman church -- is beyond belief.

Sexual immorality, including pornography, can sometimes lead to homosexuality or to pedophilia. The wages of perverted lust is more lust. It is an addiction.

In this day and age, children are not only being sexually abused at an unthinkable rate, but now children are being indoctrinated with sexual perversion. They are being taken to drag queen shows. And the parents sit there laughing like a bunch of fools. They are fully responsible for this evil.

Our schools, including grade schools, are incorporating graphic sex stores, including the normalization of homosexuality, into their books. School boards are demanding the right to do so. They want to criminalize an protest against such evil. Again – what kind of a mind can justify this? Only a mind that has been corrupted by, "the

prince of the power of the air who works in the sons of disobedience.” These things are evidence of Satanic evil becoming normalized, demanded, and celebrated. Even a few years ago, these things would be unthinkable.

As stated earlier, human beings are capable of great evil on their own. But the human race is in bondage to the realm of darkness. Human beings have a reprobate nature. Thus, to the degree that Christ is refused, pushed out, or ignored, the power of the enemy will come in and use the depravity of humanity to normalize these great evils.

Satan’s Clear Goal

It is absolutely clear that Satan has turned his attention towards the children of the world as never before. He knows that if you can corrupt children then the next generation will easily accept his perversions. Of course, there has always been the sexual abuse of children, let alone immorality in all forms. But today it is spread like an infectious disease. Worse, it is being tolerated and celebrated. If we cannot see that this is the work of Satan – if we cannot see where this is headed unless Christ comes back – we are fools.

Take note of the unbelievable toxic thinking of many college students and professors. This shows that Satan has already planted the seed to corrupt the next generation. And what will become of the children born now? Pray that Jesus Christ will return before humanity destroys

itself morally and spiritually – as it was doing in the days of Noah.

God is going to allow this to do only so far before Jesus does return. Indeed -- if you read scripture about the past dealings of God, the evil of child sacrifice is the point at which God intervenes with great judgment and destruction. He does so – not merely because of the sin – but He does so because of His mercy. God promises to intervene before the human race destroys itself – He promises this, if for no other reason, for the sake of the children.

It is not a coincidence that where religious deception abounds, so does all manner of sexual immorality and perversion. The Roman church certainly proves this. That is because religious deception is the result of abandoning God – it is often the result of choosing darkness rather than light – and as we have seen, once darkness is chosen, then those in it will reap all that is in that darkness. Sexual immorality is in that darkness. In that darkness, people will be susceptible to the powers of darkness.

In any nation – especially in a nation that professes Christ – where immorality, homosexuality, and child abuse in any form becomes accepted and normalized – it is evidence that Satan has fully established himself. But thank God, it is likewise the point at which God intervenes with great judgment.

Chapter 21

The Truth about Sexuality

It is almost inconceivable that any Christian person would debate the will of God on same sex marriage, homosexuality, or transgenderism. And certainly, any professing Christian who would support the indoctrination of children with any of these perversions cannot be someone who knows Jesus Christ. You cannot believe lies and the Truth at the same time. In the end, it has to be one or the other.

We will either embrace Jesus Christ and the Truth in Him – and allow God to change us accordingly – or we will adjust Jesus Christ and the Truth to fit ourselves. The latter is what is happening not only in the world, but in the church. And the result is that we not only believe lies, and live in darkness, but we become those who ARE a lie, and have darkness within.

That might sound harsh to some. But it is the Truth. It is not love to lie to people who are perishing by telling them that they are just fine. The Truth of the gospel ALWAYS exposes our sin so that we might find freedom in Jesus Christ.

Marriage

God has clearly defined marriage as a oneness between one man and one woman. The Bible also states, “male and female He created them – meaning TWO, and only TWO genders – were established by God at creation. We don’t get to pick our gender. We don’t get to redefine

marriage. We don't get to practice that which God calls perversion.

God directly forbids a violation of these basic facts of His creation and will. He forbids a violation of sexuality in any way. Adultery violates marriage. Same sex marriage violates marriage. Homosexuality and transgenderism violate sexuality. They are not only sins against God, but according to scripture, they are sin against a person's own soul.

There is no question that on these sexual issues that this world has crossed a line into moral degradation that is a new low. Pandora's Box has been opened, so to speak. And worse, the same can be said of various parts of the body of Christ. These sins have always been around. But in this day and age, homosexuality, transgenderism, same sex marriage, and even the indoctrination of children has become more and more the NORM. It is not only tolerated -- but celebrated. This has never before happened in our history to this degree. It is of Satan.

Satan has always wanted to destroy what a human being IS. That is why we are seeing the destruction of GENDER. This is a sure sign that we are approaching the end of this age. God will NOT tolerate this -- it is the point at which He has always intervened. And thank God He will.

It is one thing to be caught in a sin and to cry out for help. It is another to deal with sin by calling it RIGHT. This is the outcome of refusing Truth. It is what people do when they have rejecting redemption in Christ, and the Word of God. When

a person or a nation deals with sin by calling it, "right," they have crossed the moral line and shut out God. This is what America is doing -- right now; in our time. Some churches are likewise doing the same.

Not About Constitutional Rights

The homosexual agenda is not about constitutional RIGHTS. Rather, the homosexual agenda has one goal: To get homosexuality accepted AS MORALLY RIGHT. For if that happens, then true Christianity must be declared as wrong. And THAT is the goal of Satan. Once this becomes the new normal – and it is well on its way to exactly that – then Satan's greater goal of destroying what a human being is will proceed without restraint. That is why Satan's attention has turned towards children. He wants a generation that grows up in this new, perverted normal.

The Truth About Sin

Most people who affirm homosexuality do so because they have accepted the notion that people are, "born that way." This question needs to be addressed. It is at the heart and core of the issue.

First of all, it is actually absurd to think that every person who is caught in the sin of homosexuality sat down one day and decided to be gay. No. There are certainly some who fell into that sin through their own choice and efforts. But many persons bound by this sin will tell you that they had inclinations and desires along that

line as far back as they can remember. They will tell you they did NOT choose these inclinations -- although they are guilty of yielding to them. Some of them will even tell you that they wish they were free -- some will tell you that they have tried to get free, even through Christ, but have failed. Many, having run out of answers, have surrendered. Others are in despair because they don't know what else to do.

But homosexuals are not born as homosexuals -- created that way by God. Rather, they are born, as we ALL are born, as a product of a fallen RACE. Thus, before we come to Christ, we are all at the mercy of the sin nature, the spirit of this world, and the darkness that belongs to the fallen creation. And because we are, we are all going to be subject to the flesh -- we are going to be governed by the flesh -- in one way or another. That is what we ARE, and it is ALL that can happen to someone who is born in Adam.

My manifestation of the flesh may be sin along one line, and your manifestation may be sin along another line. But it is all SIN. It is all the product of a fallen race. For some, homosexual tendencies may be their particular manifestation of their flesh.

You and I did not sit up the night before we were conceived and decide to be born with a sin nature. We did not choose to be born at all -- we didn't exist before we were born of this world. We were born as the product of a spiritually dead race -- the Adam race. And because of the nature of that race, we were doomed to be in bondage to the sin nature -- along SOME manifestation. Then,

because of the various forces in our lives – temperament, environment, upbringing, family -- we developed a particular way to manifest the sin nature.

There are human beings who have a terrible time with temper. Some have an inclination towards alcohol or drugs. Others are addicted to heterosexual desires. Some are in bondage to homosexuality. I could go on. But the thing to realize is that ALL of this goes back to the SAME ROOT: The sin nature. We are born of a fallen race. That is the root cause and the root problem.

Now what are we supposed to do about this terrible condition? Are we to excuse ourselves by saying, "I was born this way? I cannot help it. God made me this way. So I am free to indulge myself."? No. If we were talking about someone who likes to murder people we would recognize the absurdity of such an excuse. We would say, "You must get help. You must be locked up!" But what about other sin?

Because we did not choose to be born with a sin nature God does not hold us responsible for it. And because we were not responsible for the family into which we were born, nor our environment as a child, nor the culture that influenced us, God does not blame us for the baggage we have accumulated as a child. We did not choose those things. We did not decide to be born in Adam. BUT God does hold us responsible – once we see the Truth of Christ – for coming to Him for deliverance OUT of our particular sin.

The issue for each human being on this earth – once God shows them the Truth – is faith in Christ, or the unbelief of turning away and embracing sin. But you see, if I turn away and embrace my sin, then I am no longer blameless for being in sin. No. I am fully accountable and to blame for remaining in Adam. I have rejected deliverance through Christ. In short, the debate of whether any of us are born a certain way is moot. The issue is what we will do with ourselves once God brings light. Will we possess ourselves and follow our desires? Or will we turn to Christ and be born anew?

Here we see the Truth regarding ANY sin. Are you in bondage to drugs? The ONLY solution is Christ – but that solution is freely offered. Are you in bondage to heterosexual lust – pornography, fornication, or adultery? The ONLY solution is Christ and what He did at the Cross – and that solution is freely offered. The same goes for ANY sin – and it certainly applies to homosexuality. Are you in bondage to this terrible sin? The ONLY solution is Christ. And that solution is freely offered.

This is what is taught in Romans 1. God has shown people the Truth. He has shown it to them many different ways. But they have suppressed the Truth in favor of unrighteousness. They have embraced the sin nature – they may not admit this, but it is what they have done. The outcome is worse and worse darkness and worse and worse corruption.

Today even many churches are refusing to preach the Cross. They are refusing to tell people they are sinners in need of deliverance through Christ.

Why? Is this merely a problem with theology? No. It is a problem with God. This is evidence that they have rejected the Truth, neglected the Truth, or are so deceived that they don't know the Truth. Regardless, many of these churches are likewise affirming homosexuality and same sex marriage. They are affirming all kinds of immorality. It is all from the same cause: They have refused the light. Now they are in darkness.

To summarize: We are not responsible for being born in Adam with a sin nature. But we are responsible for the light God gives us – or turning to Christ and seeking deliverance from our particular sin.

Sinful Conduct

Each of us are responsible for yielding to our sinful inclinations – through deliberate conduct -- instead of yielding to God. We are responsible for choosing wrong instead of choosing right.

How do people, for example, become addicted to drugs? At some point they crossed a line and took their first drug. How do people become addicted to pornography? At some point, they crossed a line and starting looking at it. Their inner inclinations were there and they chose to translate it into outward conduct. There was a starting point – a point at which they ignored conscience and did what they knew was wrong. And then, in each case, despite knowing

that it was wrong to do, they KEPT doing it. There was a repetitive choice to give oneself over to a sinful inclination – and it resulted in addiction. We are responsible for the particular bondage we are in because we yielded to those inclinations instead of turning to God.

Let's apply this to homosexuality. Suppose as I grow up I begin to have inclinations along that line. Maybe I don't know where they came from. They are just there. There will come a day – there will come multiple instances – where I will be caught between those inclinations and what my conscience is telling me. There may come a point at which I will either choose to act out these inclinations in outward conduct or refuse to do so.

The question at that point is this: How will I respond? If I yield to the flesh I am going to enter into greater darkness – I am going to simply increase the power of sin over me. All of this, of course, finds its root in the sin nature. But despite not being to blame for being born with a sin nature, can we see that once we begin to yield to it, with outward conduct, instead of seeking help from God – can we see that we become fully responsible for the course we take, and the consequences that come with that course? Especially since we can, at ANY time during that course, turn to God?

How about adultery? Or fornication? If I am a heterosexual person who has strong inclinations and leanings – should I just say that I was born that way and yield to sexual immorality? If I commit adultery against my spouse do I tell them

that I was born that way and that they are going to have to take it or leave it? Ridiculous. How about murder? Or an inclination to steal? Is there ever an excuse for staying in sin? No. Because Jesus Christ is the certain way OUT.

In short, you and I cannot set ourselves free from the sin nature through works. But we can turn to God. By faith, we can yield our member to God as instruments of righteousness. Romans 6 exhorts us to do so – and the passage would be nonsense if it were not possible through faith in Christ.

The Responsibility of the Church

The church MUST preach the Truth on these matters. That is the ONLY way to be faithful to God. That does not mean that believers should be defined by what we are against. But if you preach and focus on what you are FOR then you are going to have to define both what you are for and what you are against. There should be no argument on these issues. There should be no hesitation to tell the Truth. We are responsible for doing so.

Redemption in Christ should be front and center. But the church must NEVER be a place where people can come for affirmation in sin. That is not love and it is a lie. Rather, the church should embrace anyone who truly wants to be free from their sin.

God does not welcome us as sinners in order to affirm our sin and leave us in sin. God accepts us JUST AS WE ARE – but not to leave us that

way. We can come to Jesus Christ as the worst human being that ever lived. But the whole point in coming to Christ is for deliverance from sin. We come to Christ because we WANT HIM – not because we want sin. Any other presentation of the gospel is an outright lie and will eventually destroy those who embrace it. The church must reflect this grace and mercy of God – but never compromise with the Truth.

This is why it is such a great evil for these sins, not only to be affirmed by churches, but in some cases, to be practiced within the churches. Read Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Read Romans 1. Does anything else need to be said as to the will of God? At some point, we either believe and embrace the Truth or we do not.

There is no sin so deep that the Redemption has not already reached it. Nothing can change this – not even the judgmental attitude of professing Christian people. We must preach the Truth in love. But we must preach the TRUTH. This is certainly the case with regards to sexual sins. The Truth must be both preached and practiced within the church – and then the church will have grounds to preach the Truth to the world.

Again – sexual immorality of all kinds has gained a foothold in the church. It has become a point of debate and a cause of division. To debate and divide over issues about which there can be NO question and NO debate is simply another evidence that Satan is at work. It is evidence that the Truth has been abandoned and that leadership does not know Jesus Christ.

Chapter 22

Anti Christ

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (I John 4:1-4)

This passage is a warning. It is a warning by the Apostle John to the body of Christ. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits to see whether they are of God." But where is this happening today – where are people and churches using this test for Truth that John give in this passage?

Spiritual Deception

Before we move on, we need to ask: John said, "Believe not every SPIRIT, but test the SPIRITS...." What does John mean when he talks about a SPIRIT? I think sometimes we don't recognize what the Bible means when it talks about a spirit. Do we think that when John mentions spirits, that he's talking about some disembodied cloud floating around in a church

building? Do we think that he is simply referring to people when, say, they speak in tongues or make these prophetic pronouncements like some people claim they do? No, a spirit isn't necessarily going to look like a spirit. It's not necessarily going to act like what we would expect. A spirit is the underlying spiritual environment that is created wherein there is a picture of God in his son, Jesus Christ, presented. So you could have a spiritual environment that seems happy and wonderful and full of unity – but that is governed by a false Christ. You could have different environments that seem good or that seem bad, but there could be a demonic spirit behind it.

Now, if you doubt that, if you think that's too extreme, if you think that we're looking for a devil under every rock, we're not. But I simply point to this passage, "Beloved, believe not every spirit..." Doesn't this clearly indicate that there might be spirits trying to find access in churches and in people's lives – a danger that people need to be aware of?

God is telling us something that we need to take seriously. But few take this seriously today. It is basically ignored -- it is just pushed away as applying to somebody else. Most think that it applies to a first century problem -- but not for today.

But let's read on and see what John is saying. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits -- test the spirits -- to see whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." I would submit that if many false prophets are going out into the world in the

first century, during the time of the Apostle John, what would we say about today with television, internet, and the printed material that is available? False prophets abound. In fact, there are more false prophets – false teachers around today -- than there are true prophets.

This also tells us more about what John means by SPIRIT. He is talking about evil spirits that can work through PEOPLE – in this case, people who claim to be speaking for God. They may be self-deceived, or deliberate deceivers. But John is telling us that the spirit of antichrist gains access primarily through false ministers of Christ – “angels of light.”

As we noted, this shows that antichrist is not one person. It is a spirit that works through many people. That is the case even if there are prominent representatives of antichrist. It is the spirit working IN the sons of disobedience – not merely the sons of disobedience themselves. In short, antichrist works through people, but the people – through unbelief – provide the flesh and blood.

The apostle Paul made it clear:

***For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,
but against principalities, against powers,
against the rulers of the darkness of this
world, against spiritual wickedness in high
places. (Eph. 6:12)***

***For the weapons of our warfare [are] not
carnal, but mighty through God to the
pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down***

***imaginations, and every high thing that
exalts itself against the knowledge of God.
(II Cor. 10:4)***

Christian people need to wake up. I realized that this sounds negative. It sounds like being down on everything. But read what the Bible says -- and get a picture of the gravity of the situation and figure out what time it is in this age. You'll understand that we don't have time anymore to fool around and play church. We got to take these things seriously and understand what God is doing and how we are to respond, or we're going to be deceived.

The Test

John does not leave it to us to figure out how to test the spirits. He's going to tell us what the test is. God is very thorough about this. He says, here's the test -- "Hereby we know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ having come in the flesh -- that is the Greek reading -- is of God. We could also translate: "Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God."

Now, what does that mean? The theologians and those who are focused on the academic meaning of the Bible will immediately point to the historical fact that in the time of John Gnosticism was invading the church.

Gnosticism was a heresy. Now you have to remember that this was a Christian heresy. It started out as a pagan heresy, but it invaded the church and was Christianized. As noted earlier,

antichrist isn't a pagan issue or something that is limited to secular government. It came into the church: AntiCHRIST, not AntiBudda, or ANTIpagan. No. AntiCHRIST.

Gnosticism taught, and this is the bare bones of it, that the physical world was evil. And because it was evil, God would not touch it. God would have nothing to do with it. Consequently, Gnosticism, given that as a premise, had to teach that Jesus Christ was not the only begotten son of God become man. In other words, Jesus Christ, according to Gnosticism, could not have become a flesh and blood human being because that would have meant that God touched evil and became evil. They demanded that Jesus Christ only appeared to be a man. In short, Gnostic Christianity refused to confess, "Jesus Christ having come in the flesh."

The basis for John writing this passage certainly was the claim of Gnostic Christianity that Jesus Christ did not literally become, through a human birth, a flesh and blood human being. According to this heresy, THE WORD did not become flesh -- and dwell among us. You'll find in the writings of John that that truth is repeated many, many times because he's writing against this error so often. It is a primary Christian Truth – the entire plan of God's Redemption through Christ depends upon the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became a flesh and blood human being.

The centrality of this Truth of Jesus having come in the flesh cannot be overstated – if we deny it or omit it we do not have Redemption. Indeed, if we deny or omit it we do not have Christianity at

all. Notice why: If Jesus did not actually become a flesh and blood human being then through His redemptive work He has not come to dwell in His people. In that case, we are not saved. The very core of Christianity, "Christ in us," is null.

The reality of Jesus Christ in His people by the means of the Holy Spirit is fully dependent upon the fact that Jesus Christ Himself was the Word become flesh – dependent upon Jesus becoming a flesh and blood human being. It is because Jesus was God the Son, born into this world from the outside of this world – lived, died for us, was raised, and ascended – all as a human being – this is what made it possible for Jesus Christ by the means of His spirit to come and dwell in His people. The two are as one truth.

"Christ in us, the hope of glory," (Col. 1:27) is the core of Christianity. It is this reality of Christ in us that John is defending in this passage. He's saying that the spirit of God will always confess this great reality. And when John says, "confess," he is talking about revealing, proclaiming, or manifesting. Indeed, the very presence of the spirit of God IS the confession of this core Truth. But even more importantly, the spirit of God will actually make this happen in our experience – God will work by His spirit to bring us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, Who is in us.

Joined to the Lord

The Spirit of God will always confess that Jesus Christ, having come in His flesh, presently IS come to dwell within those in the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:17 says, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him." When Jesus Christ comes to dwell in us, we are joined together with Christ in spirit in resurrection union. But we are not joined with Christ in soul or natural man in this age. No. Rather, Christ is joined with our spirit, but within our body and soul. Paul's picture of the believer as an earthen vessel in which dwells the Treasure is perfect.

John says, "Hereby you know the Spirit of God." The Spirit of God will not only reveal the fact that Jesus Christ dwells within His people, but the spirit of God will actually reveal Christ in His people -- the purpose for which the Spirit of God was given according to Jesus was to reveal the living Christ to us in an inward way.

The very essence, the very core, the very definition of Christianity is being addressed here. The Spirit of God will always reveal Christ to the believer in an inward way -- will reveal that Jesus Christ IS come into our very being. If you read John 14, 15, and 16, every purpose for which Jesus said the Spirit of God was given centers on a revelation of Him. But not just in doctrine; not just in concept. That's all there, of course. But the purpose of the Spirit of God is to actually reveal Jesus Christ to us in an inward way so that we may know Him and inwardly realize Him.

The Spirit of Antichrist

How often is this mandatory revelation of Jesus Christ as dwelling in His people even talked about in Christian ministry today? John is saying that the Spirit of God will always confess this Truth --

and yet we almost never hear it spoken of, let alone preached, as the core truth of Christianity. We don't hear it preached as the test for Christianity; as the test for where the Spirit of God is at work. We don't even hear it mentioned.

Can we see a terrible blindness here? I don't think most Christian people are deliberately and knowingly neglecting this. But I do think that Christian people are blind to it -- Christian people don't know and they don't know to know. But if we read on in the passage, it is this blindness -- merely the omission of this Truth -- that is exactly the work of the spirit of antichrist.

John writes in verse 3: "And every spirit that confesses NOT Jesus Christ having come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the Spirit of antichrist."

Now, let's note something very essential to see: We just read in verse one and two, what the Spirit of God WILL confess; what the Spirit of God WILL DO. But did you notice that in verse 3 that John doesn't mention ANYTHING AT ALL that the Spirit of antichrist WILL DO? He doesn't. All that he mentions is what the Spirit of antichrist WILL NOT DO. He tells us only what the spirit of antichrist will OMIT. The Spirit of antichrist will NOT do what the Spirit of God WILL do: Confess Jesus, reveal Jesus. The spirit of antichrist will do anything necessary, or preach as a substitute, that which will OMIT this reality, HIDE it, or BLIND people to the reality of Christ in them.

This tells us that what is NOT preached is as important as what IS preached. If, "Christ in us,"

that is, "Jesus having come in the flesh," is NOT being revealed – is not central to either a person's life or a church's life – then the spirit of antichrist is at work. The omission of this core reality is a sufficient identifying mark that antichrist is at work.

How many understand that antichrist blinds? The term itself suggests that possibility. "Antichrist," means, "instead of Christ," and so a primary device of the enemy is to preach anything BUT, "Christ in us" – to preach anything else as the substitute. This substitute will often blind believers to the real Truth. And so even though there are millions of Christian people who don't necessarily believe horrible error, there are millions who are blind to the Truth. But that is a set up for real deception – because if we do not know Christ there will ultimately be no standard against error. Where Christ is not realized, the enemy can easily fill that void with that which is of darkness.

Read again 1 John 4:3: "Every spirit that confesses NOT Jesus Christ having come in the flesh is not of God." Let's talk a little more about what John means by SPIRIT. Certainly included in what he means is the spiritual environment that is governing a church. Is it the presence of Christ in his people? Is it the reality -- the knowing of him in an inward way -- the realization of Christ? Read the New Testament. That's what governs a church according to the mind of God. Where that's absent, what is governing? Well, maybe it's theology. Or perhaps it is a focus upon church life -- a nebulous idea of church as a family; as a society; as an institution. Folks get

together, they study the Bible, they listen to sermons, they sing in the choir, and they have fellowship, and they have friends and they have family activities and they meet certain challenges. They try to raise the money to pay the bills. And all of it may be innocent enough; it may be honest, moral, and good. But yet, what is the spiritual environment? Is it what John says it must be to be a living, dynamic church according to the mind of God? Paul says, "Christ, our life." (Col. 3:4) That is essentially what John is teaching. Is Christ the life of our church? Not merely in word, but actually – in experience?

When all the religion and posturing is skimmed off, what is the spiritual environment that governs this church? What is the life blood? What is the pulse of this church? Is it Christ in us -- individually and collectively -- the hope of glory? Is it Christ our life? Is it, "Yet not I but Christ?" Is it Christ crucified and raised – but also US crucified and raised in Him? Well, it's supposed to be that. And if it's not, what is it? Is it just dead religion -- or maybe just a big blank space? A blank space is a very dangerous thing. What I mean by blank space is I mean all the areas in our Christian experience that are supposed to be filled with Christ but aren't. There is an omission or a blindness there – which is evidence of antichrist.

There are many sincere churches that don't know the Truth and don't know to know the Truth. They may not be deceived into horrible error and heresy right now, but the fact that there is a huge blank space regarding experiencing Christ as our life is dangerous. that makes them ripe for

deception. That makes people by the tens of millions everywhere just ripe to be picked for deception because they don't have a living experience with the living, resurrected Christ that can hold them and keep them out of it. They're not under the work of the cross. They're not in the process of losing life to him in order that he might be their life. Again, not a criticism, not a condemnation, not a put down, not taking a superior position here -- but simply repeating what John is saying here because it is vitally important. It's a warning right from the Bible. Every spirit that confesses NOT Jesus having come in the flesh is not of God. The blindness or omission is evidence that antichrist is working.

John states: THIS is the Spirit of antichrist. WHAT is the Spirit of antichrist? Every spirit that confesses NOT, "Christ in us the hope of glory." You can't get any clearer than that. The Spirit of God focuses upon Christ in you, the hope of glory, on a personal level. The Spirit of antichrist blinds people to that and will confess anything but that.

John doesn't even mention one thing that antichrist will confess -- although there is ultimately going to be great error. But what does matter is what is NOT being confessed. Where Jesus Christ having come in the flesh -- his flesh and then ours today -- where that's absent -- the Spirit of antichrist is at work -- at least to have blinded people. THIS is the spirit of antichrist.

Antichrist Already at Work

John writes, "THIS is the Spirit of antichrist. Whereof you have already heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." Note the wording: John calls antichrist IT. IT. IT should come; IT is in the world. And IT was already out there in John's times. So like I said before, you may look for an individual called antichrist. If you do, I think you're going to be deceived. And I say that despite the fact that there could be representatives and main representatives as we approach the end of the age. But regardless of that, antichrist is a spirit, a spirit that ultimately will deny and redefine the very core definition of Christianity. IT will deny, and blur, and redefine Christ in you the hope of glory as Christianity -- and offer something instead.

John wrote, "Whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. " Paul likewise wrote, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work. (II Thes. 2:7) These words were written 2000 years ago. Yet both apostles are telling us that the spirit of antichrist was ALREADY at work – at work in the church. Could it be more clearly stated that antichrist is NOT an individual, but a spirit? That antichrist is NOT a political figure, but a religious figure?

The greatest danger is to look outward for a person that is antichrist, all the while antichrist is a spirit working within the church – a collective man – who is a living denial of Jesus having come in the flesh. But such are the deceptions of the enemy. It is happening right now.

Chapter 23

The Man of Sin

As noted, Paul wrote about the spirit of antichrist – using another picture; using other terms. But it is the same Truth. Paul prophesied of, “the man of sin; the son of perdition.” This is not a different manifestation of evil during the church age; during the end time. This is the same manifestation – pictured in a different way.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now restrains will restrain, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: [Even him], whose coming is after the working of

Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (II Thes. 2:1-12)

We remember that in his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul taught Truth about the second coming. But in the aftermath of reading Paul's epistle, they apparently thought that the Second Coming was imminent. Paul wrote this passage to show them that they were wrong – but within this passage we are given much additional teaching on the end of the age, leading up to the Second Coming. We are also given another picture of the spirit of antichrist.

False Christianity

The first point that Paul makes is that the Second Coming will NOT take place until there is first an apostasy. The word, "apostasy," means, "a falling away." Of course, this speaks of a falling away, or of a, "standing aloof," from CHRIST. This immediately gives us the context of what Paul is talking about – he is talking about the church.

During the end time apostasy, we can be sure that there is going to be a ongoing manifestation of Jesus Christ – a clear proclamation of the Truth – so that anyone who wants Christ can turn. But

according to Paul, even though the Truth will be proclaimed – indeed, in reaction to the Truth being proclaimed -- many who are already in apostasy will harden themselves all the more. Indeed, that hardening will eventually result in the formation of, “the man of sin; the son of perdition.”

Note that, “apostasy,” requires that a person had been standing by faith in Christ – perhaps not yet saved – but at least open to the Truth. But these, “fall away,” from Christ. Thus, this is Truth forfeited. It is light rejected, in favor of something else.

If we read this passage, and grasp what Paul is describing as a spiritual condition, it becomes clear that, “the man of sin; the son of perdition,” is NOT an individual. It is a collective man – comprised of all of those who are in apostasy.

Note that last point: Paul says Christ will not return, “except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed.” Can we see that the falling away results in the formation of the man of sin? The two are directly related – those in apostasy are collectively revealed as, “the man of sin” – a collective man – a body of people who have forfeited the Truth.

That, “the man of sin,” is a collective body of those in apostasy is proven by the fact that this collective man sits in the temple of God – which is the body of Christ. In other words, this, “man of sin,” is all of those who are in apostasy – and yet continue WITHIN the body of Christ. They continue walking in false Christianity.

Of course, most who are in apostasy, but continue walking in false Christianity – in the churches – are deceived. Most don't fully realize what they are doing. But the root problem here is unbelief – it is that at some point they have chose darkness rather than light.

So, we see several things. First, the Truth of Christ will continue to be revealed. Second, in response to that Truth of Christ, there will be many who refuse or neglect Christ; many who forfeit what God offers by His grace. This is going to happen on a level never before seen – and as it does happen, those in apostasy will form what Paul calls, "the man of sin; the son of perdition." This will be a collective body of those who are still in Adam, or who are operating out from the Adam nature – it will be a false Christianity. This will mature to the point where this collective, "man of sin; son of perdition," will be established within the church as the new normal – celebrated as true Christianity.

Someone might say that this has always happened within the church – that there is nothing new about it. That is true. There have always been seasons of apostasy. Indeed, during the middle ages, the Roman Catholic Church was considered to be true Christianity – and we could reason that in every way this fulfilled Paul's prophecy. But it did not – for the apostasy that Paul is describing is one that leads up to The Second Coming. Thus, this apostasy about which Paul is warning is going to be far beyond any before it. If we were to quote other scriptures, we would see that this end time apostasy is going to be far more evil,

with signs and wonders, and governed by a spirit of deception never before unleashed upon the earth.

Many have been taught that this, "man of sin," is an individual – just as the antichrist is supposed to be an individual. But we have seen that this is not the teaching of scripture. The antichrist – the spirit of antichrist -- was already at work in the first century. So, despite the fact that this man of sin and the antichrist ARE one in the same, these terms do NOT speak of any individual person.

John wrote of the spirit of antichrist – and warned that it would work through false prophets – and that Christians needed to test the spirits. Paul gives the same warning, but shows the fullness and maturity of this spirit of antichrist within the church. There will always be false prophets inspired by the spirit of antichrist. But as this spirit infiltrates the church – as believers DO believe any spirit – there will be formed a CORPORATE MAN. Just as there is the body of Christ, so there is a body of antichrist -- who is, "the man of sin, the son of perdition."

Thus, "the man of sin," is the collective body of those who have fallen away from Christ – or who refused him to begin with -- but who now represent a false Christianity. Sure. These people, as they fall away from Christ, form this false Christianity. They comprise this, "man of sin," who, "sits in the temple of God." The temple of God is the church.

The Necessity of the Cross

Why did Paul use the terms, "man of sin," and, "son of perdition?" To what do they refer?

Can we see that both these terms suggest BIRTH or OFFSPRING? The man OF sin is that which is born OF sin. The SON of perdition is that which is born of perdition. To who, or what, could that apply? It applies to none other than ADAM -- and all of the offspring of Adam. "The man of sin," and, "the son of perdition," represent the collective body of people who are matured and hardened in the Adam nature – but nevertheless operate within a false Christianity.

Now, this might seem impossible. Why would anyone do that? Because they are deceived. But all that is necessary for a person to become one who professes Christ yet remains in Adam is for that person to refuse or neglect the personal Cross. In principle, Christ without the Cross is Adam. Christianity without the Cross is dead religion.

The human race is delivered out of the Adam race into the new man in Christ by being planted into the death and resurrection of Christ. But many will not take their place in HIS DEATH, and thus, remain IN ADAM. They are deceived – and therefore operate – at best -- within a traditional, religious form of Christianity that is NOT in Christ, but in Adam. This is, "the man of sin...who sits in the temple of God."

ANY form of Christianity that minimizes the personal Cross – or that people practice who have not come into an actual experience of Christ in His death – is a false Christianity. It is false because it is NOT new life – it is not CHRIST IN US. It is religious manifestation of Adam.

Jesus died for all – but in doing so – made it possible, indeed, essential, that we die in Him. There is no other deliverance out from the Adam race into new life in Christ. But Satan, through the spirit of antichrist, has always sought to create a false Christianity that is the result of sidestepping the personal Cross. The outcome is a religious man – still in Adam – sitting in the church – fully on the throne of his own life. This is antichrist. It is the collective man of sin.

Chapter 24

The Abomination of Desolation

The abomination of desolation, spoken of in Daniel 9 and 12, is the SAME manifestation of evil revealed by John and Paul. All of these pictures are antichrist. In Matthew 24, Jesus points to Daniel's prophecy:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:) (Matt. 24:14-15)

To understand what Jesus was revealing we must first understand exactly what "the abomination of desolation" is. Actually, there were several historical occurrences wherein the abomination of desolation was set up in the temple in Jerusalem. One was in 167 B.C. – and may be the one to which Daniel was referring – and one was in 70 A.D. – and was the one to which Jesus was referring. In each case, the blood sacrifices of animals which God had ordained were replacing with the sacrificing of swine's flesh. In other words, the animals that God had said were CLEAN – and could be sacrificed – were replaced by animals that God had said were UNCLEAR and must never be sacrificed.

Now, those were actual historical occurrences. But Jesus and the book of Daniel are using those

historical events as representative of spiritual principles that apply eternally. In other words, the abomination that these events were in the material world is a type and shadow of something worse in spirit. The spiritual principle and the Truth holds regardless.

Under the Old Covenant, God commanded that certain animals be sacrificed to Him to make atonement for sins. Likewise, these same animals were allowed to be consumed by God's people. These animals were deemed to be CLEAN by the Lord. But there were other animals that were forbidden to be sacrificed. Likewise, these same animals were forbidden to be consumed by God's people. These animals were deemed to be UNCLEAR by the Lord. In addition, in the OT, God's people were not permitted to offer to the Lord any sacrifice that was blemished or tainted.

These ordinances were a type and a shadow of the Truth revealed in the New Testament regarding the Redemptive work of Christ. Gather up all of the CLEAN animals and you have a type and shadow of Jesus Christ. He alone was CLEAN – He alone was a sinless human being. His death alone could be a substitute for the necessary death of the Adam race. No one and nothing outside of Christ could do that redemptive work, for all others were UNCLEAR.

Right away we can see that the sacrifice of unclean animals would be a abomination because it would be a denial and a mockery to what the sacrifices pointed to: The sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It would be a distortion of the need for humanity to be redeemed, and a distortion of the

only means by which humanity was redeemed. It would be a exaltation of humanity IN ADAM as being acceptable to God.

Those who are IN CHRIST are holy – clean. But humanity in Adam is UNHOLY; UNCLEAN. Clean animals represent Christ – and then by extension – those who are IN HIM. UNCLEAN animals represent those who are NOT in Christ – often called GENTILES or HEATHEN. To set up the sacrifice of unclean animals and to normalize it in the temple is to say that those in Christ are accepted by God – which would be to say that Christ and what He has done is meaningless, for clean and unclean are alike.

The entire system of OT animal sacrifices of clean animals that God commanded pointed towards Jesus Christ crucified – which was necessary to usher in a new creation through His resurrection. Replace those animal sacrifices with that of unclean animals and you have no death of the Adam race in Christ crucified. You have not new creation in Christ. Rather, you have man in Adam presented in the temple of God as a Christian – as the man God is after.

Of course, this is all symbolism – but the principle being illustrated is already happening in Christianity. The prophecies are being fulfilled.

Daniel's Prophecy

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of

***abominations he shall make [it] desolate.
(Dan 9:27)***

***And from the time [that] the daily [sacrifice]
shall be taken away, and the abomination
that maketh desolate set up, [there shall be]
a thousand two hundred and ninety days.
(Dan 12:11)***

Daniel records that the Messiah will, “confirm the covenant with many for one week.” This “covenant” is not the Old Covenant or the New Covenant – but both. The Messiah will confirm all that God has promised in COVENANT. Go back to the garden of Eden. The one covenant that God has given – represented in two phases – is the promise of a Savior. We see this in Genesis 3:15. Jesus Christ confirmed that covenant – He was the fulfillment of it.

But it says, “for one week.” This is prophetic language, and thus, not a literal length of time – but represents a season in God’s plan. A week represents God’s creation – so here we see the fullness of God’s new creation in Christ Jesus. Again – this began immediately after the sin of Adam, and was promised through the seed of the woman – Who was Jesus Christ.

Daniel says in Daniel 9 that “in the midst of the week” the Messiah shall cause the sacrifice to cease. It was the death of Jesus Christ – Christ being the one and only sacrifice that could win redemption – that caused the daily sacrifice to cease. There had been a daily sacrifice in the temple of God. But now there is a once for all sacrifice in Christ that is for EVERY DAY forever.

But the sacrifice of Christ that ended the daily sacrifice happens in the midst of the week – a week being 7 days. Here we see type and shadow, and not literal days. If we take the 7 days of a week and put the death of Jesus Christ in the midst of that week, we have 3 ½ days before His death, and 3 ½ days after His death. In keeping with the spiritual symbolism, we see that the entire age – from Adam to the return of Christ is THE WEEK during which Jesus Christ confirmed the covenant God gave in the garden in the beginning. Symbolically, not literally, Jesus died in the MIDST of this week. Just to confirm that his is what is being prophesied, we know that the ministry of Jesus did last 3 ½ years. But that leaves us the second half of the WEEK – it leaves us with the second 3 ½ prophetic or spiritual years. I would submit that this is the entire church age – from the death of Christ until the return of Christ.

This spiritual picture fits a number of other place in scripture that speak of the time period of 3 ½ years – or 1260 days – or 42 months – or times, a time, and half a time. Many have made this period of time to mean THE great tribulation. But it only represents great tribulation in a secondary sense. Rather, ALL of these periods of time that equal 3 ½ years or 1260 are again talking about the church age – from the time that Christ died – from the time that HIS death replaced the daily sacrifice until the Second Coming. The church age is the great tribulation – a time of spiritual trial, upheaval, and suffering.

So what we have is the first 3 ½ days of that week – the week wherein the Messiah confirms the covenant – these first 3 ½ days of that week represent the 3 ½ years of Christ's ministry. And then we have the second 3 ½ days of that week wherein the Messiah confirms the covenant being fulfilled by the church age. That same church age is the tribulation – 3 ½ spiritual years.

This fits Daniel 12. Daniel says that from the time that this daily sacrifice shall be taken away – which is taken away by the death of Christ -- until the abomination of desolation is set up will be 1290 days. This is again the 1260 days, or 3 ½ spiritual years – which is the church age – plus and additional 30 days. During the church age, Jesus Christ continues to confirm God's covenant – through His very presence in His people. But during the same church age, there is also the formation of the abomination of desolation – a build up to the point where it will be SET UP and NORMALIZED.

But what of the 1290 days? Why the extra 30 days? The first 1260 days of the 1290 days represents the church age – as noted. The extra 30 days are not literally extra days – but THIRTY most often represents MATURITY. Daniel is telling us that while this abomination of desolation is forming during the church age that it will be at the very end of the church age that it will come into FULL MATURITY – and when it does then it will be the fullness of abomination of desolation.

We have already seen that a false Christianity – a false Christianity wherein Christ crucified and His

people crucified IN HIM – resulting in a NEW MAN in Christ – this is going to be pushed aside and replaced by RELIGIOUS MAN IN ADAM. This will happen within the TEMPLE – the church. But since MAN IN ADAM is an UNCLEAN AND UNHOLY race – to establish this false Christianity within the temple of God can be typified by pointing to the literal abomination of desolation that was set up through the offering of unclean animals, more specifically swine's flesh.

There could be no more of an abomination to God than this because it is a denial and refusal of Jesus Christ – the once for all and only holy sacrifice for sin. And there could be no more of a complete attempt to destroy the purpose of God, for it would completely negate all redemption for humanity and offer a substitute.

Can we see that this is exactly equal to “the man of sin” of II Thessalonians 2? – which sits IN the temple of God? That this is exactly what antichrist means – within the church? And that this is also what is pictured in Revelation 13 with the beast and the false prophet? These pictures are of all the same spiritual wickedness that has always been within the church – but because the people of God have forfeited life and Truth is now going to be matured and fully established and normalized.

Chapter 25

UFOs and Aliens

As evil, immorality, perversion, and spiritual wickedness rapidly accelerate, there has also been a rapid increase in UFO and alien, "sightings" -- supposed landings, crashes, and testimonies that aliens are already here. Is it a coincidence that all of this UFO activity is happening along side of the proliferation of evil in this world?

No one knows where all of this is going. But even if an alien spaceship lands on the White House lawn, and the occupants introduce themselves, it will not change the Truth about God and His purpose for the human race through Christ. But such an event could be used as a device of the enemy to deceive millions.

Ask yourself this question: If you are a believer, do you actually think that this is an issue about which God would be passive; that if there is life on other planets, and if they would visit this earth, that this would be ignored in the Word of God?

Theories Abound

An extra-terrestrial explanation for UFOs is not the only one that is today being offered. Some say these UFOs are nothing more than advanced technology from our own government. Others suggest that the beings who pilot these UFOs are beings that have always lived on earth – hidden until now. They suggest that these beings are living underground, or under the ocean. Others

suggest that these creatures are from another dimension. Still others have claimed that they are from our own future.

There are many within the church who suggest that these, "aliens," are actually demons. It would be easy to dismiss this possibility. But not if we look at the facts as they presently stand. We have all of these sightings and claims – but the real proof is always just out of reach. It is always illusive. Isn't that what we might expect if these things were the product of demonic activity?

The UFO phenomenon has mesmerized many people – it has brought about a kind of insanity. People have begun to see things, claim things, and read INTO things – people have even rewritten history in alien terms. Watch the Ancient Aliens TV show. Some of the most absurd theories are presented as fact. Today, people are more, "alien conscious" – if not, "alien obsessed."

Today we have reports of alien activity in Antarctica, under the earth, under the ocean, on the moon, on Mars, and even in unexplored areas of the earth. Some claim aliens are already walking among us. Some of these reports have been given by otherwise reputable people. The government has even done an investigation.

The question here is not whether some of this stuff is really happening. Of course it is happening. It is REAL. But the question is WHAT it is – WHAT is the source?

Human Nature

In this day and age it is nearly impossible to know the Truth about what is happening in this world. Fake news abounds. Lies are everywhere. Even what used to be some of the most trusted institutions – like the medical profession – has been corrupted through politics and money. The justice system is more corrupt than ever. And you cannot trust a word coming from the government.

There are ridiculous theories that are being promoted everywhere – such as the people who are convinced that the earth is flat. There are people that think that we really do live in, “The Matrix.” In short, as God has been abandoned, and darkness has come in, this has infected the mind of people on all levels. Moral insanity abounds – as does the reasoning capacity of those infected with it.

Look at the religions of the world. Hundreds of millions of people are deceived by false religion. There are religions that are based upon hate – the adherents are filled with an evil spirit of hate. Is that the product of false doctrine? No. It is the prince of the power of the air working in the sons of disobedience.

Human beings have always been easily caught up in movements – we easily go along with the crowd. Fear can drive people to believe lies and turn against each other. The pandemic of a few years ago proved it.

There is a psychic dimension to the human makeup that can serve as the control point by which human beings can be stirred up and manipulated. It even happens at rock concerts, political rallies, and protest marches. But is also happens within churches and religious groups.

Religious movements are some of the worst examples of how people can allow others to control and manipulate them. Cults are prime examples, but religious control happens in many other groups where that control doesn't show itself. It is possible to list out reasons why these things happen, but in the final analysis, the reasons are INWARD. There is a psychic vulnerability in all of us that can be used by Satan and used by corrupt human beings.

The point is this: It is entirely possible that the UFO phenomenon is something that is impossible to understand in human terms. UFOs may very possibly be demonic activity. It is entirely possible for even the most intelligent and sincere people to be totally caught up in spiritual deception on this matter. And once people are impacted by it there is almost no limit to the place that the human mind can take it.

Insanity on All Levels

What else would we expect in a world where God has been rejected? The enemy WILL come in. And where the enemy comes in, there will not only be sin, but there will be INSANITY – people will lose their grip on reality and be carried away with fables.

They shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (II Tim. 4:4)

None of us know where this is going. But as noted, it is entirely possible that real proof of aliens will continue to be illusive – all the while stories and theories and unsubstantiated claims will continue. Isn't that what we should expect if this really IS demonic activity?

Is it possible that every bit of this extra-terrestrial mania is a delusion – a delusion from out of the realm of darkness? I'm not saying that the delusion is not real. To the contrary, I'm saying that it is a real delusion; it is a spiritual incursion that impacts people. But it is causing people to see things and to believe that they have seen and experienced things – but those experiences did not happen; they were not real. Therefore, most of those people are not lying. But they have not experienced what they think they have – they have experienced a spiritual delusion.

We are in a time of unprecedented evil – lies, immorality, corruption, and perversion abound. Now we have a huge increase in UFO sightings. How can these NOT be related? They ARE related. Aliens or not -- all of this is of Satan – it is all part of the end game.

Questions

There are important questions to ask about this whole UFO issue. For example, why is it that despite all of the accounts and testimonies over

the last 70 years that these supposed aliens never make public contact?

Obviously, they don't mind having their vessels photographed, or videotaped, but they never land and make public contact. Oh, there are stories of alien abductions – but again – in every case there is no real proof. A delusion would be just like that.

There are no pictures or videos of landed space craft. There are no videos of aliens walking around. In fact, there are no really clear pictures or videos at all – despite the fact that most everyone has a cell phone camera. What does this tell us?

Why is real proof always, “hidden proof” – or proof that is always just out of reach? If this were all a spiritual delusion then that is what we could expect.

Some people think that the government is simply covering up the existence of aliens. But it is simply not possible that if aliens REALLY wanted to make themselves known that the government could cover it up. Why? Because aliens from another world could not be controlled by any government. They could just land. Yet they apparently do not want to reveal themselves. They are content to simply fly around – but to never make themselves known in a public way.

A spiritual delusion is a lying wonder. And we are told that we can expect lying wonders from Satan at the end of the age. Indeed, there are many people, right now, who are being impacted and

influenced by other kinds of spiritual delusions. That accounts for the inexplicable and insane moral reasoning of many. They are detached from reality. Isn't that what living in a delusion IS?

Moral insanity is spreading through the human race like an infectious disease. Truth is being rejected, or worse, forfeited, as never before. This creates a condition wherein the spiritual forces of evil can gain access on unprecedented levels. Is it unthinkable that what the Bible calls, "principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places" – that the father of lies, the prince of the power of the air, and the god of this world – is it unthinkable that such a one, with his minions -- now given access -- could not author this entire UFO hysteria?

We must ask again: Why is the UFO obsession accelerating virtually hand in hand with the evil that is accelerating in this world -- and even in the church? Is this mere coincidence?

The Biblical Record

There is not a word or suggestion in scripture about beings on other planets. Not unless you want to dig into the book of Revelation, or the OT book of Ezekiel, and make passages found there to MEAN UFOs. People have done that. But aside from that nonsense, the Bible makes this earth, and the human race, the center of God's universe. The Bible shows that Jesus Christ became a human being in order to restore human beings

back to God. Indeed, Paul makes the restoration of all of creation dependent upon that:

For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected [the same] in hope, Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. (Rom. 8:19-22)

There is another issue here as well. Let us suppose that there are beings on other planets that are visiting earth. For this to be possible, such beings would have to be highly intelligent. They would have to have the ability to reason, think, and relate. This demands that these beings have a SELF. But a SELF means the power of CHOICE. Thus, they would have to have a moral conscience – in other words, a soul. Gather all of that up and this demands moral accountability to God.

If such beings exist, then God created them – and since they are intelligent, God created them in His image – with a moral and spiritual aspect of their being. So, who died for their sins? Who became one of them to redeem them? Or perhaps we would like to suggest they are as perfect as Adam was before his sin? You can see where all of this is going: There is simply no way there are such beings on other planets. And this is why God

never says that there are – but strongly indicates that there are NOT.

Now, if life was left to chance, and evolution is the truth, then the chances are that there are millions of other planets with life. But if God created the heavens and the earth, and if God has a plan for humanity as revealed in the Bible, then there is absolutely nothing absurd about believing that we are living on the ONE planet that He choose to work out that purpose – and that presently it is the ONLY planet where that purpose is being worked out.

The overwhelming revelation of scripture is unto that end: That this planet – and this planet alone -- was created by God to work out His purpose for the human race that He created upon it:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (Gen. 1:1)

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; [even] in him. (Eph. 1:9-10)

Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set [him] at his own right hand in the heavenly [places], Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: (Eph. 1:20-21)

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visit him? Thou made him a little lower than the angels; thou crowned him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing [that is] not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom [are] all things, and by whom [are] all things, in bringing many sons unto glory. (Heb. 2:6-10)

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether [they be] thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (Col. 1:16-17)

Standing in the Truth

It is possible that this UFO issue may remain unresolved in this age. But if there is something that emerges from it we can expect that it will be used by the enemy to try to discredit Christianity. If beings present themselves as aliens from another planet we can be sure of one thing: They are NOT that. They are something else.

Are we prepared for such a challenge? It may never happen. But regardless, Satan is going to mount the attack of the ages against Jesus Christ in the last days. No matter what shape that takes, we MUST be ready – we must know Christ and be standing by faith in Him.

Chapter 26

There Must Be Heresies

"Heresy," is an interesting word in the NT Greek. It means, "a choosing." That might not seem like a bad thing. But it is very bad. That is because it means that a person is choosing for themselves, and out from their own nature; their own natural man – what Truth IS. Compare this to the fact that all Truth is found in One other than ourselves – in One Who is outside of our natural man: Jesus Christ.

No human being has the right, or the capacity, to decide what the Truth IS. We can only discover Truth – Truth is eternal; Truth is a Person. Heresy is a corruption of the Truth into a lie. We cannot walk with Jesus Christ if we are walking in lies or darkness. We must walk in the light as He is in the light.

There remains teaching today within the church – teaching accepted as orthodox – that is not the Truth. It emerged centuries ago from the minds of men – mostly sincere people who were trying to formulate answers to challenges to the Christian faith. These teachings were established and written and became THE accepted doctrine. They have been handed down through the centuries. But they are NOT found in scripture. They are the traditions of men.

Even some of the persons who formulated these teachings have been set up as icons of the Christian faith. Entire movements and denominations have been formed around them. If

you listen to the ministers of these denominations, they can hardly speak a sentence without quoting their heroes – and even when they don't quote their heroes directly, what they say is what they have adopted from them.

This is how heresy becomes the narrative. It is how heresy is established as Truth. Thank God we have the basics of the gospel. Yet even that was corrupted by some of the most well know icons of the Christian faith. They were not Jesus Christ, nor one of the apostles. Thus, believers need to stop treating them as if they were.

You and I cannot know Truth unless we know Jesus Christ. Oh, we may have an intellectual grasp of doctrines and facts – but when the Bible talks about knowing the Truth it means to actually experience the Person of Jesus Christ – it is an experiential knowledge. Short of knowing Him, we are indeed left to our brains, our wits, and to our personal bias, hang-ups, and unbelief. That will not bring us into the Truth. It opens the door for us to decide what the Truth ought to be. This is heresy.

Forms of Heresy

The most common form of heresy is false doctrine. But the most damaging form of heresy is to come under the influence of a false spirit – to walk within a false gospel; a false Christianity. It is actually possible for a person to outwardly hold to all of the correct Biblical doctrines and yet WITHIN to have no realization of Jesus – or worse – a false revelation of Jesus.

In the last chapter we talked about the possibility of being under a spiritual delusion. This happens within the church. Sincere believers become mesmerized – their thinking is altered – by the spirit of error. This is what Paul said about the Galatian church:

***O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?
(Gal. 3:1)***

The word translated, “bewitched,” is a word from which we get the English word, “mesmerize.” It means to transfix someone onto something to the exclusion of all else. This fixation is not merely an intellectual or doctrinal problem. It is spiritual at the core. The Galatian church had been mesmerized by legalism to the point where they had, “fallen from grace.” They were standing aloof from Jesus Christ. In short, they were mesmerized into the delusion of righteousness by works to the point where they abandoned their faith in Christ alone.

What did Paul say was the solution. Well, he gave them scripture – which is always necessary. But then he declared to them the living solution:

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. (Gal. 4:19)

The solution to the delusions created by spiritual heresy is to come into an inward knowledge and realization of the Person of Jesus Christ. Anything else as a solution is of the spirit of

antichrist – for it does not confess, “Jesus having come in the flesh.”

Of course, most Christians would mock, scoff, and push away all of these causes and solutions. But there are there in scripture.

What we see in all of this is that heresy is, at the core, a spiritual problem. It is a faith problem. That is why it becomes a doctrinal problem.

Heresy is ultimately a false Christianity based on a false picture of God – a false picture that governs the mind, the thinking, and the faith.

God Allows Heresy

For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are genuine may be made manifest among you. (I Cor. 11:19)

Our usual idea of heresy is that of a Christian life that is governed by lies – lies about God and His Son. That is correct. But there is also another kind of life that is based on lies: A life governed by blindness to Christ. That is also a false Christianity. A Christian life that is based upon dead religion, wherein Christ is not real, which consists of merely teachings and doctrines – this is a false Christianity. It is not resurrection life in Christ.

Some people do not understand why God allows heretics in the church. Many of these have worldwide television programs. They are deceiving many. Other people cannot accept that this age is going to end in massive apostasy.

They reason that they will not accept this is that they believe that if God is victorious that this cannot happen. But throughout the church age, error has been more the norm than the exception. Why did God allow this? Why will He allow a great end time apostasy?

God is going to allow apostasy for the same reason that He has always allowed error in His church: To purify His people; to prove the faith of those who really want Him.

The above passage is clear: God must allow heresy so that those who are genuine – who truly want Jesus Christ and the Truth – can stand against error and FOR the Truth. Heresy will press people to God for the Truth. This will build faith in those people and give them opportunity to be set free from any areas in their own heart that need to be purified.

That is God's intended use of heresy. But unfortunately, instead of profiting from God's use of heresy, many people – rather than stand against it – have embraced it. Thus, we see the other side of the coin: What God intends in order to prove Christians genuine, will likewise expose those who are NOT genuine.

There would be no reason to allow heresy unless there was heresy IN US. The heresy that is in us is not doctrinal. It is spiritual. The heresy within is unbelief, self-righteousness, spiritual pride, self-promotion, greed, and all of the other corruptions of the flesh. When God allows heresy on the outside of us it will expose the heresy

within us – so that believers might be convicted and repent.

The Heresy Within

Satan is the father of lies. But people are drawn into his lies. But WHY are people drawn to error? The reason why people believe error is because of the error within them. And yet this is exactly why God allows heresy – to expose the error that is within us so that we might forsake it and be proven genuine.

There are REASONS why people believe what they do, and without the Truth in Christ, that reason finds its root in our own nature. At best we are blind, but in reality, we are corrupt.

Note that error does not find its root in false doctrine. Rather, false doctrine emerges from the real root: The fallen nature of man. We believe false doctrine, indeed, false doctrine becomes established as Truth, because we are blind to Christ and are therefore susceptible to that which agrees with our fallen nature.

The same thing can be said about true doctrine. Life in Christ, and Truth in Christ, does not find its root in true doctrine. Rather, true doctrine emerges from the real root: Christ Himself -- realized in the believer. We believe true doctrine and it becomes established because we have come into a realization of the Truth Himself.

Doctrine

It is here that we must see a primary Truth: True doctrine IS the Truth because it rightly represents the Truth Himself, indeed, emerges from knowing Him – and will likewise point back to Him. False doctrine is not the Truth because it misrepresents the Truth Himself, and emerges from the fallen nature of nature man.

But how about the Bible? Isn't doctrine true or false based on scripture? Yes. But scripture is also based on the Truth Himself. In other words, there is only ONE Truth – the Person of Jesus Christ. The Bible is the written Truth – it represents the one Truth, Jesus Christ. Our knowledge of Jesus will always agree with the Bible, and thus, always agree with the Truth Himself.

The word translated, "approved," in I Cor. 11:19 KJV, and which means, "genuine," was used in reference to metals that were subjected to fire so that they might be purified. In metallurgy, when the metal is subjected to fire, the impurities come to the surface and they are discarded. What is kept is the purified metal. The suggestion is clear: Heresy is allowed – and even used – to push Christian people to where only that which is of Christ in us will remain.

It is here that we must understand. When God purifies the believer, it is NOT that he separates the good in us from the bad in us – and then discards the bad, keeping the good -- building upon it in Christ. Never. What God does do is separate the good AND bad that is in us from

Jesus Christ Who is in us – and then He discards both the good and bad that is of us and keeps only that which is of Christ. He does not do this without our choices of faith – without us coming to the Cross. Thus, God allows trials and heresy for this purpose.

The Wheat and the Tares

***The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.
(Matt. 13:24-25)***

Embedded within The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares is the same principle as to why God allows heresy: It exposes people as either genuine or fake.

Matthew 13 is where we find the parable of the wheat and the tares. It is very important to understand that, "tares," are NOT weeds. Rather, "tares," are FAKE wheat. Thus, we see how this parable ties into God's use of heresy.

It is not possible to discern between the wheat and tares until both begin to mature. That is why, in the parable, the tares appear – become evident -- only when, "the blade is sprung up:"

But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

This is also why the servants are told not to try to separate the wheat from the tares until, “both grow together until the harvest.”

The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.

There are a number of Truths revealed in this passage as to how God works, and why He works the way He does. These agree completely with what we saw about God’s reasons for allowing heresy in the church. The tares are both false teaching, and false believers. God allows both in order to bring out the genuineness of the wheat and the falseness of the tares.

Acceleration and Intensity

As the end of the age approaches, the acceleration and intensity of the activity of the enemy will greatly increase. But this is going to likewise accelerate and intensify the necessity for believers to preach Christ and stand by faith in Christ. As heresy increases, so will the reason God allows it: To prove those who genuinely want Christ.

This is just another way of describing the separation of the wheat and the tares. The difference between the wheat and the tares does not become fully evident until both grow up and mature. Christ will become more evident – there will be a more evident witness of Jesus Christ. But evil will become more evident – that it IS evil.

Is this not already happening? Note that this will make the choice for or against Christ clearer. It will also make each person all the more accountable. Those who choose darkness rather than light will be given up to the darkness they choose, and everything that goes with it.

Revival is the result of choosing light rather than darkness. But quite often it is revival that is rejected that accelerates apostasy. Apostasy is the result of choosing darkness rather than light. This will ultimately separate the wheat from the tares. It will be faith vs. unbelief.

The Need for Truth

God has already given a witness of Christ for anyone who REALLY wants Him. But the problem is that many don't KNOW to want Him – they think that they are already walking in the Truth. Therefore, there is a need for greater light and Truth. God has ALWAYS been faithful to provide exactly that before He brings judgment.

The more the Truth of Christ is preached, the more the enemy will take steps to destroy it. But in turn, God will use this to prove those genuine who preach Christ. This dynamic is going to increase in intensity for the rest of this age. But in the end, God will have His witness – it will be a witness in His people.

What is needed are people who will preach true doctrine -- yes, of course, is essential – but there needs to be something BEHIND the true doctrine. There needs to be HIS LIFE and TRUE FAITH.

Preaching Christ needs to emerge from Christ within those who preach.

Apostasy or Revival

The great end time apostasy will contain much heresy. But underneath it all it will be spiritual – it will be based upon an inward unbelief and hardness against God. But what will the end time apostasy actually look like?” The answer is that it will look like end time REVIVAL. How else could it deceive? How else could millions of people willingly make themselves part of a false Christianity – the man of sin – and sit in the church? The end time apostasy that forms, “the man of sin,” and, “the abomination of desolation,” and, “the beast,” of Revelation 13 – this end time apostasy is going to look like REVIVAL to those whose minds have been corrupted from the purity of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 27

Lying Signs and Wonders

We have seen that heresy is ultimately a false Christianity based on a false picture of God – a false picture that governs the mind, the thinking, and the faith. This is, of course, deception.

For example, today, there are millions who live in experiences that they believe are of the spirit of God. But these experiences are not of God – but are psychic. And when people are living in psychic experiences they are unwittingly giving access to the enemy. The natural man – which is the soul or psychic man – remains the access point for the enemy, even in believers. And yet millions are unaware of this fact and open themselves to spiritual danger.

There is also the other extreme. There are millions who deny that Christ is a Living Person who is to be experienced. They would not say that directly, but to them, but that is how their Christianity is practiced. To them, Christianity is like a big Bible study. Their life in Christ is dead religion. They spend their lives circling around a body of doctrine ABOUT Christ. They are also deceived.

Heresy is to believe and live in lies about God and His Son, and God's redemptive plan through Him. But heresy is also the life that emerges from being blind to the Truth. Being blind to the Truth is also a lie – because it creates a life that is outside of the Truth. Blindness to Christ is a false

Christianity just as much as living in lies about Christ is a false Christianity.

The enemy does all he can do, yes, to deceive Christians and unbelievers alike. But he is quite content to simply BLIND people to Christ. For once people are blind to Christ, they will be more easily deceived by the spirit of antichrist – by anything that substitutes for Christ.

One of the most common ploys of the enemy to deceive is that of lying signs and wonders. He wants to use them to deceive people into a false Christianity under another Jesus.

Definitions

We should read again that last statement: The purpose of the enemy in lying signs and wonders is to deceive people into a false Christianity under another Jesus. Herein we see that the goal of the enemy is not to merely get people to believe that the lying sign or wonder is of God. No. It goes beyond that. The goal is to use the lying sign or wonder to bring people under the greater deception of a false Christianity.

Satan always uses bait. He presents bait that he knows will appeal to us. But the bait is only unto the trap of deception.

What is a LYING sign or wonder? To answer, let's get even more basic: What is a sign? What is a wonder? What does the Bible mean by those terms?

A "sign," in the context we are discussing, is an event or condition that identifies something as being OF GOD. It is a supernatural indication from God, wherein God states, "This is of Me. I am present." In effect, the sign in question is supposedly EVIDENCE of God.

A "wonder," of course, is closely related. A wonder is something unexplainable by natural laws. It is therefore assumed to be OF GOD – it is supposed evidence that God is present.

Of course, it must be clearly acknowledged that God can and does work miracles today. But most often, God does His greatest miracles in natural ways. In other words, it will not LOOK like a sign or a wonder to us. But what happens will be of God.

We are warned that there will be LYING signs and wonders. Thus, these are supposed evidences that God is present, or that God is leading, but they are LYING to us. God is not in these things – following them will not lead us to God, or into God's will. Rather, they are used of Satan to lead us away from God and out of His will.

The True Evidence of God

Remember the warning of Jesus:

***An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. But there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah.
(Matt. 12:38-39)***

It is spiritual adultery to seek after a sign rather than to seek after Jesus Christ -- we want a relationship with experiences and not God. That is warned against in the first part of this verse. But we often focus upon the first part of this verse and ignore the second part. Jesus is telling us that that there is ONE SIGN that is of God: Resurrection life. Indeed, John the apostle said the same thing:

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (I John 5:9-11)

Jesus Christ IN HIS PEOPLE is the evidence or witness of God. "Christ in you," is the sign. But if people are blinded to the reality of the indwelling Christ then they will more easily seek after OTHER evidence of God; seek after signs and wonders that God is present and working.

Our inward realization of Jesus Christ ought to be the evidence of God for us. Resurrection life that overcomes death, bondage, sin, and the flesh is the evidence of Jesus Christ within. Christianity is CHRIST IN US – and despite all of the proof of scripture – HE is the evidence to which John points as the evidence, witness, and testimony of God for the believer.

Antichrist

Antichrist is any substitute for Christ. It is any substitute for CHRIST IN US. That being the case, can we see that if a person lives seeking signs and wonders, is greatly influenced by them, or claims to be able to work them -- that such folks are already in danger of the spirit of antichrist?

That may sound a bit extreme to some people. But we need to get back to the Truth. The Bible states directly that the spirit of God always confesses and reveals CHRIST IN US – and where that is omitted the spirit of antichrist is at work. There is always going to be substitute – “antichrist,” means, “instead of Christ.” That substitute could be dead religion or one that is governed by psychic experiences and signs and wonders. Either way, signs and wonders substitute for the realization of Christ.

The Bible warns us that as we approach the end of this age that not only blindness to Christ increase, but so will signs and wonder increase. Millions will be led into apostasy through them.

If any man shall say to you, "Lo, here is Christ," or, "There!," believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. (Matt. 24:23-25)

This is a description of the workings of Satan through the spirit of antichrist. The signs and

wonders will be so real, and so convincing, that unless a person knows Jesus Christ in an inward way – born out of resurrection life – they will easily be convinced that what is happening is of God.

Again -- the vital thing to realize is that lying signs and wonders are not things unto themselves. The goal of the enemy is not merely to get people to believe that a lying sign or wonder is of God when it is not. Rather, the goal is to use the lying sign or wonder to lead people into a false Christianity – to deceive people into opening themselves to the spirit of antichrist.

God has warned His people about this danger going all the way back in the OT:

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, which he spoke unto thee, saying, "Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them," you shall not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proves you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.
(Deut. 13:1-4)

Here we are being told by God that it is possible that a FALSE prophet can actually be ACCURATE about what they say is going to

happen. This tells us that whether a prophecy comes to pass is NOT an indication that God is speaking through that prophet. Yet millions of Christians ignore this warning and immediately follow a prophet simply because what they say comes to pass, or seems to come to pass.

We need to stop and get this firmly established: A false prophet can issue accurate prophetic declarations.

But wait. We also know the obvious -- that if a prophecy doesn't come to pass that it was given by a false prophet. So BOTH outcomes are possible: A false prophet can issue accurate prophetic declarations, and a false prophet can issue inaccurate declarations. So what is the real indication of a false prophet?

God tells us that a false prophet will use his prophetic declarations – whether they come to pass or do not come to pass – to lead people into a false Christianity. In Deuteronomy, it is to lead people into serving false gods – which is the same deception.

Deuteronomy also states that God will allow this to, “prove us.” Can we see that this is exactly what Paul says is the reason why, “there MUST be heresies,” allowed in the church?

You and I will not be led astray by any false prophet, or by any sign or wonder, if we know Jesus Christ in Truth, and are walking with Him in faith. We will not be led into a false Christianity if we are living in Jesus Christ.

Any supposed Christianity that entangles people into a spiritual world of signs, wonders, experiences, and emotions – that creates the continual need for God to prove to people that He is with them – is a false Christianity. Such folks are deceived. They have been mesmerized by a lie of the enemy.

We can expect that millions are going to come under such influences. And it is going to seem as if they have found God. It will look like REVIVAL. There will be great signs and wonders – supposedly proving that what is happening is of God. But it will all be a deception. It will NOT be of God. It will be of the spirit of antichrist. It will be APOSTASY.

As we have seen, as people are deceived into this great apostasy, there will take shape – within the church – “the man of sin.” “The man of sin;” “the abomination of desolation,” will consist of those who have denied the Cross and saved their life for themselves – thinking that this is the will of God. This is the goal of Satan through antichrist.

God Speaks in Christ

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by [his] Son. (Heb. 1:1-2)

Today there are prophets everywhere. Not only are they invited to speak in churches, but there are some who post daily prophecies on the internet. They say that they are hearing words from God. So they do not claim to be merely

teaching. No. They claim to hear directly from God – and claim that what they are sharing is a prophetic word.

Let's ask: Has God chosen these people to hear from Him for the rest of us? Is that how Christianity is supposed to function? Can we see that this alone is a denial that Jesus Christ lives within EACH believer? And it is a denial that God wants each of us to know Him for ourselves?

This is just another example of antichrist at work. Antichrist will NOT confess or reveal that Jesus Christ is come to dwell within each believer – that is what John says antichrist will NOT confess – but will offer a substitute. And this is a substitute. Instead of growing to know Jesus Christ for ourselves, we simply need to listen to the prophetic utterances of someone God has appointed to hear FOR US? The entire suggestion is of antichrist.

There are no more prophets today. That is a fact because today Jesus Christ lives in each believer. Indeed, this is exactly what Hebrews 1:1-2, quoted above, states. It says that IN TIMES PAST God used to speak through prophets – BUT NOW God speaks in His Son. The Greek wording is revealing. He says, "God speaks SONWISE." In other words, God speaks to each of us through an ongoing INWARD revelation of Jesus Christ.

Christianity is CHRIST IN YOU – personally and individually. YOU and I can personally know Christ, hear from God through Him, and experience Him. That eliminates the need for prophets. It eliminates the need for any other

Mediator between God and man – Jesus Christ is the ONE and ONLY Mediator.

We have already seen that it does NOT matter if what a prophet says comes true. What matters is the Jesus revealed; the Christianity offered. And whether people want to accept it or not, the entire routine of prophets making pronouncements and people simply believing them is not only dangerous, but it is of another spirit – the spirit of antichrist.

It is tragic how easily believers buy into these things – how easily some folks bypass scripture and make themselves part of deception. But this is merely one indication of how easy it will be for the great end time apostasy to deceive millions.

Again – heresy is a matter of believing lies. But heresy is also a matter of being blind to the Truth. And if we are blind to the Truth then we will eventually believe lies. The only solution is, “Christ in us” – an ongoing inward realization of Jesus Christ. Christ must be preached. Christ must be experienced. This is what the Bible demands.

Chapter 28

The Spiritual Kingdom of God

"My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36)

Jesus continually talked about the kingdom of God; the kingdom of heaven. Many of His parables begin with the phrase, "And then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened," or, "the kingdom of heaven is like." He spoke of Himself as the One who would sit on the throne of that kingdom. He promised His disciples that they would be part of this kingdom. Jesus spoke of this kingdom as much as He did about any other subject.

But there was a problem. Jesus was speaking about a spiritual kingdom. The disciples, however, knew nothing about a spiritual kingdom. None of the Jews did. The Jewish concept of the kingdom of God was material – the Messiah would sit in the temple in Jerusalem and reign and rule over Israel. All of the other nations would be inferior and subservient to Israel – God's kingdom. Thus, all through the gospels, every time Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God, He was speaking of the spiritual kingdom of God. But the disciples interpreted it on the only level they understood.

This misinterpretation lasted all through the ministry of Jesus, through His death and resurrection, and right up until the hour of His ascension into heaven. This is what was behind the question of the disciples on that occasion:

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 2:6-8)

Despite the death and resurrection of Jesus – and despite all of the teaching He had given them about the kingdom of God – they still did not have spiritual discernment. They still expected the material kingdom.

In this exchange we see both their misunderstanding, and His correction. But we also see the solution. Jesus knew they did not grasp the Truth of the kingdom. But He also knew why: They needed inward enlightenment. His promise in this passage of the giving of the spirit of God would bring that enlightenment. After Acts 2 you never read of a single instance where a disciple ever asked Jesus about the coming of the material kingdom again.

Peter and Judas

Peter and Judas were personally called by Jesus Christ. Both heard the same teaching, saw the same miracles, and spent three and a half years with a perfectly sinless man – a man who claimed to be the Son of God. And both of them had the

same opportunity to eventually realize who Jesus was, and to commit themselves to Him.

Both Peter and Judas stood out as being zealous for the kingdom – the material kingdom that the Jews expected. Indeed, the reason for which Judas betrayed Jesus was because he realized that Jesus was NOT fulfilling his hopes for the kingdom. He turned Jesus over to the Jews as part of a plan to force Him to declare Himself as Messiah at His trial and take His place on the throne. Of course, the Jews had another scheme – to put Jesus to death. But the zeal to usher in the earthly kingdom NOW was behind Judas' act of betrayal – and the ease with which Satan used him.

Peter had started down the same road. It was all brought out in Matthew 16. On that occasion, Jesus had asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answer, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." So far, so good. But then Matthew records:

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savor not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. (Matt. 21:23)

The reason Peter protested against Jesus' prediction of what was going to happen is that it was contrary to his hopes for the kingdom NOW. In Peter's mind, Jesus must not be killed – He needed to take His place on the throne in the temple. But you will note the incredible rebuke of Jesus to Peter. He said, "Get behind Me, Satan!" Satan the devil was, at that point in time, able to use Peter to try to get to Jesus.

Can we see what was going on here? Peter had an overwhelming desire for an earthly kingdom NOW – a kingdom that would not only solve huge problems, but which would give Peter and the disciples power and position for themselves. This desire, along with the lifelong belief that such an earthly kingdom was the will of God – that an earthly kingdom was the kingdom that fulfilled prophecy – gave Satan access to Peter.

When a person is obsessed with what they believe God MUST do – to the point where they even try to force it – that person is not walking by faith. They are walking in religious flesh. They are operating according to their own mind, emotions, and earthly nature – all governed by what think God MUST do.

A person who is caught in such a deception is not thinking in terms of opposing God. No. They believe they are spearheading God's will. But they are deceived – it is really THEIR will for God. There is a personal agenda. And this provides Satan with the basis for something terrible.

Thankfully, Peter later woke up and repented. Judas did not. This situation stands as an important lesson for believers.

An Oft Repeated Error

The kingdom of God is not a place over which God reigns. Rather, the kingdom of God is God's reign over ANY place or person. In other words, the kingdom of God is the sovereignty of God – which finds its source in his Person. The Redemption of Jesus Christ brought the restoration of God's rule and kingdom.

Jesus Christ in His people IS the kingdom of God. It is the kingdom of which Jesus spoke – howbeit in parabolic language. Jesus is the King. And where He is in His people as their personal Lord – as their very life – their kingdom of God is within.

God intends to build His kingdom out of Christ in His people. In other words, the kingdom is to be formed from the INSIDE out. The kingdom of God is first IN US – Christ in us – and then all of the impacts will follow. But the mistake many of us make is to want a kingdom that is built from the OUTSIDE in. And yet what a shallow kingdom it would be if it were populated by people IN WHOM the kingdom of God in Christ was not resident.

One of the oft repeated errors of the Christian church is to try to usher in the kingdom of God upon an earthly basis – but to be deceived into thinking that it is the kingdom Jesus promised. This error continues today. We have people who preach that believers must take authority over various dimensions of society and government –

so that Jesus can return. We have others who think that the solution to spiritual problems is to elect better people in government. But the most harm that is done is the blindness to the true kingdom, which is, in effect, blindness to CHRIST IN US.

This is an important issue as we reach the end of this age. Whether there will be a push for a world government or not, there will almost certainly be a push for a religious kingdom. It may not be one with a headquarters or specific leaders, but it will be one that is governed by the spirit of antichrist.

Many believers are expecting an individual that will be antichrist. Many are expecting that this antichrist will be secular in nature and persecute true believers. But the Bible indicates something else. Antichrist is never secular in nature – but always religious. And it is never openly opposed to Christianity – but is presented AS Christianity. In the outward, what we should expect is a false Christianity presented as the real – supported by signs and wonders – but which is nothing more than man in Adam substituting for the new creation in Christ.

The Believer and Politics

If we are in Christ, we will know that the kingdom of God is NOT of this world or of this age. But nevertheless we ought to strive to be the best citizen possible of our respective country. We ought to obey all of the laws of the land – unless they clearly violate the Word of God.

It is acceptable to God if a believer votes or holds to a political position. This is part of being a responsible citizen. Even though the governments of this world are exactly that – OF this world, and not the kingdom of God – we nevertheless do have to live in our respective countries. Therefore, we ought to support morality, Truth, and the rule of law. We ought to vote for the candidate that represents these best.

But if we have Godly discernment, we will realize that the kingdom of God – anything that is OF GOD – is not going to be ushered in through politics. Christians are NOT called to take control of the world's governments. We are called to live from Jesus Christ as Lord as our government, which, as noted, will make us obedient citizens to the extent that this does not conflict with God's will.

To the extent that any government at least acknowledges God and His Son, and the Word of God, that government will have a certain amount of protection from God. But when the honoring of God begins to be abandoned, as it is being abandoned today, God will allow that government to have exactly what it chooses: He will remove His protection and leave that government to its own choice and devices. And since Satan remains the god of this world, the consequences ought to be clear. Thus, as citizens of our respective countries we ought to do represent God – and vote accordingly.

A Nation That Honors God

God promised in the OT:

***If my people, which are called by my name,
shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek
my face, and turn from their wicked ways;
then will I hear from heaven, and will
forgive their sin, and will heal their land.
(II Chron. 7:14)***

But what do we suppose will happen if the people who are called by the name of Jesus remain proud, do not pray, do not seek God's face, and do not turn from their wicked ways? The opposite will happen. And right now, the opposite IS happening.

It is a fact that IF a nation like the USA would, in fact, turn to God, that evil would again be restrained, and Christ would be honored. But everything in the Bible tells us that this is not going to happen.

This does not mean that individuals cannot turn to God. It does not mean that believers cannot repent of compromise and turn back to Christ. That will happen to some degree. But this age is going to end only one way: In apostasy – until Christ returns.

Chapter 29

Watch and Be Ready

If you gather together all of the exhortations regarding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ there is one two word phrase that summarizes them all: Be ready. So, the question for us is this: What does that mean, and how do we make sure we are ready?

This is an especially significant question given the fact that we are told that it is impossible for us to know WHEN Jesus is coming back. Given that fact, it tells us that to BE READY does not mean to figure out when Jesus will return and to ready ourselves merely for that EVENT.

One important clue on this matter is the Greek word that is always used in reference to the Second Coming – it is the word translated COMING. That word is PAROUSIA. This word refers to more than the event of arriving. It means, “active presence.” In other words, when God speaks of the Second Coming of Jesus He not only means the event of His arrival, but everything His coming means, and everything that will happen once He arrives.

We must add to this one other vital fact: Jesus Christ is already here in His people. His PAROUSIA has already taken place spiritually, and continues in the life of the believer. Jesus Christ is, “actively present,” in those who have received Him.

Of course, the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ in His people is NOT the literal, bodily, Second Coming. But nevertheless, the spiritual presence of Christ in His people has a direct relationship with His literal coming – a direct relationship to the need to BE READY. In short, BE READY for the Second Coming means that we need to be presently walking in the light as He is in the light. We must be living IN and OUT FROM Christ NOW – and if we are, then we will be READY for His coming THEN.

Believers are, “joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him.” (I Cor. 6:17) That oneness in spirit – which is resurrection union with Christ – is HOW Christ dwells in the believer, or if you prefer, it is HOW the believer is IN CHRIST. We are NOT, in this age, joined to the Lord physically, nor joined to Christ with our psychic or natural man. We are joined to Him only in spirit. It is at the Second Coming that there will be a full oneness with Him in body, soul, and spirit.

We will be ready for the Lord THEN if we are walking with Him NOW. Of course, THEN all that He is will be released into all that we are IN HIM. But if we are not at home in Christ now, we are not going to home with Him then.

Read the parables. Read the many teachings on this matter. There are very clear warnings: Be ready NOW. Each day. This is about relationship by faith. It is about walking in the light as He is in the light. It is being open to the purpose of God for whatever it takes for Him to have His will and glory. Do that and no matter when Christ comes back you will be ready for Him.

Like a Thief in the Night

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. (I Thes. 5:2-3)

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. (II Peter 3:10)

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come...Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. (Matt. 24:42-44)

Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch. (Mark 13:33-37)

A thief in the night NEVER sends advance notice of his arrival. If there is one thing that a thief does NOT do, it is to give any indication at all of when he is coming to rob you. In fact, Jesus said that not even HE knew the hour of His return. That ought to settle it once for all: Jesus was not leaving clues as to when He was coming back. He could not have been doing so because He did not know. The fact is, there is no possibility at all that any of us can know when Jesus is coming back. We cannot even calculate when to expect Him to return. Why? Because Jesus said, "The

Son of Man comes at an hour that you do NOT expect.”

There are only two necessities given that must occur BEFORE Jesus comes back. First, the gospel will be preached as a witness. Second, there will be a massive apostasy. Clearly, the second is a reaction to the first. The gospel will be preached and many will turn. But most will not. They will abandon Jesus Christ.

Of course, this has often been the case all through this age. It is certainly happening today at an accelerated rate. But we can expect the witness of Jesus Christ and the apostasy to come to BOTH happen on a much wider scale with greater impact than at anytime throughout history. God is going to have His witness – His grace and mercy will be offered. But many will either reject it, or abandon the Truth.

In this we can see a separation between the wheat and the tares; a separation of sheep from goats. That has been going on since the beginning of this age. But as God gives more light there will be a greater separation.

Over and over, the continual warning about the Second Coming is that it will happen SUDDENLY – it will happen without advance warning – and it will happen NOT when we might expect, but at an hour that provides no expectation at all. But we need not fret over this. We need only BE READY at all times. Live in the Christ who dwells in you -- and when He comes you will not be caught sleeping.

As It Was in the Days of Noah

And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:26-37)

If you carefully read this passage and take it seriously, you cannot fail to come to several conclusions. First, Luke is in full agreement with what we have already seen – that Jesus is going to return at a time when life seems to be moving forward, business as usual. His return will be like a thief in the night. There will be no indication of what is about to happen. Secondly, there is always a picture of judgment and destruction upon the ungodly. But thirdly, there is the promise of deliverance, salvation, and the purpose of God, for those who have believed Christ.

Details aside, this is the promise of God with regards to the Second Coming, indeed, it is His promise regarding any PAROUSIA – anytime Jesus Christ enters into a situation. His exhortation is to BE READY at all times for Jesus – by abiding in Him by faith NOW.

Chapter 30

Great Tribulation

There have always been those who have cataloged end time events into a nice, neat package – and many of these have been organized into prophecy charts. In fact, nearly all prophecy charts that have emerged over the last 130 years or so look the same. The only difference is usually found in differing opinions as to whether, “the rapture,” will occur before, during, or after the great tribulation. Most hold to the, “pre-trib,” rapture theory – in other words the church will be raptured into heaven BEFORE The Great Tribulation – and thus, escape it

Other than the disagreements about the timing of The Great Tribulation in relation to the Second Coming, the expectations of the prophecy teachers for the end time are pretty much in agreement across the board. Indeed, most of these theories have become so locked into the thinking of believers that if you seriously question any of them you are thought of as a false teacher. But we MUST question these teachings. In fact, we need to completely dismantle them. Why? Because we need to know the Truth.

The Common Teaching

As noted, the most prominent theory is that of a, “pre-tribulation,” rapture of the church. In other words, most believe that before The Great Tribulation Jesus Christ will come FOR His people – that He is going to return to this earth and will

rapture the church away into heaven – where the church will abide during The Great Tribulation.

This rapture will signal the start, according to the standard teaching, of a 7-year period called, “The Great tribulation.” Those who are not in Christ will be left behind to endure this tribulation. This theory has been made into books and movies, most notably, the, “Left Behind,” series.

During this 7-year period called, “The Great Tribulation,” it is theorized that all of the prophecies of the supposed person who is the antichrist – and all of God’s judgments upon this earth -- will be brought to pass. This theory is compiled by interpreting verses from Daniel, the gospels, the epistles, and of course, The Book of Revelation.

This theory continues by saying that once the 7-year tribulation is over, Jesus Christ – who came FOR His people before the tribulation -- will descend from heaven a SECOND time WITH His people. The millennium will begin and last for one thousand years.

Few question this narrative. It is generally taught as hard-fast doctrine. In fact, there are many other details commonly taught about specific nations, the antichrist, and how it will all unfold. Many speak as if there is no possibility at all that this entire teaching could be WRONG. The result is that, right now, there are millions of sincere believers expecting to escape The Great Tribulation through the rapture.

A Big Problem

This entire teaching -- except for the fact of the Second Coming and rapture -- IS WRONG. It simply is NOT taught in the Bible.

The biggest problem with this teaching is that it requires that Jesus came back to earth TWICE. It requires, "TWO Second Comings," instead of one. It requires that Jesus come back once FOR His people, and then later that He come back WITH His people. Yet there is NO indication in the Bible that this will be the case.

Every time Jesus spoke of His return He used terminology that is consistent with ONE return. Every time the epistles mention His return they do the same. In fact, Hebrews records:

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Heb. 9:28)

Someone might try to argue that, "the second time," could refer to the rapture that happens before the tribulation when Jesus comes FOR His people – and that this does not negate the fact that Jesus will still return WITH His people after the tribulation. But such reasoning is a clear cut case of reading INTO the Bible what you already insist is the Truth. A straightforward reading of this passage leaves no room for TWO returns of Christ. And if no one had ever made the suggestion that Jesus was coming back TWICE there is no one who would read it that way.

How did such a teaching come to be established? Well, once you establish that there is a period of time called, "The Great Tribulation," then you must relate it time wise to the Second Coming – you must relate it to the rapture that happens at the Second Coming. This is like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.

The suggestion that the Second Coming could take place BEFORE this tribulation, or during this tribulation, is generally dismissed -- because once Jesus is here all tribulation would have to cease. So for many, the Second Coming cannot take place BEFORE the tribulation.

That would mean that the Second Coming – and thus, the rapture -- MUST take place AFTER this tribulation.

This created another problem. If the Second Coming and rapture happen AFTER the tribulation then it means that the church will be here to endure the tribulation. That seemed unthinkable to many.

Yet how could the church escape the tribulation if the Second Coming and rapture happen AFTER the tribulation?

The only possible solution is to have TWO returns of Christ – the first before the tribulation at which time Christ will come FOR His people and rapture them off to heaven for 7 years – and then the second return of Christ after the tribulation when

Christ will again return, this time WITH His people.

So, this is the common timeline: The first return of Christ -- including the rapture. Then, "The Great Tribulation," of 7 years -- while the church is in heaven. And then the second return of Christ bringing the church with Him -- followed by the millennium.

But NOWHERE is there even a hint of TWO returns of Christ in scripture. So how do we solve the problem as to when ONE return of Christ will take place – and relate that to the tribulation? The answer emerges once we realize that NOWHERE is there teaching that there is going to be a 7-year period of time that is called, "The Great Tribulation."

Solution and Simplicity

We need to put aside our predisposed traditions and simply believe scripture: There is ONE Second Coming. But things become all the more clear once we realize that the traditional teaching about, "THE Great Tribulation," cannot be established from the Bible. There is NO period of time called, "The Great Tribulation."

Those who study prophecy have pieced together references to periods of time in scripture, and other references, and come up with these doctrines – but those references are spiritual pictures. And NONE of them, even once, teach a seven year period of time called, "THE Great Tribulation."

The Bible simply says that there will be, "great tribulation." There have always been seasons of great tribulation – and as we race towards the end of the age -- tribulation will increase as never before – it will increase to levels never before seen. This is what Jesus said. And while there will be great impacts in the physical realm, the greatest upheavals will be in the spiritual realm.

There are TWO – and only TWO – places in scripture where the phrase, "great tribulation," occurs.

These are they (the 144,000) which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:14)

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Matt. 24:21)

In both of these cases the phrase, "great tribulation," is a description of a general time of trouble. In neither case, is there any indication that it is an, "official," period of time called, "The Great Tribulation," that is going to happen before or after Jesus returns. In fact, the context of Matthew 24 is the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.. Indeed, He said, both before and after this Matthew 24 prophecy: "This generation will not pass away until all of these things come to pass."

This applies to even the signs and wonders that Jesus describes that will happen after the time of tribulation – these happened in the spiritual

realm. Did actual stars fall from heaven? Could they ever without destroying the earth? The spiritual intention is obvious.

As we discussed in the previous chapter, Jesus Christ is going to come suddenly at an hour that gives NO indication of His Coming – at an hour that we expect NOT. But if the church is raptured away then the people left behind would know that Jesus was coming back in 7 years.

No. People will be living like they did in the days of Noah. Evil will be celebrated and normalized. But there will be no indication that it is all going to end. His Coming will not be anticipated -- despite all of the warnings God will give.

When the Bible speaks of Jesus coming WITH His saints, this refers to the dead in Christ who, though physically dead, remained one with Christ in spirit. When Jesus comes, they will come WITH Him in spirit and be united with their resurrected body. Those alive will be united with them and Christ in spirit and reign and rule with Him on earth.

This is the ONE Second Coming of Christ. There is ONLY ONE. There is no period of time called THE Great Tribulation – despite the fact that there has always been, and will continue to be, great upheaval in this world. The greatest tribulation that is ahead of us is spiritual -- evil is going to increase and accelerate as never before - - the source of which is the spiritual realm.

Keeping an Open Mind

Our walk with Jesus Christ does not depend on whether we have rightly discerned end time prophecy. Thus, no matter what we believe the Bible teaches on this matter, we need to keep an open mind, but above all, we need to keep our eyes upon Jesus.

If we do not do so – but demand that we know how end time events are going to unfold – we are going to leave ourselves vulnerable to deception. We may interpret events as they unfold according to our mistaken interpretations and find ourselves in a false position. Or we may reject the way in which God unfolds events because they do not agree with our interpretations, and likewise find ourselves in a false position. Therefore, it is fine for us to read scripture and ask God for discernment on these matters. But again, we must keep an open mind and heart – we must keep our eyes upon Jesus.

Chapter 31

Matthew 24

Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these [are] the beginning of sorrows. (Matt. 24:4)

This is a passage that is often quoted by prophecy teachers. They use it to indicate that the end of the age is near. But if we read the passage, Jesus directly states, "The end is not yet." He says, "ALL these are the BEGINNING of sorrows."

There have ALWAYS been wars. None of them have ever ushered in the end of this age. Imagine being alive during WWII. You would have probably thought that Hitler was the antichrist and that WWII was going to lead to Armageddon. How about the great plague of the 1300s? People alive then thought it was the end of the world. The list of examples could go on. Every time there is a cataclysmic event in the world prophecy teachers say that this signals the return of Christ. Every time there is a prominent leader who works evil in this world, some prophecy teachers say he is the antichrist. But all

we need to do is read the Bible and all of this nonsense will stop.

We may soon have war in our time. Perhaps it will begin in the Middle East. Maybe China will invade Taiwan. But even if those wars happen we need to be cautious about assuming that this signals THE END. Jesus went out of His way to make sure that we would know that regardless of any war, "the end is not yet."

Get that. This discourse was a perfect opportunity for Jesus to tell us that a certain war would signal the end of the age and would be the sign of His coming. Instead, He makes it a point to say the opposite.

There are only two things that God has promised MUST happen before the return of Christ. First, "the gospel will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations." This verse actually reads, "the inhabited world," in Greek. That did happen during that generation before 70 A.D.. The gospel was preached all through the inhabited world – and down through 2000 years it stands as a witness to all nations. The other event that must happen before the return of Christ is not promised within Matthew 24 – and so it cannot be applied to 70 A.D.. That other event is the great apostasy.

So despite the seriousness of world events, no war, pandemic, earthquake, or famine is a sign of the end of the age. Jesus directly stated this fact.

This Generation

The core of Matthew 24 is bookended by the same declaration of Jesus – a statement that cannot be ignored:

Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. (Matt. 23:36)

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.
(Matt. 24:34)

Do we have the liberty to take these words of Jesus – words preceded by the dogmatic expression, “Verily I say unto you” – do we have the liberty to take these words of Jesus and apply them to a generation other than the one to which He was speaking? We have no such liberty if we take the Word of God seriously.

I realize that there is the theory that when Jesus said, “this generation,” that He meant the generation in which His prophecy would come to pass – perhaps OUR GENERATION. But that seems REALLY thin. Within the normal understanding of language, and of intended meaning, if Jesus meant any other generation than the one to which He was speaking then He was misleading His audience. If you or I gave a description of events and said that they would come to pass before this generation passed away – but we meant a future generation – we could rightly be accused of being less than forthright with our audience. Jesus would never play such games with His people.

The greatest proof that Jesus was talking about THAT generation is that His words DID come to pass before THAT generation passed away. Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. That was a few years less than 40 years after He spoke those words – 40 years usually representing a generation.

One of the reasons why Matthew 24 is applied to the end time is that Jesus spoke some things that sound like they could only apply to the time when He will return. But once we understand that Matthew 24 is a description of the end of that age – indeed, the destruction of that Old Covenant age – and the ushering in of the new spiritual age and kingdom in Himself – things become clear. Jesus is describing what will take place, not only in the physical realm, but in the spiritual realm. That accounts for the spiritual language – and how it can apply to that generation.

There is another sense in which we can understand Matthew 24. In all prophecy, there is the element of revealing the future. But there is, just as importantly, the pronouncement of spiritual principles that apply to ALL of the workings and dealings of God – for all time.

For example, Jesus said:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso

***reads, let him understand:) Then let them
which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:
(Matt. 24:14-16)***

This was definitely fulfilled by 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed. But if we take the principle out from the historical event we will know that God ALWAYS sees to it that the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached before ANY end comes – He always gives people a chance to turn to Christ before He brings judgment. And we will likewise see that He is telling us that when any holy place – church, etc. – sets up that which is abominable to God -- normalizes that which is unclean – that we must flee that church.

How to Approach End time Prophecy

God does want us to understand the spiritual Truth and principles that He has revealed in His Word. He does want us to understand the Truth He has embedded within the prophecies of the Bible. We can discern the meaning of antichrist, the man of sin, and the abomination of desolation. We can discern much of what God is revealing in the book of Revelation. We can understand the spiritual meaning and underlying principles of those things. That is why in both Daniel and Matthew 24 it says, "Let the reader understand." But it is clear that the details – the time, the specific events, the actual unfolding, and the order of things – these are NOT given for us to know.

Just prior to His ascension from the Mt. of Olives, the disciples of Jesus asked Him:

Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? (Acts 1:6)

The disciples understood that there was going to be a kingdom. They grasp that much. But they wanted to know WHEN and HOW. Jesus answered and said:

It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:7-8)

There is a principle in this for us. We are given to know spiritual Truth and spiritual principles as revealed by God in His Word through types and shadows, spiritual language, and through prophecy. But we cannot know many of the specifics of WHEN, HOW, or even WHERE. It is not given for us to know. It is sufficient that HE knows.

Note the word BUT... It was not given for them to know what they asked, BUT Jesus was telling them what they needed to be occupied with: Growing to know Him after receiving His spirit. Of course, they did not understand that. But it is nevertheless a fact – and He would say the same thing to us.

We cannot understand anything that God means by what He says unless we are growing to know Christ. He is the LIGHT by which we SEE.

The confusion arises when we claim to know what is not given for us to know. This kind of presumption is everywhere in teaching about the end time.

The best exhortation we could read regarding prophecy was spoken by Jesus:

And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, you might believe. (John 14:29)

Jesus is telling us that yes, we need to believe that what God speaks is the Truth. We can grasp spiritual principles. But it is not given to us to know the details. Yet because we believe God, when the prophecy unfolds we will see our faith affirmed. In short, we will understand all of the specific meaning and details only when what God has spoken comes to pass. That is the way to approach end time prophecy.

Chapter 32

The Church

As we approach the end of this age, and God begins to SHAKE the earthly and the spiritual, it is absolutely vital that believers KNOW Jesus Christ, and stand in Him by faith. If we know Him, we will be able to understand what is happening and why. Attached to this is will be a greater realization of the responsibility of the believer and of the church during these end times.

Much of the rest of this book is going to be devoted to continuing to lay the same foundation that we began to lay in the initial chapters. This is a valuable so that believers might be equipped for life in Christ now and in the coming years.

The Purpose of Christ in His Church

Once we realize that the foundation of Christianity is CHRIST IN HIS PEOPLE, we will realize that wherever those in whom Christ dwells are present – Christ is present. Resurrection life is present. Victory over the enemy is present. But again -- these are not THINGS God gives us. We are talking about the PERSON Whom God freely gives us.

Can we see that the presence of Christ in His people – the presence of the One who said, “I am the resurrection and the life” – that His presence is a restraint against the forces of evil? Sure. For in Him is all victory over the enemy. By His resurrection death is conquered. Thus, the presence of Jesus Christ in this world and in His church – merely the honoring of His name – is a

standard against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.

But that being the case, wherever Jesus Christ is not present in His people, and wherever the name of Christ is not honored – the enemy will remain. Antichrist will emerge. Worse, if the enemy was once driven out by the name and presence of Christ– if Christ is now abandoned – the enemy will return. And the latter state of that place or person, church, or nation will be worse than the former. This is exactly what is now taking place.

The Revelation of Christ Within

In Matthew 16, Jesus gave a principle that not only reveals the responsibility of the body of Christ, but it also reveals to us the nature of things – it reveals to us what has been happening in this realm since Adam.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed [it] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 16:13-19)

The first thing we note in this passage is that it is the inward revelation of Jesus Christ in the individual that is the ROCK upon which all else that is of God is built. Christ in His people, revealed and living – is the ROCK upon which the church is built. It is also the means by which the gates of hell are broken down.

Get the picture: Jesus Christ lives IN the believer. But He wants to live THROUGH the believer. He wants to be manifested – He wants the body of Christ to be living expressions of HIMSELF. This will not only require Christ to possess each person who would be used of Him, but it means that those believers in whom Christ lives must bring the presence of Christ into other avenues into which God leads.

Put away the nonsense of a believer walking around rebuking Satan and supposedly, “taking authority,” over this and that. That has been tried, and continues to be tried, and it does NOT work. It cannot work. There is no such thing as, “the authority of the believer.” No. There is only CHRIST IN US. He is the power of God.

What Jesus is describing is something totally different. Jesus is saying that those in whom HE LIVES are going to encounter, in God’s will and initiative, the forces of evil; the gates of hell. The believer has NO ability or strength in themselves. But they can be used by Christ as the means by which HIS LIFE and VICTORY brings down the gates of hell.

The means of victory in these matters is NOT my words. Not even true words. Rather, the means

of victory is HIS LIFE. And that life cannot function unto His victory unless the one through whom He functions is fully dependent upon, and fully given over, to Jesus Christ as Lord – to do HIS WILL, HIS WAY, unto HIS GLORY.

The last of the words of Jesus in our passage are usually skewed in most English translations -- due to the difference between Greek and English tenses. The passage actually reads:

Whatever you are binding on earth must having been bound in heaven: and whatever thou are loosing on earth must having been loosed in heaven. (Matt. 16:19)

Can we see that the believer is simply being used as a vehicle to execute God's will, and only God's will? The picture of the KEYS also brings this out. A key can fit into, and open, only the lock for which it is designed. Thus, Jesus is saying, "I already know what I want to do – but I want to do it through you. Grow to know ME and you will know My will. Give yourself to Me, and I will be the power to work through you. You will BE the key through which I open or close all doors."

The point here that is the most relevant to our subject at hand is that believers are given the responsibility for coming against and breaking down the gates of hell. Things are NOT going to be the same regardless. If believers grow to know and believe Christ, and do His will, the gates of hell cannot stand. If believers do not do the will of God, the gates of hell will not only stand – but because Satan is never passive – he will advance and retake ground from which he

was once evicted. And if so, the last state will far exceed in evil the first state. It is a guarantee.

True Freedom

What does it mean to be SET FREE – to be set free in the way that Jesus Christ meant it – as He promised in John 8:32?

And you shall know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free. (Jn. 8:32)

Jesus Christ is the Truth. So freedom depends upon knowing HIM. But in addition, the emancipation of any person is that they see that they are united with Jesus Christ personally and individually. They have personal access to God only through Christ – and that their personal access is EVER PRESENT. He is their personal Mediator unto God. This realization will always be the result of seeing and embracing the Living Christ.

What this means is that as the church lives and moves as an expression and extension of Christ -- the result is not going to be that people will become more and more reliant upon the church. People will not become followers of a particular church or ministry. They will be set free to live in Christ. But in turn, they will likewise be free to fellowship with others in a body of believers. The spirit of freedom will reign.

This is echoed best in two passages that describe what should be the impact of Christ through the church in this age:

Delivering thee from the people, and [from] the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, [and] to turn [them] from darkness to light, and [from] the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:14-18)

The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

Have we seen this impact of Christ through His people? We have NOT seen it on any large scale. But since the entire human race is in need of such deliverance, we can assume that God wants much more than we have seen.

The Word of Testimony

God cannot fail. And God will not lose. The victory is finished. But the vast majority of those who call themselves by the name of Jesus have not come into the purpose for which God called them. They have either been deceived, been blinded, or have simply forfeited the grace of God. So even though God always wins, many will not share in His victory.

This does not mean that God is without people – God has always had those who have been an

expression of Christ. Most of these folks have NOT been in the public eye. They are not in the history books. They are the invisible church. But spiritually speaking, they have allowed God to contribute life to the body of Christ through them. This is called, "the testimony of Jesus Christ."

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. (Rev. 12:10-11)

You will note the phrase, "they loved not their lives unto the death." This is not speaking merely of physical martyrdom. Rather, it points to what we have been seeing about the work of the Cross. There are saints who have lost themselves to Christ – been made one with Him in His death (the blood of the Lamb) and consequently found Him as their life. The result was the, "testimony of Jesus Christ" – which is Jesus Christ realized and expressed in them. And this was the means by which the enemy was defeated.

There is going to be a living witness to Jesus Christ as we approach the end of the age. Christ will be manifested THROUGH those TO whom He has been manifested in a living, inward realization. This manifestation of Jesus Christ will be God's call to people from out of apostasy into the Person of Christ.

Chapter 33

Witnesses Unto Christ

And, being assembled together with [them], commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, [saith he], ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 2:4-8)

We continue our discussion as to the purpose of Christ in His church – which is essential to see during these times of upheaval, apostasy, and great spiritual shaking.

The key statement in the above instructions given by Jesus to His disciples -- moments before His ascension -- is, "You shall be witnesses unto Me." What does that mean? It is vital to find the answer since the primary purpose of Jesus Christ for His people is gathered up into that one simple phrase.

A, "witness" – a TRUE witness -- is someone who testifies to the Truth about that which they have personally seen or experienced. Thus, to be a true witness carries two requirements: A personal experience about which they can testify, and then a true testimony to that experience.

Normally when we refer to a testimony to the Truth, we think about a verbal testimony. And certainly that is always going to be part of any testimony. To witness TO Jesus would include preaching the Truth and sharing the Truth – from out of the Bible; from out of true Biblical teaching and doctrine.

But that is only the beginning. Any true witness to Jesus Christ is going to have WORKS that testify to Him. In other words, I can teach about Christ in words, but should also testify to Him by how I live.

Yet there is more. Words and works should rightly represent the Truth about Christ. But those words and works must be based upon – must come OUT OF – an inward LIFE. In short, a real witness unto Christ – the real testimony of Jesus Christ – is the Living Christ Himself living IN and THROUGH those who are His people.

Living Evidence

When Jesus said that His people would, "be witnesses unto Him," He was saying that His people would be LIVING EVIDENCE of the Risen Christ. This obviously includes words and works. But beyond that, a true witness of Jesus Christ is one through whom Christ can manifest Himself.

What does that mean – how does that happen other than words and works? Well, if Christ is living in a person, and manifesting Himself through a person, then the presence of that person in any place constitutes the presence of the Living Christ in that place. That person may not speak a word or do much of anything, but there is going to be the spiritual impact of resurrection life.

Of course, we are apt to think of miracles, signs, and wonders at this point. But no. The spiritual impact of the presence of Jesus Christ may not be immediately noticed. Or it may not seem to be positive – where Christ is present there may be great upheaval. But we can be sure that wherever Jesus Christ is present that there is going to be a spiritual impact of resurrection life – of life that emancipates – an impact that may take some time to come to fruition.

Read the gospels. Read Acts. Everywhere Jesus went there was an impact. Everywhere those who were in Christ walked there was an impact. There were upheavals, divisions, animosity – but there were also healings, freedom from sin, and a greater hunger for God. Put aside signs, wonders, and the outward. The presence of Christ in His people is supposed to be the presence of Christ – if there is a true witness.

As noted -- the greatest impact of Jesus Christ is resurrection life – in other words – the emancipation of people from out of spiritual death, deception, sin, and ignorance. That is

what God wants to work through His people. That is the greatest witness to Christ.

Of course, this is never forced upon anyone. Jesus did not force Himself upon anyone. But wherever Jesus is brought the doors will be opened to freedom for all of those who believe.

Living Epistles

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some [others], epistles of commendation to you, or [letters] of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: [Forasmuch as ye are] manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency [is] of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. (I Cor. 3:1-6)

In this matter of being a witness unto Christ we find a great Truth regarding ministry. The essential for ministry that is of God is NOT that we have great talent, knowledge, education, marketing skills, or even a strong will. The essential is never ordination or credentials that say we qualify as a minister. Even a dedication to ministry that we believe is of Christ is not the

key. The essential is the Living Christ within the one who would minister – the essential is that Christ Himself is manifested; Christ Himself is ministered. When that happens, then there is a true witness; there is true ministry.

You will note, in the above passage, that Paul stated that he did not need recommendations or credentials to prove he was a minister. Rather, it was the impact of the Living Christ working THROUGH Paul in the lives of others that was the proof. Paul gladly states that NONE of that was of himself. It was ALL of Jesus Christ.

Of course, this Truth will not sit well with those who demand that credentials and ordinations or official positions are what matter – or that mere theology is the key. And certainly it is possible that this Truth could be taken to mean that anyone who simply wants to minister ought to appoint themselves to do so. But all of that is of the letter, at best. God bypasses the natural religious efforts of even well-meaning people and reveals that the only real ministry and the only real ministry is through the Living Christ within – edifying others in a personal, resurrection union with Christ Himself.

The Witness Within

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son: He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that

God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (I John 5:9-11)

In the NT Greek language, the English words translated, "witness," "record," and, "testimony," are all the same word. They mean EVIDENCE. Thus, John clearly states that the evidence, or witness of God, is WITHIN the believer. The greatest evidence of Christ is Christ Himself in the believer. Thus, it only follows that ministry must come out from Christ – real ministry is Christ Himself being ministered – Christ Himself being manifested and expressed -- through a believer.

Most of us have been taught that ministry is an assignment or calling God gives – and that by His spirit He empowers us to fulfill it. And then we assume that what we see must be of God. But is it? We ought to SEE CHRIST – we ought to see the impact of the Living Christ in the lives of people. Do we see that today, even within the church itself? Or do we see RELIGION?

It is a sound principle: Whatever is the real source of ministry will reproduce itself in others. If the source is religious flesh – then that which is born of flesh can only be flesh – it will produce more religious flesh. But that which is birthed and out from resurrection life in Christ will edify His life in others – and ONLY that which is of Christ can have that impact.

The Testimony of Jesus

And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See [thou do it] not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that

***have the testimony of Jesus: worship God:
for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of
prophecy. (Rev. 19:10)***

To, "have the testimony of Jesus," is to have the Living Christ within. And according to this verse, the Living Christ within is the source of, "the spirit of prophecy."

"The spirit of prophecy," is not a matter of telling the future. Rather, it is a matter of proclaiming the Truth – which brings us back to ministry. We are being told that it is CHRIST HIMSELF within any believer is that is the source from out of WHOM comes all ministry that is of God.

Can we see that to BE a witness unto Christ is exactly that: It is what a believer is TO BE? This is beyond DOING. A believer is to BE evidence of the Living Christ – because Christ is within. Of course this will include words and works. But any words or works that are real are going to be OUT FROM the real testimony of Jesus Christ – which is CHRIST IN US.

God Will Have His Witness

***And this gospel of the kingdom shall be
preached in all the world for a witness unto
all nations; and then shall the end come.
(Matt. 24:14)***

***And I saw another angel fly in the midst of
heaven, having the everlasting gospel to
preach unto them that dwell on the earth,
and to every nation, and kindred, and
tongue, and people, Saying with a loud
voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for***

***the hour of his judgment is come. (Rev.
14:6-7)***

***And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in
Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria,
and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
(Acts 1:8)***

God has always had a witness to Himself in this world. This was a fact all through the Old Testament, from Adam to Jesus. But then all that served as a witness unto God was gathered up and fulfilled in His Son, Whom the Bible calls, "THE faithful witness unto God. (Rev. 1:5) Since then, as we see in Acts 1:8 above, Jesus Christ continues to be the witness unto God -- primarily through His people.

We are apt to think that a witness unto Jesus Christ would require a public display – something that is headline news; something that is recognize AS a witness unto God. But this has never been the case. In fact, so much of what is called, "Christian history," was not a true witness to Jesus Christ at all. Rather, for the most part it was a false witness. It did not represent God at all. It represented religion ABOUT God.

The witness of Jesus Christ in this world – at the core – is NOT a matter of making headlines and attracting attention through miracles. No. Rather, the witness of Jesus Christ is a matter of spiritual impact. It is a matter of the presence of Jesus Christ, in the power of His resurrection life, living and moving in His people. This begins within those people themselves – and as it does – Christ will be manifested and expressed through

those people. The spiritual impact of HIS LIFE is victory over death – first IN those people, but then THROUGH those people.

That impact is FIRST in the spiritual realm. The power of the enemy is broken. Then the impact is felt in the outward realm. That impact is sometimes dramatic, as it was in the first century. But often it slowly emerges as the forces of the enemy are restrained and driven out. But in any case, what emerges is a witness to Jesus Christ as Lord. As the Savior of the world.

To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly [places] might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph. 3:10-11)

Christ in You

There has always been a common misconception that it is the job of the church to, “Christianize,” the world – that is – the church is supposed to turn the world into a theocracy. The Jews of the time of Jesus believed this – they expected the Messiah to reign and rule from the temple in Jerusalem. To them, THAT was the kingdom of God. Even the disciples of Jesus Christ were under this traditional error. Later, after the apostles were gone, this same deception of the enemy enveloped much of the church. What emerged was the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, of keeping separate from the world, the church became a religious version of the world.

It became an abomination – a false witness to God.

But despite the universal influence of false Christianity, God nevertheless maintained a true witness unto Himself. That witness was NOT in the form of great churches, seminaries, or religious institutions. Most of that witness was never recorded in the history books. That is because the witness of God is Jesus Christ WITHIN His people.

Since the ascension of Jesus Christ, and then Acts 2, Jesus Christ, through the spirit of God, has dwelt within His people. Christianity is, "Christ in you." (Col. 1:27) Thus, wherever there are people in whom Christ dwells, Jesus Christ is present – and there is a witness unto God. Of course, what ought to emerge from the presence of Christ in His people is a manifestation of Christ in preaching, teaching, prayer, and above all, living. What ought to emerge is an expression of Christ through His people according to the TRUTH.

Only if the Truth of Jesus is manifested – which is to say – only if Christ Himself is manifested according to the Truth – is there a true witness. But we need NOT to think of this in terms of signs and wonders, or in terms of some impractical, spirituality that requires human perfection. No. The true witness of Jesus Christ is one that is manifested through imperfect human lives that proclaim, "Yet not I, but Christ." (Gal 2:20)

The presence of Jesus Christ in His people means that wherever such people live and move Jesus

Christ lives and moves in and through them. This means truth and holiness. That is an expression of Christ.

The Spiritual Realm

The impact of Jesus Christ is FIRST in the spiritual realm. Unless there is an impact in the spiritual realm, nothing will endure. Of course, Jesus Christ, through His redemption, has already won all victory in the spiritual realm. But He has given His people the responsibility of standing in that victory and of BECOMING evidence of that victory – such that His victory will be manifested. His victory is to be manifested through His people – even unto the powers of darkness – unto His glory.

This is NOT accomplished by merely doing Christian ministry in the outward. It is first accomplished in the people in whom Christ dwells – they must be crucified and raised in Him. Then those people will not simply, “witness,” to Christ – but they will BE WITNESSES. They will BE evidence of the risen Christ.

Chapter 34

True Christian Ministry

In the midst of this increasingly evil world – an evil that is more and more infecting the church – believers continue to be called upon to PREACH CHRIST. This has always been the responsibility. But as we have seen, it has been a responsibility to which many have fallen asleep. The primary reason for falling asleep to this responsibility is always that believers themselves have personally and individually fallen asleep to Christ.

Where there is little value placed upon the Truth personally, there will be little value placed upon the preaching of the Truth. What will eventually creep in are other gospels – the prosperity gospel, gospels of license, gospels of legalism, and gospels that apply to only an elect few. And those who are deceived by them will be absolutely convinced that they are walking in the Truth.

The solution is that individuals give themselves personally to Christ – that He might be a living witness to this world IN them and THROUGH them. The preaching will then minister HIM. This is how the first believers were used to, “turn the world upside down.”

Christian Ministry

What is true Christian ministry? It is just this: It is the Person of Jesus Christ being ministered – that is, it is the life and light of the very Person of Jesus Christ – being manifested and communicated from one person to another.

Don't misunderstand -- no one can transfer Jesus Christ from themselves to another. But those who would minister can be vessels through whom Christ can be seen – through words, actions, attitudes, and prayer – and then those who are convicted will be able to choose.

God does not need any of us. But God has chosen to use His Body to manifest Christ; to minister Christ. Thus, it is important to understand the nature of this ministry, and its purpose.

The Truth

If Christian ministry is CHRIST HIMSELF being ministered, then if this means nothing else, it means that real Christian ministry is the TRUTH – and nothing else but the Truth. Jesus said, "I AM the Truth." Therefore, it is inescapable that where Christ is ministered and manifested that ONLY Truth will be ministered and manifested. There are NO exceptions.

We MUST be settled about this. There is mixture everywhere today that is being passed off as Christianity – despite the fact that Paul said that a little leaven leavens the entire lump. Many believe that, "the end justifies the means," in the things of God. Truth is watered-down in the name of, "love" – in the name of getting people, "interested in Christ." Even if the Word is accurately preached as to the letter, the spirit behind it is often NOT of God. Intellectualism, philosophy, and emotionalism are used to promote Christ. "Whatever works," seems to be

the policy. And every excuse under the sun is used to justify these methods. But question must always be: Is this of the Person of Jesus Christ?

We are going to see that the solution to these failings is not to find, "better methods." Rather, the solution is that those who would minister Christ would THEMSELVES be both indwelt and governed BY Christ. A person cannot minister HIS LIFE and HIS TRUTH unless they are governed by His life and His Truth. In short, a person cannot minister Christ unless they, themselves, have become governed by Christ.

What is Christianity?

If we are going to understand Christian ministry, we must again examine the foundation -- and understand what Christianity IS. Christianity is, "Christ in you." (Col. 1:27) Or, if you prefer, Christianity is a matter of being IN CHRIST.

This was Paul's proclamation at the end of one of the most important passages of scripture – found in Colossians 1. This is one of the passages we need to look at in order to grasp the Truth about ministry.

As we break into the passage of Colossians 1 at verse 24, Paul is already writing about ministry. However, he does not first write about preaching or teaching. Rather, he writes about another aspect of ministry that is not often mentioned or thought about among Christians – in fact, it would seem that most believers are unaware of such ministry. Paul writes:

***Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you,
and fill up that which is behind of the
afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's
sake, which is the church:***

Paul is stating that his suffering for Jesus' sake is actually for the sake of the Body of Christ. Is this not MINISTRY? In other words, what God is accomplishing in Paul through suffering – through the work of the Cross in Paul's life -- was resulting in a contribution of LIFE unto the entire body of Christ.

We will see later that this is what Paul teaches in II Corinthians 4. There he says, "Death works in us, but life in you." (II Cor. 4:12) This is spiritual ministry – it is Christ being ministered – yet not by words, but by LIFE. Here we see a fundamental Truth about true ministry – but we will get to that at greater length later.

But for now, Paul was telling his readers that his ministry – at the core – is spiritual in nature. It is the ministry of LIFE – for the sakes of the Body of Christ.

Paul then begins to expand upon the nature of this ministry:

***Whereof I am made a minister, according to
the dispensation of God which is given to me
for you, to fulfill the word of God. (Col.
1:24)***

Note that the ministry of Paul was given to him TO FULFILL THE WORD OF GOD. This is an immense statement. It means that the ministry

of Paul was being used to bring to pass the plan and purpose that God intended from the beginning.

There could not be a more important ministry. And of course, the ministry of Paul is likewise supposed to be the ministry of the body of Christ.

But what is this ministry that fulfills the Word of God? Paul continues:

Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints. (Col. 1:26)

So, this ministry that fulfills the Word of God – is gathered up in the term, “the mystery.” THE MYSTERY – which had been hidden from ages and from generations past – constitutes the ministry of Paul that God gave him to fulfill the Word of God.

What is this MYSTERY? What is this MINISTRY?

Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which work in me mightily. (Col. 1:27-29)

The MYSTERY which was how revealed, that was the MINISTRY of Paul was, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” This was the MYSTERY that FULFILLED the Word of God.

Note that Paul is not merely talking about a MESSAGE that he preached. No. He wrote, "WHOM we preach...." Paul preached the PERSON of Jesus Christ. His ministry was to reveal that Christ was IN believers – and that everything that God does is based upon that reality. In other words, Paul's ministry was to reveal Christ Himself, and His presence in His people, as Christianity – as the New Covenant.

Jesus Christ is THE Truth of the New Testament. Everything is out from Him for the believer. And all of God's working is unto Him. That is why He is called, "The Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, He that was, He that is, and He that is to come." (see Rev. 1:8-11) In other words, Christ is ALL.

Doctrine

It is unfortunate that any time Christ is preached as being revealed IN believers; as the Living Word of God, that there are always those who immediately jump to the conclusion that this preaching minimizes the importance of Biblical doctrine. There are going to be folks who jump to this accusation no matter how many times, and no matter in how many ways, such an accusation is shown to be groundless. It would seem that when a person has no revelation of Christ within themselves that they will question, if not attack, the Truth that they are supposed to have such a revelation. Thus, let it be stated outright, lest there be no misunderstanding: Christianity is CHRIST IN YOU. But this never minimizes the importance of sound, Biblical doctrine – rather, it is the Truth from out of which all Biblical doctrine

emerges, indeed, it is the Truth to which all Biblical doctrine points.

There is only ONE Truth. Thus, our discernment and knowing of Jesus Christ will always be in complete harmony with scripture. Jesus Christ is the Truth. Jesus Christ is the Light. Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God. The Bible is the written counterpart – and will therefore reveal that same Truth in written form. But believers are not indwelt by the Bible. We are indwelt by the Living Christ – the exact Christ who is revealed in God's written Word.

The Bible itself proclaims that, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," is the great mystery that fulfills the Word of God – and that all ministry must constitute a preaching of the Living Christ as One, yes, who redeemed us, but as the One who presently IS the life of the believer. God wants to reveal His Son TO us – but more importantly IN US. And if that happens, then our inward revelation, or realization, of Christ will be in harmony with the written Word.

Is Christianity nothing more than a belief system? Is it faith in doctrines about Christ? Or is it a living relationship with a Living Christ? Doctrine is essential because it represents the One who is the Truth. But we need to do what our doctrines teach: Live in fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Paul preached the Person of Christ, that is to say, Paul ministered the Person of Christ. That included teaching and doctrine. But that teaching and doctrine was unto the end that believers would come into a personal and individual

realization of the Living Christ Who was in them. This is ministry that is of God – and the ministry that ought to be happening in the Body of Christ among all believers.

Chapter 35

The Desire of the Lord

In the last chapter, we saw a description of the ministry of Paul – which should likewise be the ministry of the Body of Christ. This is the ministry that should have been going on during this age, but is certainly is the one that will be greatly needed moving towards the end of the age:

Christ in you, the hope of glory. Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which work in me mightily. (Col. 1:27-29)

Here we see that, “Christ in you,” is not only the core reality of Christianity, but the presence of Jesus Christ within the believer is supposed to have an IMPACT. That impact is that each believer ought to mature in Christ Jesus. This, Paul says, is the goal of true ministry.

You will note that Paul says that maturity in Christ for others is not only the goal of ministry, but that it is the outcome of God working IN HIM.

Herein we see a principle that governs all ministry that is of God: All true ministry begins with the work of God IN the minister. Then, through the work of God in that minister, God can work THROUGH that person unto the maturity of others.

Paul's Heart Cry

There are numerous places in the NT where Paul declares his heart cry for the Body of Christ. But since these passages are part of the inspired Word of God, we can be sure that the heart cry of Paul represents the heart cry of God Himself. We find one of them in Galatians:

***My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.
(Gal 4:19)***

This declaration by Paul certainly agrees with his statement to the Colossians – shown at the beginning of this chapter. God reveals through Paul that it is His desire that Christ be, “formed,” in believers. The Greek word translated, “formed,” means, “to be inwardly realized and expressed.” This is God’s desire, and it is the purpose of all ministry – to bring believers into an inward realization and expression of Christ. To the degree that this happens, it will result in Christian maturity.

In Ephesians 1, we find another heart cry of Paul, which is actually his prayer – and as such, represents the desire of God for believers:

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being

***enlightened; that ye may KNOW....(Eph.
1:15-18)***

This epistle of Paul to the Ephesians is filled with doctrinal teaching and exhortation. But what does Paul say is his prayer? That the Ephesians come to know his doctrine? That they memorize and parrot the teaching? No – despite the fact that what Paul wrote is the Word of God. Rather, Paul wants them to have a living experience of the One about Whom his doctrine teaches: Jesus Christ. Paul wants them to come into an inward realization and expression of Jesus Christ; to have the, “eyes of their understanding enlightened,” that they might know HIM – and His eternal purpose.

This was the heart cry of Paul throughout his ministry. But that being the case, it brings us face to face with this question: Is it OUR heart cry? Is it OUR prayer? This heart cry of Paul represents the heart cry of Jesus Christ. Thus, it is the mind of Christ. Is it OUR mind? And if not, then why not?

Do we seriously believe that we can dismiss what God has clearly expressed as HIS desire for His people? Or should it not convict us, and open our eyes, to the fact that we may have been blind to the Person of Jesus Christ; blind to His plan and purpose for the church?

Blinded to Christ

This great mystery of CHRIST IN YOU – which fulfills the Word of God – the mystery that was hidden from generations past, but NOW is

revealed – this was Paul’s passion. But Paul was not merely passionate about it as a message. Rather, Paul was passionate about the PERSON. God desires that all believers know His Son – realize His Son – and that Jesus Christ becomes the very LIFE of the church.

Christ is preached in God’s church as Savior. He is usually preached as the One in Whom we must trust. But where do we hear that believers are actually one with Jesus Christ in resurrection union – and that He is ALL to each of us? More importantly, where is this actually experienced?

I would submit that most believers are BLIND to this great Truth. Instead, we have a Christianity that is focused on other matters. Today, we are more preoccupied with SELF than we are preoccupied with Christ. We want to feel good about ourselves – or to make sure that God feels good about us. We want to figure out how to get God to give us what we want out of life. The Christian world is littered with teaching as to how to garner the blessing of God.

Many believers spend their lives serving at church or in ministry. Their focus is to get others into church. Others simply follow along in a belief system, equipped with a statement of faith and rules to follow – thinking that this is Christianity. Others spend their lives seeking emotional experiences that they think are the Holy Spirit. Still others live in an intellectual world of Christian philosophy and reasoning. Churches have become social clubs. They have become religious centers. Where is the Living Christ?

The church today has simply continued on the same course that the church has followed for the last two thousand years – to one extent or another. The church is more and more a religious expression of the world – the spirit of the world continues to govern the church. Christ has been compromised in favor of what is socially acceptable; in favor of what will fill the pews and offering plates. Money governs so much. Churches today have normalized sexual perversion. The doctrine that ought to point us to Christ has been discarded for the sake of, “love and tolerance.” The list could go on.

What is the solution? The solution is NOT a new statement of faith, or a new strategy for saving the lost, or to pray that God will act upon churches and revive them. That is NOT how God works. The problem with the body of Christ is within the hearts of individuals that constitute the body of Christ. The problem is within the hearts of LEADERSHIP. Thus, God must deal with INDIVIDUALS. Individuals must be broken and convicted. Individuals must SEE that they have been BLIND to Christ – and must open their hearts for the Truth – no matter what it takes.

The Ministry of the Church

The ministry of the apostle Paul is the ministry of the church. And so we repeat what Paul said was His ministry:

***Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
Whom we preach, warning every man, and
teaching every man in all wisdom; that we
may present every man perfect in Christ***

Jesus: Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which work in me mightily. (Col. 1:27-29)

There is no other ministry. It is therefore God's will that all of His people turn away from religious flesh and turn TO His Son – no matter what it takes.

We have this ministry....For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to [give] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (II Cor. 4:1, 6-7)

Christ in us is -- NOT US. Does that seem like a strange statement? Well, in this day and age, we are more and more being taught that salvation is a matter of God doing THINGS TO US. Or a matter of God giving THINGS TO US. Or a matter of God imparting to us something that will make us better people. The average believer's view of Christianity – perhaps not in words, but in concept – is that God takes our natural man and does a work to make that natural man into a Christian.

This is error, and it is a master stroke of Satan to have blinded so many to the Truth about Christianity. It may seem to be an exaggeration to say so, but it is actually a fact that many believers do not understand what Christianity IS.

Christianity is CHRIST IN US. The Christian life is a progressive realization of the Christ who is in us, and a progressive experiencing of Him. This is the Truth.

Now, to put it in simple terms: When a person is saved, they are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him. (I Cor. 6:17) That is HOW Christ dwells in the believer – we are made one spirit with Him. But we are NOT made one, “soul man,” and we are not made one physical body with Christ. No. We are made ONE SPIRIT with Christ. We are joined to Him in spirit.

Christ is “Other Than Us”

Note that we are JOINED to the Lord. Note that Christ is IN us. Note that we have this Treasure IN earthen vessels. In other words, Christ is OTHER THAN US – even though we are joined to Him in spirit. We are not Christ – neither are we simply made to, “look like Jesus.” No. And Christ is not us. Christ is in us, and all the while we remain joined to Him, He is other than us. Christ is a Living Person and we are an individual who is alive in Him. Individuality is maintained, even in this resurrection union.

It is vital to see that Jesus Christ is OTHER THAN US – even as we are joined to Him in spirit. Why? Because seeing this opens up the Truth of the separation in each believer of soul vs. spirit. If Christ in us is other than us then in our Christian experience we are going to encounter dimensions that are of Christ, and other dimensions that are of ourselves. And as we grow to know Him, this

separation will become more and more defined and clear.

Perhaps even more importantly, seeing that Christ is OTHER THAN US will reveal that the Christian walk is not about US. It is not a walk governed by preoccupation with SELF. It is not a walk wherein I grow to know MYSELF. It is not a self-improvement class. Indeed, the Christian life is a deliverance from myself through a growing realization and experiencing of Jesus Christ. We are drawn out of ourselves into the One who is other than us – and we become preoccupied and governed by HIM.

Salvation

Salvation is not a THING, or something that God does TO US. Salvation is not merely a legal classification. Christianity is not a matter of God taking our natural man and making him into a better person. No. Salvation is Christ in us. He is THE LIFE – and if we are one with Him then He is OUR LIFE. In other words, God does not give us a THING called, “eternal life,” to have and to hold within ourselves. No. God gives us Christ – who alone IS THE LIFE.

Jesus Christ is the only life we have – He is the only life there is. Thus, as noted, Christianity is not the outcome of some THING God DOES TO US. It is not the result of God giving us THINGS. No. God gives us CHRIST HIMSELF – in Whom are all things.

But you see, here again the Christian church has redefined the Truth to fit religion. We still think

that eternal life is a ticket to heaven that God has reserved for us. In the meantime, we think that God has given us a bunch of experiences by the power of His spirit. We busy ourselves with church and with ministry. We walk in some sort of religious belief system, trying our best, "to look like Jesus." None of this is NT Christianity. Christianity is CHRIST IN US. Salvation, or eternal life, is the result of being made one in spirit with the Person who is THE LIFE.

The same mistake has been made with regards to the building of Christian character. We think that God builds Christian character in the believer by ACTING UPON US, through experiences, or through some big event, and molding our natural man into a Xerox copy of Jesus. The Truth, however, is that Christian character is NOT a matter of the believer coming to, "look like Jesus." Rather, Christian character is the result of God crucifying our natural man so that the Christ who dwells in us might flow through us and be made manifest. Today we know almost nothing of this. Yet it is central to the purpose of God.

Jesus Christ is our life. But not just some future eternal life in heaven. He is the Christian life NOW. The entire essence of the Christian life is drawn from out of Him. He is the source and He is the power. And He is the goal – that His people might manifest Him. Jesus said of Himself four times in the book of Revelation, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." That makes Jesus ALL.

Christian Ministry

Because Christ is IN US ministry is possible. He is the ONLY reason it is possible. That is because all ministry is, "out from Him," as the source. He is the LIFE and He is the LIGHT. Thus, for a person to minister Christ, they must know Him, experience Him, and be governed by Him. You cannot separate ministry that is of Christ from a person's personal relationship with Christ Himself.

Anyone can, "minister," the tenets of a creed. Anyone can study theology and then pass on that theology to other. But that is not true ministry. True ministry is the ministration of LIFE and LIGHT – it is Christ Himself being ministered.

Chapter 36

The Ministration of Life

To continue the discussion on the meaning of true ministry, it is of value to look at the words in the original language. The word translated, "ministry," "minister," and, "ministration," in the NT is from the Greek word, "diakonia," which means SERVANT. Thus, a, "minister," according to God's definition, is a SERVANT of God. This agrees completely with what Paul said about himself to the Corinthians:

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. (I Cor. 4:1-2)

So, Paul says that he is a minister, or servant, of Christ, but then adds another term to his description of a minister: STEWARD. The Greek word behind this English term is, "the manager of a household or estate." Therefore, Paul is a servant who is responsible for managing that which belongs to God.

Now, one key characteristic of a servant is that a SERVANT has no ownership rights – they never do. A SERVANT is there to be exactly what Paul said: A STEWARD – one who is to manage the property and affairs of his master. But what is the property and affairs of God that Paul was to manage? The mysteries of God – which means that Paul was to be responsible for the LIFE and LIGHT in Christ that God had revealed TO him, and IN him. He was to be responsible FIRST for

allowing God to do whatever was necessary for Paul himself to come into an inward realization of Christ. But secondly, Paul was to be used as a vessel to bring in the Life and Light Himself to others.

Now, we can see what it means to be a, "faithful steward." A FAITHFUL steward does the will of the Master with what belongs to the Master. But this is because the steward is FIRST faithful, not to his responsibility, but FIRST faith to his Master. But if a servant is faithful to the master, then that servant will likewise be faithful in his responsibility. Thus, the relationship between servant and Master governs all.

A, "faithful steward;" "a faithful minister," knows and rejoices in the fact that the mysteries of God do not belong to himself – but belongs to God – and desires to be faithful to God regarding what belongs to God. He will manage what God has given him, and assigned him, as if it belongs to God, and not himself – because that is the TRUTH. He will be in a relationship with God wherein he does the will of God with no personal agenda, but only unto God's glory.

All of these principles that applied to Paul apply to each member of the Body of Christ. For each member has received the mysteries of God – each has received LIFE and LIGHT in Christ – with varying degrees of ministry. How that ministry is worked out will vary – through preaching, teaching, serving, edification, prayer – it may be to simply suffer for Jesus' sake -- but whatever the ministry which emerges, it must be based upon the LIFE and LIGHT that has been formed in

the individual who would minister – it must be based upon a personal realization of Jesus Christ.

So we see that ministry is not a job, or merely a professional calling. No. True ministry is the outcome of relationship with Christ. Only if a person has received from God, and has allowed God to possess THEM for Himself, can there be ministry that is of God that emerges.

Joined to the Lord

We have seen that Christianity, at the core, is CHRIST in us. And we have seen that what that means is that we are joined to the Lord and made one spirit with Him.

He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. (II Cor. 6:17)

Note that we are NOT joined to the Lord in physical body or with our natural, soul life. No. We are joined to Him only in spirit. Over the course of the Christian life, there will be a work of the Cross upon our natural man – we must bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus. (see II Cor. 4:10) But this is so that, “the life also of the Lord Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” So, despite the fact that we are joined to the Lord ONLY in a SPIRITUAL union, it is the will of God that our earthen vessel manifest the Lord with Whom we are one in spirit. The result will NOT be that we will, “look like Jesus.” Rather, it will be that Jesus Christ is seen in and through us.

Now, if Jesus is to be manifested through those who are IN HIM, then will not ministry emerge? Yes. Because Jesus Christ IS that ministry – He is the goal of all ministry that is of the spirit of God.

But don't think of ministry of something that is official, or professional. No. Ministry is CHRIST -- His life being manifested to another such that there will be an impact of edification in Christ. All believers have the potential to manifest Christ.

Can we see that ministry is a matter of LIFE and LIGHT – because ministry is Christ ministered? Sure. Indeed, all ministry that is of God is of the life and light of Jesus, and NO ministry is of God otherwise.

The world is capable of providing human beings with that which can make the body better, and which can try to rearrange the mind to a more tolerable condition. And unfortunately, the church has borrowed much of that. But only if we are joined to the Lord in spirit can there be true ministry from OUT of that resurrection union.

If we would be earthen vessels through whom Christ Himself, by the spirit, could minister, doctrines would fall into place, minds would be renewed, and bodies would be healed. His LIFE would issue forth and be experienced -- His resurrection life – which has power over the last enemy, death.

The ministration of life in Christ Jesus always carries the light – for, “in Him was LIFE and that LIFE was the LIGHT of men.” (John 1:4) But don't think of life and light as THINGS. They are

Christ. The light is in the life because both find their source in the same Person.

God Commits Only to Christ

God has not called His people to minister religion about Christ. He has not called us to peddle a statement of faith. Rather, He has called us to preach the PERSON of Jesus Christ – and to minister life in The Son.

It is impossible to minister the life of Christ unless the life of Christ is within the one who ministers. And the life of Christ cannot be within the one who ministers unless that one is bearing the cross and losing their life to Him.

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. (II Cor. 4:1, 10-12)

“Death works in us, but life in you” – this is the means of the ministration of the life of Christ. And yet how often is that preached? Is it even acknowledged? This is not some hidden knowledge, given to only a few. It is right there, up front, in the NT. This ought to give us an idea as to how far afield the church has strayed, and how much we need a wakeup call.

Chapter 37

The Need to See the Living Christ

Surely if there is one thing that is going to emerge in a time of great apostasy, shaking, and religious confusion, it is to SEE and KNOW Jesus Christ. One of the impacts of ministry that is of the spirit of God -- which Jesus promised to Paul - - was that eyes of the spiritually blind would be opened, and many would turn from darkness to light. In order for people to be set free – or order to walk with Christ – this is certainly essential.

But if we are to see the eyes of the blind opened we must understand the MEANS. The only way in which the eyes of the spiritually blind can be opened is if they see Jesus Christ.

To NOT be able to see Jesus Christ is spiritual blindness. To see Jesus Christ is spiritual sight. That is because Jesus Christ is THE LIGHT. Indeed, once we begin to see Jesus we will be able to see the Truth about all things – in His light.

If people must see Jesus, then obviously, Christ needs to be preached. He needs to be preached in Truth and in power.

Christ in the Individual

God wants to reveal Christ to each individual believer. The revelation of Christ cannot come by proxy. Even if God speaks or bears witness to Christ through another member of the Body, it is unto the end that each individual learn Christ for

themselves. This is what it means to edify each other in Christ. Ministry is LIFE – ministry is Christ. It must be real and must be personal.

The personal knowledge of Jesus Christ is an inward matter – it is an inward realization. It is not emotional or intellectual – although the mind will be renewed according to Christ and be thoroughly engaged. A person will begin to be governed by their relationship with, and knowledge of, Jesus Christ.

This is absolutely essential. It is what it really means to see Jesus – we come into an inward realization of Him. This is a Truth stated everywhere in the NT:

***My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.
(Gal 4:19)***

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Mat 16:16-18)

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: (Gal 1:15-16)

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; (Phil 3:10)

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. (1 John 5:20)

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

This is so essential that it was actually the heart cry of the apostle Paul, and was the object of his prayer for the body of Christ:

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what [is] the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set [him] at his own right hand in the heavenly [places], Far above all principality, and power, and might, and

dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all [things] under his feet, and gave him [to be] the head over all [things] to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all. (Eph. 1:15-23)

If you read this passage you will see that the core of Paul's prayer is that believers would be given, "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the KNOWLEDGE OF HIM." But it is that knowledge of Christ that is the basis for "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened." In other words, the inward knowledge of Christ OPENS THE EYES – enables spiritual sight. And then, based on the knowing of Christ opening the eyes spiritually, Paul says, "that you may KNOW." He then goes through what we WILL know: Those Truths that constitute the plan and purpose of God.

Now ask: Why didn't Paul simply tell them that if they wanted to know the plan of God that all they needed to do is read the rest of this epistle? Paul talks much about it in this letter. Or why didn't Paul tell them that they need to gather up all the facts they had been told about Jesus Christ? Wouldn't that be how could know Him? But no. Despite the fact that it was the cry of Paul that the body of Christ could see – he did not mention study, facts, or theology. Neither did he point them to the rest of what he wrote in this epistle. Instead, he said, "I pray that God would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus Christ."

We are being told in these passages the same Truth in the above passages: We have no spiritual sight unless we see Jesus. All discernment is the outcome of seeing and knowing HIM. And without this spiritual sight, we cannot get far in this Christian walk.

The New Birth

Jesus said, "Unless you are born from above you cannot see." (John 3:6) That ought to be a given. But just as a new born babe has the capacity to see – has the ability to see – it takes time for that babe to actually open their eyes and to start seeing. Furthermore, even once a babe does see, they do not know what they are seeing. There is no understanding.

The problem with many professing Christians is that they are not born from above. And if that is the case, they CANNOT see. The best they can do is grasp certain Christian truths from an intellectual or theological standpoint. And they might make the mistake of thinking that this IS seeing. Ministry needs to show the difference and bring into their lives the presence of the Living Christ.

This is what Paul did. It is why he prayed that God would open their eyes to Jesus Christ. That fact alone ought to tell us something: If Paul prayed that God would open their eyes, does that not show us that NOTHING else will? That spiritual sight is not accomplished through the efforts of religion. It is not something that any of us can bring to pass. All that any of us can do is bring Jesus Christ into the presence of others. HE is the LIGHT.

John, the apostle, in his gospel, makes this statement:

In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. (John 1:4)

This tells us that unless we are indwelt with HIS LIFE there is no possibility of seeing – for LIGHT is of HIS LIFE. This is just another way of saying that you must be born from above. But it also tells us that before God can open the eyes of the spiritually blind, they must take their place at the Cross and put their faith in the Risen Christ. Our death -- through being crucified with Christ – will result in His life in us – which will make it possible for us to see, for His life is our light.

Chapter 38

Freely Received, Freely Given

One of the biggest corruptions that has been brought into the church – into the preaching of the gospel – is that of legalism. But legalism has many faces. One of the common manifestations of it is the marriage between the Truth of Jesus Christ and MONEY. This is everywhere today, and we can expect it to only expand as an evil dynamic and tool of the antichrist as we move towards the end of the age.

Grace

If we wanted to find a single word that encapsulates the gospel of Jesus Christ, that word would be GRACE. Most believers have heard the most common definition of, “grace” – grace is God’s unmerited favor. That is a good definition.

Now, of course we should not think of, “grace,” as a THING that God gives – sort of like a bucket of something, or a power. It is easy to do that because sometimes vocabulary fails us. But no. GRACE is actually God’s attitude and heart towards humanity. That means that GRACE is out from God – it is an aspect of His very Person extended to humanity.

John, the apostle, wrote, “Grace and Truth came in Jesus Christ.” (John 1:16) Sure. Jesus was, “FULL of grace and Truth.” (John 1:14) Thus, Jesus not only accomplished His Redemptive work by the grace of God – but He was God’s gift of grace in a Person.

The Bible calls God, "the God of all grace." (I Peter 5:10) It is impossible for God to act except it be in grace, and it is impossible to experience God without experiencing grace. Grace is the nature and character of God, and His Son, Jesus Christ.

All Grace is in Christ

We cannot separate the Person of Jesus Christ from the grace of God – for as noted, grace and Truth were given IN Jesus Christ. Therefore, if a person wants the grace of God they will find it only in Christ. Indeed, even when God draws unsaved people to Christ it is by His grace in Christ.

Grace is never imposed. It can be resisted -- God Himself has made that possible. Grace is absolutely FREE – meaning there are no strings attached. But we do have to believe. "By grace through faith," is a Truth that governs all. That is not a condition – it is simply the TRUTH. If ALL grace is found ONLY in Jesus Christ then unless we put our faith in Him we cannot be under His grace.

God has given all things FREELY in His Son. (Rom. 8:32) So, again, we see that what we cannot experience what God has freely given in Christ unless we experience Christ.

God's Purpose

Anyone can learn the doctrine of grace. It is fundamental to Christianity. But actually receiving the grace of God is another matter. The

fact is, you and I will NOT receive the grace of God – dare I say CANNOT? -- until we see that God's grace is ONLY means by which we can receive Christ and walk with Him.

We must grasp this Truth: Grace is the ONLY means by which we can receive anything from God – whether we are talking about salvation or whether we are talking about that which we need to walk with Christ or whether we are talking about material provision from God – grace is the ONLY means.

Why? Because the alternative is that we must MERIT what we need from God. We would need to MERIT or EARN from God what we need – whether it be through our works, our attitude, or by, “having enough faith.” (Lots of us try to muster up faith and generate it up to God!) But unless God has freely given us ALL things solely by His grace in Christ -- THIS is what we are left with.

So many believers are blind to the necessity that ALL is by the grace of God. That is because we are blind to the One in whom ALL grace is given. Therefore, in our ignorance, we continue to try to be good enough, measure up, feel good about ourselves, or have a good attitude.

But let's ask: Why are we blind to grace? Why do we keep trying to measure up? It is for one reason alone: We still have not seen that we are utterly empty; that there is nothing in us. We have not seen that we will NEVER measure up. So we continue to try to muster up something out of ourselves that will convince God that we

deserve what He has. Oh, we probably don't use those words, but it is there.

All of this is self-righteousness. But again – we likely don't think in those terms – but that is exactly what it is. And self-righteousness is unbelief – it is actually sin.

This blindness or hardness of heart – if that is the case with me – is not resolved by keeping laws. It is not fixed by religion, study, or a change in circumstances. It is resolved ONLY if God brings me to the end of my occupation with myself and my righteousness. I must be brought into an absolute failure to maintain myself before the Lord. This is the ongoing work of the Cross.

Now, if God brings me to the end of my own righteousness, it is then, and really, ONLY then, that I will truly receive the grace of God. Until then it might have been a true doctrine to me; a good teaching. But now I have met the grace of God in Christ.

I must freely receive what God freely gives. If I try to receive on any other basis, I am not walking in the Truth. I am not in real fellowship with God. But if I do receive freely what God freely gives, then it is evidence that the Cross is at work. And the grace that I have freely received will change me into a vessel through whom God's grace can be manifested and flow. In other words, believers are supposed to be – not only those who freely receive grace – but those who are governed by it and then pass it on to others.

Ministry of Grace

Ministry that is of the spirit of God is the ministry of grace. God has freely given us all things in Christ. We are to freely receive what God has freely given. Thus, those who have freely received what God has freely given are going to freely give to others – out of what God has freely given them.

Can we see that all is of grace? Yes. ALL is of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. And certainly, that which has to do with any facet of ministry to others is always going to be freely given to others – because it is out from that which is freely given to those who would minister.

The Commands of Jesus to His Disciples

This Truth was certainly lived by Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry. And He directly taught his disciples to do likewise:

Preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. (Matt. 10:7-8)

The occasion in which Jesus spoke these words to His disciples was the very FIRST time He sent them forth to minister in His name. But there is one sentence in this passage which gathers together all of the Truth about true ministry – which is an expression of what it means to be a

FAITHFUL servant: FREELY you have received, FREELY give.

This is, of course, the Truth of grace. But again -
- here we see that GRACE is not simply the means by which God saves His people. Rather, GRACE governs ALL that is of God – and therefore GRACE governs ALL that God does IN His people and THROUGH His people. In other words, if God has given His people all things FREELY in His Son (Rom. 8:32) – then God’s people MUST likewise give all things FREELY. We have received NOTHING that is of God except it be by GRACE through Jesus Christ – therefore, having FREELY received, we must FREELY give.

If believers would see this Truth in Christ, and then live out from it, it would not only revolutionize our personal lives, but it would completely alter the face of ministry. God has given us ALL things freely in His Son – everything that God has to give is given to us, not as a supplement to Christ – but in the Person of Christ Himself. God has NOTHING to give humanity outside of what He has given in Christ. And He has given us Christ solely by His grace. But since all ministry is OF Christ, and is a matter of conveying and manifesting Christ – a faithful servant will freely give because he has freely received. Anything other than giving by grace what we have received by grace is UNFAITHFULNESS, and a misrepresentation of Jesus Christ.

Now, this is not merely a law or principle to live by. It is a work of His grace. For if I have FREELY received in faith what God has FREELY

given, then it means I have seen that there is nothing in me by which I can compensate God, or merit what God has to give. I will have seen that the ONLY way in which I can receive from God is FREELY by His grace – I will have seen that I must receive from God FREELY because FREELY is how He gives. This will not be just a doctrine or principle to me. I will know that GRACE is the only basis by which I can have a relationship with God. The result IN ME is that I will FREELY give to others because God has FREELY given to me.

There is simply no way to freely receive by the grace of God unless that grace does a work in me whereby I will then voluntarily and gladly freely give to others. These things are NOT passive. What God freely gives amounts to LIFE and LIGHT that is of His Son – and Christ in me by His spirit will begin a work of grace that will make me want to FREELY give what God has given me. This is the ONLY possible outcome of FREELY receiving from God.

Now, of course, most of us, while we may understand this teaching, continue to try to be good enough to receive from God. Or we try to muster things up from out of ourselves. But if we are trying to be good enough then we are NOT freely receiving, and we will NOT freely give – there will be strings attached – because we have not yet come into the Truth on this matter.

Jesus was clear to His disciples, and He was talking about ministry. “Freely you have received, freely give.” This is a description of a faithful steward – it is actually the only way to be

faithful to Jesus Christ. It is a description of true MINISTRY. We freely give BECAUSE we have freely received – and what we have freely received has made us to be people who desire to freely give.

So we see that all ministry, at the root, is out from Christ – it is Life and Truth in Christ, being experienced by a person, doing a work in that person – and then as the result, being brought into the life of others. Do not separate ministry from Christ; do not separate stewardship from Him – for all Life and Truth is out from Him. It is only as a person gives themselves to Christ can such a person can be a vessel through whom Christ can be ministered.

Practicalities

Almost from the start, Christianity became a money making machine. And once properties, and buildings, and employees, came into the picture there were expenses that had to be met – in order to keep the machine running. And once that happened, then there had to be an accepted NARRATIVE – or you would be unplugged from the money machine. This is exactly how the world operates – and the church does as well.

You can tell much about a church or a ministry by what it teaches and practices about money. On Christian TV alone we have an ongoing abomination centered upon money – centered upon how to get blessings of all kinds from God by giving money. And in many local churches people are put under the law of tithing. It is a shocking thing to see how folks simply fall in line

with these teachings and narratives – thinking that they are in the will of God.

Many believers and ministers have their stories about how God has miraculously blessed them for tithing, or for, “planting a seed,” into a TV ministry. But do we realize that every cult has its list of miracles attributed to God – supposed miracles wherein God supplied money? All of them have people who give money and testify as to how God blessed them. But it is all one grand illusion – regardless of whether the stories are true. If you look for signs and wonders to prove God is on your side you will eventually find them.

Paul wrote:

***Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds,
and destitute of the truth, supposing that
gain is godliness: from such withdraw
thyself. (I Tim. 6:5)***

Is this obeyed today? It has NEVER been obeyed. Instead of withdrawing from those who teach that money is associated with being godly, professing Christians run to them; follow them – and worst of all, FUND them – and make it possible for them to continue preaching their heresy.

Do we realize that doing so makes us a partaker of their sin? That it makes us as guilty as they?

It is actually worse. If I enter into a fellowship of giving to false teachers, I actually enter into fellowship with their spirit of error. Read I Corinthians 10. Of course, few believe that – but if I am funding heresy I am already one with it. To say this has no spiritual impact, or impact

upon my relationship with Jesus Christ is nonsense.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the gospel of grace. God is the God of all grace. Grace and Truth came in Jesus Christ. And we are going to attach MONEY to the grace of God?

This has gone on for over two-thousand years. And attaching money to the grace of God is simply another outward symptom of the inward unbelief and religious flesh that has governed the visible church.

No one wants to see people come under the judgment of God because of sin – rather than they would repent. But make no question about it, if people will not repent, they are going to come under the judgment of God. God will not settle for less than a people of grace.

Chapter 39

The Essential of Prayer

We tend to think of prayer in terms of asking God for help, or for things. We ask for ourselves or for others. Or maybe we ask for discernment. But while these motives for prayer are good and God-ordained, there is another aspect of prayer that governs all of those motives and more. Prayer ought to be our joining with the Lord for His will, His purposes, in His way, and in His time.

Now, if you examine that, it covers all – and satisfies all of the teaching of the Bible about prayer. Prayer is not our asking God to do what we want – no matter how legitimate and seemingly good we think it is. Rather, prayer is about asking God to do what He wants – and it includes our opening of ourselves for whatever it takes. It is our joining with the Lord in His will.

Are we not joined to the Lord and one spirit with Him? Thus, why would we need to beg God to do either our will, or even His will? That is nonsense. God wants to fashion our heart and our faith such that we ask, seek, and knock to JOIN HIM in what He already desires to do.

This is what Jesus was getting at when He said to the apostles, “Whatever you bind on earth must already be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth must already be loosed in heaven.” (Matt. 16:19) God wants to work THROUGH His people. But He won’t force the issue. He needs a people who will put their own agenda aside and join Him.

Herein we see a great Truth about FAITH. We cannot have, "the faith of Jesus Christ" for anything except what Jesus Christ has faith for. How could we? Thus, "the faith of Jesus," is present in the believer only to the extent that we join Jesus in His will and purpose – only then can we join Him in His faith.

We do not need to understand everything that God wants to do, or the way He wants to do it, in order to have the faith of Jesus. We simply open ourselves unconditionally for whatever it takes. If we do that, then, "by faith we understand." Or, "we walk by faith, not by sight." The bottom line is that faith does not necessarily know where God is leading, but can nevertheless abandon ourselves to Him – because it is sufficient that HE knows.

Prayer IS Ministry

Once we grasp that prayer is a joining to the Lord for HIS purpose, we can more easily see how prayer is real ministry. We may not be out front preaching or teaching – some folks who do that are NOT really joined to the Lord in what HE is doing anyways – but if we are joined to Him and pray we are contributing to the ministry of the Lord by His spirit. And that is quite meaningful in ways we cannot calculate.

Think about it: If prayer is a joining with the Lord for His presence in a situation for His will – then since we are one in spirit with other members of His body we can be sure that we are

bringing them into greater contact with HIS LIFE. There will be an impact and a strengthening.

But why does it often seem as if our prayer is having no impact? Well, let's ask: Do we think that there is such a thing as indifference on the part of God? No. There is ALWAYS an impact. It often seems as if nothing is happening because EVERYTHING that is of God happens FIRST SPIRITUALLY. That is the only way that what happens in the outward can be real – because it must first have a spiritual basis in Christ.

A spiritual basis for the outworking of God's will must begin with His people joining Him in His will – must begin with that kind of unconditional prayer. It cannot begin any other way.

In this age God has chosen, in large part, to execute His will through His people – to reveal Christ in and through people -- and to work through those people as expressions and extensions of Christ.

Watching

Numerous times in the NT we are told to, "watch in prayer." What does that mean? Does it mean to settle back and watch for an answer? No.

"To watch in prayer," means to press through our own humanity and own agenda – unto a full awareness of the Lord and His presence. This is not necessarily something we FEEL – although emotions may react – but it is something we spiritually realize. It is not a condition of mind or

emotions. It is a spiritual fellowship that transcends all of that.

To repeat what prayer really means – to watch in prayer means we put off all distractions of mind and emotion, and join the Lord in spirit for His presence. We are, in other words, watching for the LORD HIMSELF. We look to HIM.

So many of us unwittingly look to ourselves in prayer – we look to how we feel or to how we think or to how we sense. And from that, we determine what God is saying, or conclude whether He has even heard us. This is error. The Bible states, “All the promises of God find their YES and AMEN in HIM – unto the glory of God by us.” (II Cor. 1:20) In other words, how you feel is not how God feels. Rather, we must keep our spiritual eyes upon Jesus to the disregard of ourselves. For some of us, this is a new thought. But part of what it means to press through and stand in prayer is to allow the Lord to bring us into these realities.

We saw earlier the essential of an inward realization of Jesus Christ. It ought to be obvious how this must be a goal of prayer, and how the faith of Jesus Christ will be the outcome of such a realization.

Power in Christ Alone

There is a rather predominate belief among Christians today that God has given us a power to overcome the enemy – and that we ought to go around using this power to rebuke Satan and, “speak victory,” into the lives of people and

situations. This is contrary to what God reveals in His Word. The proof that it doesn't work is all around us. Is the church showing victory over the enemy? Does the church carry great power today? Hardly. The church – for the most part – doesn't even have its own house in order.

The Truth on this matter is exactly what we have seen: Prayer – indeed the Christian life – is a matter of the saint – by faith – actively joining the Lord in His will. Or, to put it another way, we are already joined to the Lord and one spirit with Him – but we must live IN and OUT FROM His life in all matters.

God has not given us a power to go out and USE. Rather, He has given us CHRIST within – a Christian is a person in whom Christ dwells – and the Person of Christ is the power of God. (I Cor. 1:24) Thus, it is only if we actively live out from our joining to the Lord for HIS will can there be any power. Only then is it possible for Christ to live through us. Anything else, at best, is dead religion.

The power Who IS Christ cannot work through an individual who has not come under the power of God who is Christ. In other words, in order to be an expression of Christ in the outward there must be a realization of Christ within – we must be under the work of the Cross and the power of HIS resurrection. There is simply NO other power of God except that which is in Jesus Christ. He alone is Lord.

Ministry to the Body

If a person allows God to have His way with them, then the LIFE of Christ will be released to the rest of the body of Christ. This is TRUE MINISTRY. It is often HIDDEN ministry. And the fruits of it may not be seen much in this age. But it is ministry none the less. The real fruitage and real value will be realized in the next age.

When Christ returns at the end of the age, what God has accomplished in an individual is not going to be erased. No. It will be released to fullness. And because I am joined to other Christians in spirit, then what God has wrought of Christ is a contribution to the spiritual life of the body as a whole.

Paul talks about this in many different places in the New Testament. He talks about the fact that if one member suffers -- that all suffer; if one member is benefiting -- then all benefit. Remember that? Thus, what God is accomplishing in you contributes to the greater body, but what God is working in other Christians likewise contributes to you.

For example, Paul spoke of himself as suffering for the sake of the body of Christ. But as we are seeing, that suffering must first do a primarily work in Paul, because unless God gets a work done in the individual there can be no contribution to the body THROUGH them.

So Paul's suffering was not merely for Paul. Rather, it was for Christ's sake – indeed, Paul says it was for the sake of the body of

Christ; for the sake of Christ's purpose in His body:

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church. (Col. 1:24)

Paul is saying that yes, Christ finished all the work that needs to be done for the believer. But now the individual believer, and by extension, the body of Christ, must grow to experience Christ. We must fellowship with Him IN what He has done. The finished work of Christ must be worked out in His people. That begins personally, as Christ possesses and does a work in the individual. But then, because all individual believers are members of the same body – Paul says that this is also is a work that benefits the entire body.

Paul says to the Colossians that, "my sufferings are for YOU." He says that these sufferings do a work that, "fills up that which is behind" – that is, they bring to fullness in Christ that which has not yet been brought into fullness." He says that his sufferings are for – not merely his OWN sake – but for, "His body's sake, the church."

We should not think of this in terms of us ADDING to what Christ has done. No. Rather, it is the ministration of what Christ has finished.

And so here we see that what the individual experiences in this age is not merely for that individual's personal growth. Rather, what Jesus

Christ forms of Himself in the individual has an impact of life for the entire body of Christ.

For Jesus' Sake

Many times in Scripture we read that the saints suffer for, "the sake of Jesus." Why is this for HIS SAKE? WE are HIS inheritance just as HE is our inheritance. Christ wants individual believers through whom He can live and move. And if He gets individuals, then He will have a corporate body. Thus, all of the sufferings of the saints are ultimately FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST – for the sake of His purpose in individuals, and for the sake of His purpose in His body. In other words, what is for the sake of Christ is indirectly for the sake of His body.

Jesus Christ obviously does not need any of us. But He has ordained that He wants a body through which He can live and move. This will benefit those through whom He lives and moves. And it will be part of an eternal purpose.

God's Ultimate Purpose

Each believer is individually IN Christ. But it is because EACH believer is individually in Christ that Christ is our COMMON life – He is our, "communion." And likewise, because EACH believer is in Christ, ALL believers are ONE in Christ, and members of each other. This is a fact regarding believers who are alive in this age at any point in time. But it is also a fact regarding all believers – both those physically alive and those who are asleep in Christ.

Consider the gifts of the spirit. God gives these gifts to His people. They are NOT just for the person to whom the gift is given. No. They are given to individuals for the sake of the body of Christ. If you and I allow Jesus Christ to have his way in us, then whatever that gift is; whatever that revelation is, is now a part of the body because we are part of the body. And God would like to use that gift to minister to His body through us.

But note: If that individual never had the opportunity to minister to the body of Christ; never had the opportunity to preach and teach – and in the church as it functions today, that is so often the case – it is nevertheless a fact that Christ can have His way in that individual to whom the spiritual gift is given. And there can be a spiritual release of life FOR the body – even if it is unseen.

Is the ONLY way to function in a spiritual gift during a church service? Does Christ live through us, and minister through us, only if we are physically present with a body of believers? Absolutely not. We are spiritually one with Christ regardless of physical presence.

You and I encounter needy people every day. We live among both believers and unbelievers. If Christ is in us we can minister – it may not be in some recognized way. We may not garner any attention at all. No one may see what we are doing. Our scope of ministry may be no bigger than our family, friends, or workplace. Does that make it of any less value to God? Jesus said, “The last shall be first and the first shall be

last.” Maybe we ought to stop thinking in terms of results we can see, or that others can see, and start thinking about the interests of God instead of the interests of man.

That Which Abides

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. (I Cor. 3:11-15)

What is able to abide and stand through all? Resurrection life – Who is a Person. Only that which is, at the core, resurrection life in Christ, will abide and pass through all into the eternal ages. LIFE in Christ must be built by Christ through ministry into the body of Christ. This is that which will abide.

What we see here is that there is a difference between the MEANS by which Jesus flows His life into His body, and the FRUIT. The MEANS are the things believer DO. The FRUIT is what is produced. In the final analysis, the MEANS – preaching, teaching, giving, serving, and even prayer – all of these will pass away into history.

What matters, and what will abide, is if LIFE IN CHRIST has been the FRUIT.

In the above passage, Paul talks about what is BUILT – not about what is done TO build. He talks about each person's WORK – not about the works done to build the final work. Thus, all that matters is the FRUIT – the LIFE that is built. Not what was done to build that life.

Can we see that this applies to prayer? Prayer is ministry that builds life into the body of Christ – if it is of the faith of Jesus and according to the will of God. The impact, in that case, will abide forever.

If preaching ministers LIFE, and teaching ministers LIFE, and the spiritual gifts minister LIFE, and prayer ministers LIFE – then what matters, and what will stand in the end, is LIFE. This makes all that ministers LIFE equal in importance.

True Ministry

Once we catch a glimpse of the Truth of the body of Christ – and see the purpose of God in the individuals that comprise it -- we will likewise see that we suffer not only for the sake of what God is doing in us personally -- but we also suffer for Jesus' sake; for His purpose in HIS BODY. In fact, I would boldly proclaim that it is not possible to suffer simply for yourself. It just it doesn't work that way. If we are suffering in God's will, it IS for Jesus' sake – He is getting His will in us. And we are likewise suffering or His purpose in His body -- we are members of one another – that is what the body of Christ IS -- by

definition. Therefore, whatever you do; whatever you become in Christ -- that is either adding to or subtracting to what God wants to do in His body.

All the performing of ministry in the world, not matter how far-reaching, and no matter how impressive, will pass into history – and all that will abide is the life which Jesus was able to flow through that ministry. All of the prayer in the world – done by those who are never seen or recognized – may be used of Christ to build life. Thus, the MEANS are not the issue. The FRUIT – the life – is what matters – and it is all that will endure unto thee eternal ages.

Why is all of this important as we approach the end of this age? Because the body of Christ needs to hear the Truth. The body of Christ needs the ministration of LIFE. God wants to salvage out of this present darkness – including the darkness that is invading the church – those who would turn to Him.

We are NOT going to change the course of this age. We need to get that settled. But we can change the course of the individual lives who are caught up in this evil age. We can do that by first giving ourselves to the Lord. But then, we can be expressions and extensions of Jesus Christ. Primary to this is PRAYER. Anyone can pray. And as we have seen, this is not the least we can do. If it ministers LIFE it is as valuable as any other expression of Christ through His people.

Chapter 40

Standing in Christ

Christian people should not be defined by what they are AGAINST. We should be defined by the Living Christ. What this means is that our lives should proclaim: "Yet not I, but Christ." (see Gal. 2:20) Believers are to be evidence of the resurrected Christ. That is what it means to be a witness unto Christ.

But it is also inevitable that if we stand FOR Christ that we are ultimately going to encounter, and have to stand AGAINST, that which is contrary to Him. Or, to put it another way, if we know the Truth we are going to discern UNTRUTH; if we stand in Truth we will have to stand outside of, and against, error.

Standing for Christ, and against that which is against Him, is going to characterize a Christian life at all times. We are always going to face our own nature, the world, and the enemy. But as we move towards the end of the age, this battle is going to become more intense, more exacting, and the stakes will be higher.

The Weapons of Our Warfare

Satan does not come and present himself as an obvious enemy. Instead, he will work through human beings that give him place – often those human beings do not realize it. Other times, Satan works spiritually in unseen ways. He is, "the prince of the power of the air." He tries to get to believers and unbelievers alike through

their soul life. But believers have Christ in them in which to abide by faith.

It is Christ in us -- the LIFE of Christ – the resurrection life of Jesus Christ – that carries the power over death; over the forces of the enemy. And it is the LIGHT of life in Christ that will renew our minds and give us the discernment of good from evil.

Anyone can argue doctrine. Anyone can use words of wisdom and logic. But at the end of the day the most anyone can win from that method is the argument itself. Christians are here to take territory from the realm of death by bringing in the One Who is the LIFE. That is impossible unless we have life in us – and are fully given over to His glory.

The battle at hand is spiritual – and it will be all the more spiritual as we get to the end of this age:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare [are] not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (II Cor. 10:3-6)

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the

whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places]. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore. (Eph. 6:10-14)

It ought to be obvious from these passages, that even though Satan may use people to accomplish his ends, the real enemy is not flesh and blood. That does not mean that there is not a point at which we must deal with people who are doing the bidding of Satan. But we need to realize where the battle takes place: It is in the spirit. And our greatest weapons are faith in Jesus Christ, and our knowledge of Jesus Christ – strengthened and centered by prayer.

An Example from Galatians

***O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?
(Gal. 3:1)***

Paul said that the Galatians were, “bewitched.” The word in NT Greek means, “mesmerized.” It means to fixate or focus someone onto something to the exclusion of all else. For the Galatians, they were fixated upon their own righteousness through law keeping. In turn, this blinded them to the Person of Jesus Christ.

Paul never suggests that the Galatians were not saved. They DID have Christ within them. But because He was no longer the object of their faith for living, He may as well not have been. That is why Paul says, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (Gal. 5:4)

Embedded in Paul's warning to them about their condition is a principle as to how the enemy works. There was something more going on here than doctrinal deception. It was a spiritual deception – a spiritual condition that had affected their minds; their soul life.

Satan's point of access in human beings is the soul – the psychic nature. It is the part of natural man that we cannot see. Thus, to the extent that we walk according to the flesh – which means to walk according to SELF; governed by natural man – we are vulnerable. This includes a life that is governed by religious flesh. In that case, we can be deceived.

Herein we find the spirit of error. The spirit of error is a lie about God. It need not be expressed in doctrine – it is lie that has gained a foothold in a person's soul. It affects their emotions – stirs up fear, pride, or self-righteousness.

You can find this mesmerization in any deception. For example, people in cults read the same Bible as those who truly know Christ. But they read into the Bible what their fixated mind dictates. They do not perceive according to Christ – they do not discern according to the Truth. Rather, they

interpret life and God according to the lie that they have embraced.

As we race towards the end of this age, more and more people, both in the world and in the church, are going to be mesmerized by lies. The father of lies will infect people – they will be open to this - with all manner of fear, hate, violence, and pride.

We have already seen this. During the COVID pandemic, there were certain narratives – since then proven to be false – that spread worse than COVID itself. It spread through fear and intimidation. It was fed by peer pressure and reputation. Few dared to question much of it. Transfer that over into religious deception. Add the spiritual powers of evil. People will go along with it, and even defend it, without even stopping to think about what they are doing.

We are told that the end time deception that is to come – sweeping many into apostasy – will be so powerful that even the elect – those who DO know Christ – would be deceived if it were possible. It will be filled with signs and wonders. It will appear as a soul-appealing angel of light. This will not be that which merely appeals to the intellect. It will appeal to the fears, the hopes, and the false expectations of both unbelievers and believers alike.

This is not to paint people as victims. The protection against this is reverence for God, and losing one's life to Christ – resulting in a clear knowledge of Jesus Christ. In the same epistle of Galatians, Paul gives the Galatians what will break

the condition of mind and soul that has them bewitched by error:

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. (Gal. 4:19)

When a person begins to inwardly realize Jesus Christ – and abide in Him by faith – standing in Him – the spell will be broken. That person will begin to perceive according to the Truth. They will stop being governed by their soul, and begin being governed by Christ.

Chapter 41

Where Judgment Must Begin

For the time [is come] that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if [it] first [begin] at us, what shall the end [be] of them that obey not the gospel of God? (I Peter 4:17)

The decent of this world is not going to be reversed. That is a fact – regardless of the ebbs and flows that will happen along the way. Even if things turn upward for awhile they will revert to the downward slide. It is inevitable.

This should never mean that the church should be dragged down with the world. Rather, the church ought to be the vehicle whereby those of the world – those who want Christ – can be salvaged out of this evil world.

You will note something vital: The church was never called to convert the world. The church was never called to, “Christianize,” the world, or to turn any government into a theocracy. The idea that the church is to take over various dimensions of government and society for the sake of Jesus is a lie. Rather, the church is to remain separate from the world – not taking a self-righteous, superior position – but to remain separate as a witness to Christ. The result would be that those of the world who want Christ can have a light – a light whereby they can turn away from darkness.

But none of this can happen where the church is a FALSE witness unto Christ. And unfortunately, much of the visible church – especially what is on so-called, “Christian TV,” IS a false witness. It is NOT of God.

This tells us that if any church is going to stand in these last days as a true witness of Christ -- that rather than having a focus on fixing the world -- the church needs to clean up its own house. People, especially leaders, need to first – get their own personal lives centered in Christ. And then they need to live like it and speak like it. But in order to speak the Truth in love it will be necessary to speak AGAINST the lies, and the false teachers, within.

In this day and age, the people who speak out against some of the worst errors are those who are in OTHER errors that are just as bad. Calvinists speak out against the charismatics – and charismatics return the favor. Legalists condemn those in license. Those in license condemn legalists. One cult condemns another – and all cults condemn anyone who is not them. What is the problem? The problem is that Jesus Christ is not known. He is not the LIFE. And where this continues, this will be unresolved.

Thankfully, God has never sat back and simply allowed this to continue, and will not do so at the end of this age. Judgment already began upon the church during the apostolic times and it has continued. It is going to accelerate as the age comes to a close.

The judgment of God always begins with LIGHT. God will expose us for what we are in HIS sight. That will pave the way for the CROSS – we must confess with God what we are. And in doing that, we must put our faith solely in Christ – and commit to whatever it takes for God to have His will and glory. This will completely push out the agenda of religious flesh, the lust for power, the lust for money, and the lust for popularity. It will leave room only for Christ.

Now, obviously, most are not going to accept this as God's judgment. They will continue to side step it and fashion a false Christianity – which will lead to a solidified end time apostasy. But the judgment of God is nevertheless certain. There is only ONE Truth and ONE Christ and ONE purpose of God. God is going to have this His way – and despite all of His long suffering – there is going to be no place to hide, no excuses accepted, and no arguments that will stand. We will either voluntarily come into the full light of Christ, or retreat into the darkness – but either way, God has only light to offer. God is going to have His will. It is up to us to choose whether we will be for Him or against Him.

Testing and Proving

The judgment of God is not equal to the condemnation of God. In the NT Greek, "to judge," means to expose or discern – it means to bring out the Truth. "To condemn," on the other hand, means to, "pass judgment AGAINST." From these words, we can see that the judgment of God in exposing the Truth always precedes His condemnation – IF those who are judged do not

confess the Truth He reveals and give themselves to Christ.

God will use many methods to expose the Truth about His people TO His people. Of course, when God exposes the Truth it is always in the light of His Son – God doesn't just point out sin and unbelief as things unto themselves. But if the people of God are off the track there is simply no avoiding the essential of repentance.

Often God will allow the persecution of the world to judge His people. Sometimes personal trials. But these things are intended, not to punish, but to build faith – IF people will turn and stand. As we approach the end of the age, God is going to expose the church to more and more testing and proving. Many who are not committed by faith to Christ will fall away. Many who are not presently committed to Christ will turn and repent – their faith will be proven and built. The wheat will be separated from the tares.

Today's church is going to be subjected to spiritual upheavals like never before. There is going to be a purging and a building. There MUST be. God is NOT going to have a fake church or a false Christianity. Of course, we are not going to see the outcome of all of this until Christ comes back. It will be only then that all things will be made manifest – including professing Christian people.

Judging Ourselves

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he

come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink [this] cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of [that] bread, and drink of [that] cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many [are] weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. (I Cor. 11:26-32)

This passage is not Paul's instruction as how to properly hold a communion service. In fact, it really isn't about a communion service – it isn't about the taking of the communion elements. Those issues are merely the outward. In this passage, Paul is talking about actual spiritual communion in Christ. All of the rest is simply representative of that.

Once we grasp this it clears up some of the nonsense that is attached to this passage. Paul is not saying Christians must be worthy enough to take of bread and wine. Actually, he is not talking about the actual taking of the physical bread and wine at all. Rather, he is talking about ascribing proper worth to what the redemption of Jesus has accomplished – and to the fact that we are joined to Him, and to others, in spirit, because of it. In other words, the passage is talking about reverence for Jesus Christ as He relates to communion among believers.

The warning Paul gives is that anyone who makes themselves part of the body of Christ, but who has little or no reverence for the reality of Christ in His people – has little reverence for the fact that believers are in communion with Christ and others – that person is violating that which is holy.

There are many ways to do this, not the least of which is to bring in false teaching, false practice, and to falsely represent Christ. Likewise, it is possible to bring unity around error and thus draw people away from real communion in Christ. This is going on everywhere today. Unity in Christ is only present to the extent that Christ is present as the LIFE of each believer. That is sadly lacking today.

You will note that Paul says there are consequences for operating in a false unity within the church – sometimes sickness, and even death. That does not mean that sickness or death always finds its cause in these violations – but it is possible. Such consequences, Paul says, is the judgment of God – judgment in order to turn people back to the Truth.

Paul says if we would judge ourselves we would not be judged by God. What does that mean? It means that we must agree with God about the Truth, and confess with God about the Truth. We must open ourselves to Christ. If we would do that then the sacrifice of Christ proves sufficient. If we will not, then we are violating the very essence of communion with Jesus Christ.

Gather up these passages and compare them over and against much of the church today – the visible church. Does it sound as if the visible church is ready for the return of Christ? Is the visible church ready to reign and rule with Christ? If not, then we can be sure that God is going to be faithful to burn up and shake loose all that is not of Christ. Those who open themselves up for this judgment will be a witness unto Christ and be part of a revival. Those who refuse will be part of the great apostasy. God is faithful. He will prove who within His body is the same.

Chapter 42

At the Judgment Seat of Christ

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things [done] in [his] body, according to that he hath done, whether [it be] good or bad. (II Cor. 5:10)

The above verse from II Corinthians is pulled from a larger passage that contains much related Truth. It is Truth that not only has application for the last judgment and eternal ages, but also for our life in Christ for this age.

To begin with, let's look at some of the words in this verse. We need to realize that the KJV English words that are in italics are NOT in the original Greek manuscripts. They are words put into the text by the translators because they believe that adding those words will bring out the intended meaning more clearly. That is a common tool in any translation -- and most often those added words DO make what is written more clear as to the intended meaning. But this method also puts the translation at the mercy of the understanding and interpretation of the translators -- which in some cases is lacking.

In the case of this verse, the intended meaning is actually a bit muddled by the addition of those words in italics. Not only that, but one key Greek word in this verse is actually translated with an English word that tends to lead us in a direction other than that which was intended by the apostle Paul.

The key word in question is, "appear." Paul says that, "we must all APPEAR before the judgment seat of Christ." The word translated, "appear," is PHANEROO. The word means, "to make manifest; make known; show...to reveal; take the lid off. It means the act of divine revelation (about someone or something)." (Hebrew-Greek study Bible, page 1737, Strongs 5319)

That certainly changes the meaning conveyed by this passage. When we read the phrase, "APPEAR before the judgment seat of Christ," we quite naturally think in terms of simply being PRESENT at the judgment seat of Christ – and perhaps nothing more. But in actuality, we are being told that WE MUST BE MADE MANIFEST before the judgment seat of Christ – WE must be REVEALED. The word is in the PASSIVE voice, which means that this revelation is not of something other than us that is then given to us. NO. It is a Divine revelation OF US. Paul is declaring the fact that we must all be MADE MANIFEST at the judgment seat of Christ – that is, the Truth about us is going to be fully exposed. "The lid" – all that hides or bottles up the Truth about us -- is going to be, "lifted." The REAL us will be brought out into the light.

What is being described here IS judgment. The word most commonly used in the NT that is translated, "judge, or judgment," is KRINO. It means to DISCERN – "to divide, separate, make a distinction." In other words, this, "judgment," brings out the Truth. "To judge," in the sense of this word, KRINO, means to, "separate Truth from error" – and to allow only the Truth about us to stand.

So we see that KRINO does not mean to pass sentence. It simply means to bring out the Truth. Sentence will be passed, assignments made, or action taken, will follow once the Truth is revealed.

If the word KRINO means to discern the Truth, then KRINO is describing the impact of LIGHT. Indeed, LIGHT always brings judgment – LIGHT always brings out the Truth. God always begins judgment with LIGHT.

We are apt to think of this judgment as a fearful, negative thing. But it is not necessarily that at all. Paul is simply telling us that we must be made manifest – have the Truth about us brought out – before the judgment seat of Christ.

As an aside, we must see the difference between, “discernment,” and, “condemnation.” While the word translated, “judgment,” is KRINO, the word for, “condemnation,” is KATAKRINO. As noted, KRINO means to discover the Truth. But KATAKRINO means to bring a judgment against; to condemn – because the Truth that is discovered is bad. In fact, when Jesus said, “judge not,” He was not forbidding discernment. No. For if we are in Christ, we are going to discern. We must. But Jesus was saying that we must never condemn (katakrino) – must never play God; must never decide what someone deserves.

So at the judgment seat of Christ we will all BE MADE MANIFEST. Sure. By definition, the JUDGMENT SEAT is the seat of Light and Truth –

it represents standing face to face with the One who said, "I AM the Light; I AM the Truth." So when we stand face to face with Jesus Christ then judgment will happen because it will be the result of being in His presence – the Truth about us will be brought out. WE will be made fully manifest.

Now, you will note that the JUDGMENT seat is a picture. It isn't as if there is some actual judgment seat that DOES SOMETHING TO US -- and brings out the Truth about us. No. Rather, this is a picture of what is going to happen when each of us encounters Jesus Christ HIMSELF. In a sense, HE is the judgment seat of God, Who, when encountered, brings out the Truth about everyone and everything.

Even in this age, when we are indwelt by Christ through the Spirit of Truth, there is an ongoing work to lead us into all Truth – there is a continual work that brings us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. But as we realize Christ, all else will be made manifest – because HE is the Light and Truth. For example, the more we see Christ, the more we will see in ourselves all that is contrary to Him. That is because it is the revelation of HIM that sheds light and brings out the Truth.

It is the purpose of God, and the destiny of believers, that we spend all eternity fellowshiping with Jesus Christ. But to what degree are we able to do that? This will be revealed at the judgment.

Glorified Body

That brings us to the second part of our verse – the part in which we find the italicized words. To review, this is what the KJV says:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things [done] in [his] body, according to that he hath done, whether [it be] good or bad. (II Cor. 5:10)

So far, we have seen that it ought to read:

For we must all be made manifest by the judgment seat of Christ...

Now, let's add the second part of the verse the way it ought to read:

...that every one may receive THRU BODY according to that which he hath done, whether good or bad.

There is no question that there is a correspondence between our relationship with Christ HERE and what is carried through and received into the glorified body -- at this judgment of Christ. Who we are to Christ NOW is going to be the basis for who we are to Christ THEN. Note that word: Basis. Or, if you prefer: Foundation. In this age, there is the foundation being laid of Christ, but then there is that which is built in us upon Christ. Both the foundation and what is built in Christ is that which is received through the glorified body. Who Christ is to us NOW is going to be the

basis for who Christ is to us THEN. This is the entire point of this passage, and of other passages. Of course, our understanding of how that works, and what that means, may be blurred or even incorrect. But the fact remains.

What we see here is that death does not erase the Truth about our relationship with Christ. Rather, death SEALS it as the BASIS. Upon that basis much will be built through the eternal ages. But it is nevertheless the basis for all.

In His inspired Word, God gives us a number of passages on this matter of what happens at the resurrection of the body, and the judgment seat of Christ. These passages serve to clarify what Paul is getting at in II Corinthians 5:10. One of the best if found in I John:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

This verse contains more Truth than is evident in the KJV translation. It could be paraphrased:

It has never yet been made manifest what we shall be, but we know that when who we are in Christ is manifested, that who we are in Christ will be out from His likeness, and that this will enable us to see Him as He is." This is based on the original Greek (per M.R. Vincent).

John is speaking to the same Truth as does Paul. He is telling us that in this age the glorified body cannot be seen – it will only be made manifest through resurrection. This agrees with Paul – who wrote that only at the judgment will the believer be made fully manifest. But John adds that the believer will be made manifest, “from out from Christ Himself.” In other words, the glorified body of the believer is going to carry an expression; a manifestation of Jesus Christ Himself.

This expression of Christ through the believer is the outcome of this life, the resurrection of the body, and the judgment of Christ. That expression of Christ will be the TRUTH about each of us – it will reflect, in a living way, our relationship with Christ.

Of course, our relationship with Christ is dependent upon the light we have received. Thus, it is not how MUCH we have done for the Lord, or how MUCH light we have received, but whether we were faithful over the light we were given. For those who are given much – much will be required. For those who are given little – little will be required. Our faithfulness to God in what light He has given us determines the quality – good or bad – of our relationship with Christ NOW. This determines the degree to which we are able to experience Christ, and be an expression and extension of Him as we pass into the eternal ages.

You will note that the reward of the saints is not THINGS. It is not first of all, “positions.” Rather, the reward is a full release and experiencing Jesus

Christ. Any things or positions that follow will be based upon who He is to us.

God is perfectly just. This is not a contest. It is not a race to do as many good works as possible so as to increase our reward. No. Rather, it is a matter of walking by faith in that which the Lord has given.

Chapter 43

The Great Shaking

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by [his] Son. (Heb. 1:1-2)

See that ye refuse not him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more [shall not] we [escape], if we turn away from him that [speaks] from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this [word], Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God [is] a consuming fire. (Heb. 12:25-29)

Jesus Christ is God's ONLY Word – He is THE Word of God. God is today speaking to us SONWISE. But He is doing so in more than verbal or written fashion. God is speaking to us through an ongoing, inward revelation of Jesus Christ. The real question is whether we are hearing Him – or, "refusing Him that speaks."

It appears that the end of this age is upon us. Of course, things could slow down, change, or linger – and this age may yet have many years. But we

have crossed a number of moral and spiritual lines that indicate that God is not going to allow this age to continue for much longer.

We already know that there is only one way in which this age is going to end: In apostasy. Humanity – including the church – has opened the door for the reestablishment of the power of darkness. This evil will not only be seen in the world of unbelievers, but also within those churches that have compromised the Truth in Christ.

As we advance towards the end of this age, there is going to be a widening separation between that which is of God and that which is not. There will come a division between the wheat and the tares – between those in apostasy and those who stand in Christ.

God is going to have His witness of Christ through His people. This will bring greater persecution. But it will likewise force choice. Those who want Christ will turn to Him. Those who do not want Him will have to reject Him and retreat into greater darkness. In the end, there will be no fence sitting. There will be no religious games. There will be only Christ. He is God's ONLY Word, indeed, He is God's FINAL Word.

The Shaking

In the above passage from Hebrews 12, God promises a great shaking – not only of this earthly realm, but also of the heavenly, or spiritual realm. Thus, this shaking will encompass ALL. Every status quo will be shaken. All comfort

zones will be shaken. All humanity will be shaken. It is going to result in great upheaval. But the purpose of God in shaking all things will be redemptive: For only that which is of Christ will remain.

All throughout this age, there has been a shaking. Certainly individual believers – those who come into the purpose of God – have many times of personal shaking. The purpose is the always the same: So that what is NOT of Christ might be shaken out of their lives – and only Christ might remain. This often impacts the earthly, but the real shaking is spiritual. It is nothing more than the work of the Cross.

But what God is talking about in Hebrews 12 is a universal shaking that will impact individuals – both believers and unbelievers. It will be a shaking that will not only shake loose all of the fake Christianity in individual lives, but it will shake loose all of the fake Christians in the church. But as terrifying as this might sound, it is what God MUST do. It is the only way to bring those who truly want Christ into His full purpose.

Historical Shakings

There have been many horrible wars, famines, and plagues down through history that have shaken this world. These events have also been used by God to shake His church. There may be more of the same before the end of this age. When the church – individual believers -- will not hear what God is speaking in Christ, God will often use earthly calamity to motivate them to turn to Christ. But despite the effect upon the

world, there are numerous shakings that have had great spiritual impact. We mention here only a couple of them.

The coming of the Messiah was obviously a great shaking. His Redemption is THE great shaking of God upon all of His creation. That shaking is the source of all others – it is ongoing and eternal. The end result will be that nothing but that which is of Christ will remain.

The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was a great shaking. It ended the religious system of the Old Covenant – a system that had become corrupt. Of course, the Jews have tried to piece it back together. But that shaking scattered the early church. It was a clear indication that God's, "headquarters," was no longer on earth, but in Christ. Those in Christ – Jew and Gentile alike – had earthly religion shaken down to nothing so that relationship with Christ by the spirit could become the norm.

The great plague of the 1300s was a great shaking. But this is not only because of the death that took place. What also happened was the death of the fake faith of many that was in the Roman Catholic Church. They had been taught that the church was their protection. This plague proved this to be a lie. Many stopped believing that lie. That plague shook loose all of that fake faith and opened people's ears to God – in a way that had not happened before. It began what would eventually result in the Reformation.

Obviously, the shakings that we see here on earth are merely outward evidences of a much greater

shaking that is taking place in the spiritual realm. That was certainly the case with these events leading up to the Reformation.

We have entered the time of the end – which is the time of THE GREAT SHAKING. It is the climax of all of the other times that God has shaken both the earthly and the spiritual realms. It is the season in which God is going to bring to pass all that He has promised – but also all that He was warned.

The Faithfulness of God in Christ

The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD [will be] the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I [am] the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. (Joel 3:16-17)

In this passage, we see the same redemptive Truth that is revealed in Hebrews 12: All of God's shaking of the earthly and spiritual realm are unto a redemptive end: That we might be set free to experience Christ.

We do not often think of REVIVAL as a shaking. WE don't usually think of it as JUDGMENT. But revival cannot happen unless God deals with, shakes and judges, the spiritual conditions that are in place – which are hindering life in Christ.

In the final analysis, revival that is of God happens when Jesus Christ Himself enters into a situation, the life of an individual, or into the life of a church. The presence of Christ is what SHAKES and JUDGES – for HE is the Truth and He is the Light. When Christ comes in everything is exposed in His presence. If people respond to Him in faith, only that which is OF HIM and only that which is HIS WILL can remain. That is freedom and that is Redemption.

Are we prepared for that? Are we prepared for HIM? Despite all of the apostasy that is ahead of us, and all of the possible earthly calamities – despite all of the spiritual trauma that is necessary -- God will never deviate from His purpose in Christ. He is going to have it. And He invites ALL to become a partaker of His Son.

This is the good news of the gospel – the good news of the Person of Jesus Christ. And it is something in which we ought to rejoice.

His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and [men] shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed [be] the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed [be] his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled [with] his glory; Amen, and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended. (Ps. 72:17-20)

Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with

***them, [and be] their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.
(Rev. 21:2-5)***