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BEYOND THE MORAL DIVIDE

By Foy Bullock

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

From his background as diligent student of the Word of God, pastor, evangelist, and church leader, Foy Bullock writes **BEYOND THE MORAL DIVIDE**. Mr. Bullock is District Moderator of the Southwestern District, Bible Missionary Church. He is a graduate of Bethany Nazarene College and has served as college president and General Secretary of Foreign Missions for his denomination. Foy Bullock is the author of a previous book, "These Days Have Meaning", as well as numerous articles.

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DEDICATION

No man could have a more capable and faithful companion than I for over thirty-five years. So, it is with great pleasure that I affectionately dedicate these pages to my wife, Doris Nell.

* * * * *

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment is made to those who have been a source of inspiration and challenge to me in this endeavor. There have been many pastors and friends who have requested that I make this material available in print.

Deep love and appreciation is also expressed to my wife, Doris, for her untiring labors in behalf of this project. She has served as proofreader and consultant and were it not for her dedication and sacrifice these pages would not have been produced.

Special recognition should go to my typist, Mrs. Marsha Carpenter, for the typed drafts which she labored long over. Also, a special thanks to the editors and printers for such a fine job.

Finally, I humbly submit to you that had it not been for the Blessed Holy Spirit burning these messages on my heart over a period of many years, I would have nothing to offer. Whatever good may be derived from reading these pages, I owe a debt of total gratitude to Him.

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FOREWORD

-- That we are rapidly approaching a climax in this dispensation no one can honestly deny, for all recognize it:

-- That there is a power other than Almighty God that is nudging this generation toward disaster, can be clearly seen:

-- That this power is being aided and abetted by a compromising and apostatizing Church, is very evident:

-- That the vast majority of people are unaware of the tremendous import of these things, no one can deny:

-- That perhaps a majority of the earth's population does not want to be made aware of these facts would not be hard to verify:

-- That the ministry as a whole has failed to cry out against these encroachments of the enemy, seems almost unbelievable:

-- That occasionally God has a man or a woman who dares to unveil the ugly face of the apostasy, is surprising to many:

-- That a Church Leader and Scholar of the stature of Foy Bullock should expose it clearly and emphatically, comes as a refreshing sign:

-- That a study of this serious matter should be presented in such an interesting and captivating manner as is done in "Beyond The Moral Divide" comes as an encouragement to all who love the truth:

-- That it is now ready for your own personal perusal should be a matter of thanksgiving to each of us who are favored with the opportunity:

-- That both the book and its truth are now in your hands places the responsibility for reading, believing and acting squarely upon your own shoulders:

-- That each of us shall be deepened in our commitment to God as a result of this book is the sincere prayer of this writer.

-- David P. Denton --

* * * * *

PREFACE

Those who study apostasy in relation to the Second Coming of Christ have witnessed a most significant change in Anti-Christ activity in recent years. This change has been from dormancy to militancy... from a low-key posture to an accelerated revelation of every foul spirit included in the satanic kingdom.

Can this change be pin-pointed in time? Not with absolute certainty, however, the decade of the 1960s lend evidence to a satanic assault which set the world reeling and rocking. It just might be the signal of "the beginning of the end." Many things support this theory: ... assassinations; street and campus rebellions; satanic churches; new morality; revival of occult; woman's liberation movement; drug culture, sodomite ministers; unisex; attack upon prayer in schools; Jesus People and the Charismatic Movement; and although in a different vein, the Six Days War.

The rate of moral degradation has been climbing slowly for a number of years. This growth has taken on mushroom proportions and sin, anarchy, apostasy, spiritism and corrupted modern communications have pushed society BEYOND THE MORAL DIVIDE. Just as the Continental Divide in the Rocky Mountains separates the flow of water toward the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Moral Divide has separated humanity from the probability of revival among the masses. While some are claiming revivals and tremendous things spiritually, the world is unaffected. These claims are mostly from the electric church ... radio and television ... and cannot be substantiated. The religious mind has been conditioned to equate emotional religious activity with revival, but an honest appraisal will show that most of this activity will be at the extreme swings of the pendulum ... fanaticism and entertainment.

History is replete with times of darkness during this church age, and some would argue that God has produced men and women who initiated revival. This day is possibly different in that there is an absence of quality that is necessary for genuine revival. Sincerity and dedication, evident in all religious movements, are generally mistaken for quality. Whereas, these characteristics may be termed "quality" by these movements, they do not constitute "quality" which brings true revival. This loss has come through spiritual erosion and has left leadership gaunt and passive, inept to counter the floodtide of darkness. Affluency has disarmed them, and they have "caused the seat of violence to come near" (Amos 6:3).

The advent of television brought Satan the agency and power to launch a world-wide offensive against the forces of right, and to push humanity to the summit of the MORAL DIVIDE ... never to regain the strength to initiate a counter offensive. Television is the monster of hellish persuasion that has not only glorified immorality, rape, sex, dope, divorce, drink, crime, murder, and a catalog of other vices ... but has sought to change worship into Hollywood shows and dramatics.

The position taken in this book would appear to promote defeatism. The opposite is true. Any person, church, or religious movement can experience revival today when the proper conditions are met. However, a realistic approach to the study of prophecy will convince anyone that the Word of God teaches the collapse of spiritual power in the Church and a wholesale rejection of truth in the closing days. The Second Coming of Christ is the "blessed hope" of the Blood-washed as He raptures them out of a world of moral and spiritual chaos as tribulation breaks forth upon humanity. The die is cast, the world is BEYOND THE MORAL DIVIDE and is on the toboggan slide taking it rapidly away from the call to repentance.

The conservative holiness movement has a unique place to fill in these momentous days. God has called it as a spiritual, moral, and doctrinal balance in this unbalanced age. While Laodicean Christendom builds a superstructure upon the sand of cheap piety and modern

innovations, conservative holiness hues to the rugged gospel of total transformation. As the true Church nears the Rapture and Tribulation, She will feel the mighty pressures of Anti-Christ spirits, so much so that some will be tempted to tamper with the doctrine of pre-tribulation deliverance. These pressures, however, will help strengthen Her loyalty to Christ, and create within Her a willingness to suffer. Whatever the loss, whatever the cost, and whatever the cross ... She must not fail!

If the lessons contained in this book will lead the reader to an unreserved discipleship to Jesus Christ, the writer will have been fully compensated for all the time and effort put forth in bringing it to pass.

Foy Bullock

* * * * *

Chapter 1

THREE WORLDS AS GOD SEES THEM TODAY

Introduction

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

There is nothing that excites the indignation of a true prophet as does rebellion. It is obnoxious to him. For a man of the cloth to feel comfortable among compromise and worldliness, is a sure indication of his failure as a true prophet. It is an indication also that the nature of God does not inhabit his heart. Such was the state of the young prophet Isaiah when he began his prophetic career. Caught up with the popular religious climate of his day -- and favored by being of the royalty of Judah, he naturally fell into the "in crowd" that surrounded the court.

How enriched and indebted Christians are that the power of cleansing and purging fire reached through to him in his great Temple experience (Isaiah 6). His whole life was transformed and reorganized into a life pattern that measures the scope of a true prophet -- a cleansed heart, a brilliant mind, a heavenly patriotism, and a fervent evangelism.

God raised up prophets in times of declension and apostasy in Israel. These men were super patriots and revivalists who spoke to the heart and conscience of the nation. Their prophetic messages were twofold: first, that which was local and for the prophet's time; secondly, that which was predictive of God's purpose in the future.

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, is called prince of the prophets, and is known as the "Messianic Prophet." He was a prophet of the Southern Kingdom, Judah, at the time the Northern Kingdom, Israel, was destroyed by the Assyrians. Isaiah lived through the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. His call was in the year of Uzziah's death. According to tradition, he was slain by Manasseh because he resisted the idolatrous decrees set forth by this wicked king. He was seized,

fastened between two planks, and "sawn asunder," thus suffering a most painful and horrible death which is evidently referred to in Hebrews 11:37.

The condition of Judah morally and spiritually is very descriptive of this Laodicean Church Age. The description of her rebellion and apostasy gives in detail what can be expected in prophetic fulfillment within this church period. The Old Testament prophets did not see the Church as such, "because it was a mystery to them," but they did see the condition of the religious world just before the judgments of the Lord.

Though the prophecy of Isaiah dealt with Judah and her involvement through the reigns of several kings -- the greater implications of his prophecies deal with this closing Gentile age and the millennial reign of Christ. His descriptions of the moral and spiritual failures of Judah depict in detail the revolution which will leave the world a vast wasteland morally and spiritually, just prior to the coming of the Lord.

1. The Social World

A. Diminishing Stature ... whole stay and staff ... (Isaiah 3:1).

The Church has suffered declines and spiritual battles at various times during its history -- but it has always had its men and women whose courageous voices could be heard above the din -- and through their personal identity with God and right, changes were wrought which affect us centuries beyond. Volumes have been written extolling their great contributions to the Kingdom of God. Many of them seem almost a part of this age because so much has been written about them. The book-shelves of pastors and religious institutions are spiced with biographies and autobiographies of these great divines who influenced and guided the Church into this twentieth century.

We have erected shrines to them, seeking to preserve their images. Thousands visit yearly the tombs of these spiritual warriors. Several years ago the author drove through a small midwestern cemetery and viewed the simple tombstones erected over the graves of Peter Cartwright and his wife. This powerful and unique preacher probably contributed more than any other person towards establishing Methodism in Illinois as Presiding Elder of that conference for years. The collection of recorded history is but a skeleton of the full contribution of deprivation and martyrdom which fills its pages -- men and women of stature who carried approbation "of whom the world was not worthy" (Hebrews 11:38) and helped anchor the gospel message in this dispensation of Grace. Isaiah sees a dividing point of motivation -- a moral division, where because of rebellion, God withdraws the flow of divine light and power and refuses to inspire leadership for a modern light-rejecting Christendom. True Christians everywhere cringe in heart at the influx of abominable things such as rock music at Communion services, the ordination of homosexuals to the ministry, and "born again" professors who do not repent of nor separate from their sins. However, these situations are but symptoms of a deadly condition caused by the dearth of leadership. Many potentially great Christians are circumscribed and pigeon-holed by weak and limited leaders. The middle of the road has become very unpopular, making it difficult for a person to be himself. Much time is spent in proving or disproving our associations. Albert Speer in his book *Inside The Third Reich* says, "The sad fact was that our circles were so infected by suspicion

that friendship was felt to be a threat." (page 348, par. 3) Of course he was describing the relationships of the hierarchy which surrounded Hitler in World War II, but in many respects his description fits the petty jealousies which characterize leaders in these important days of the Church.

It is lamentable that secular governments are honeycombed with corruption, greed, criminals, and moral degenerates. The public has been so shell-shocked by cover-ups and investigations that it neither demands nor expects much from its elected officials. The virtues of the past leaders, who contributed so much to the moral stability of our nation, have been so questioned and maligned by modern historians and writers, that our generation derives very little inspiration from these great men and women. This is deplorable.

Anything that affects the world any length of time will soon affect the church -- whether it be materialism, worldliness, sports, divorce, music, immorality, or any force which gains the affections of the masses. One of the heavy burdens that plagued the pre-exilic prophets was the earth-bound, self-indulgent, comfort-conscious, and visionless pastors, who had become spiritual criminals to the program of God. They had become insults to their calling and commission. Seeking to be ministered unto rather than to minister. Their faithfulness to the souls and welfare of their charges became the liability which God could not overcome in His efforts toward saving His people from apostasy. While the mighty prophets prayed, fasted, wept, and sounded forth the promises and warnings of God -- these unfaithful shepherds hardly glanced up to see what it was all about. These men referred to as pastors, shepherds, and watchmen had allowed earthly things to muddle their spiritual understanding and they became victims of the same covetousness which infested the Nation. "Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart." (Jeremiah 12:10, 11) "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:1, 2) "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter." (Isaiah 56:10,11) "And the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of Man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them." (Ezekiel 34:1-4).

The rationale of the minister is important. To misunderstand the priorities of his calling is usually disastrous. The titles pastor, shepherd and watchmen place the priorities thus: (1) God, (2) others, and (3) self. These terms also suggest two important facts: (1) the vital position which they hold in the administration of God's Kingdom on Earth; and (2) the power of disruption should they

allow these priorities to be changed. The magnitude of these facts are further accentuated because they deal with immortal souls and eternal values.

Is it possible for God to again raise up men of stature to lead His people? Yes, it is possible. God is unlimited and the promises of His Word are as valid today as when they were given. However, the erosion of inner fortitude has brought the Church to spiritual bankruptcy, leaving it with very little power of reproduction. Someone has said, "The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart." The Church has lost its ability to divest itself of these paralyzing things of earth and self-life which render it incapable to exercise the power of the Spirit over the flesh. The moral climate has reached the point of no return. History records that when man is morally strong he will sacrifice his life to maintain principle -- but when morally weak, he will sacrifice principle to maintain life.

B. Rebellious Youth

"And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbor: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable." (Isaiah 3:5) Through prophetic illumination Isaiah sees clearly the revolt of youth in the closing days against his heritage. This rebellion is significant in that it is unnatural. A rebellion is generally violent with warring factions -- but the scripture indicates that youth will rebel against principles, not so much against people.

What are the primary reasons for this generation to reject its heritage and where must the blame be placed? The affluency of our society is a great contributing factor in that it creates an atmosphere of self-indulgence and pleasure consciousness. A spirit of discontentment also accompanies affluency. But a greater factor than affluency is an immature and unstable parenthood that has failed to walk in the light of God's Word, to exercise its moral and spiritual training before its children, and to discipline them to love and appreciate the things which build a God-fearing life. Children are merely contained -- not disciplined. Their wills have never been conquered by their parents, thus their egos become inflated, their attitudes proud and defiant.

The egotist wants to be seen and heard, so the desire to learn and develop is canceled out. The undisciplined life is one of frustration. The Hippie and his ilk are victims. They are mentally, spiritually and morally afflicted because of diseased homes -- parents who robbed them of a balanced life by showering them with earthly things and starving them of eternal things.

The undisciplined, because of the lack of inner strength, live emotionally -- fun, pleasure, sex, sports, music, drugs, etc. A generation back each locale was fairly segregated with only a regional communication with others, which seemed to contain wide-spread trends and fads. Today modern communications, especially television, have made the world one locale. The moral degenerates who control Hollywood television and modern entertainment have made a breakthrough into the grassroots of social living by a continuous development of hideous movies and raw sex. The day is ripening for a homosexual explosion and the mongrelization of the races. We have passed over the moral divide.

C. Sodomite Society

"The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves." (Isaiah 3:9) Lord Byron said, "Civilization goes like this: First freedom, and then glory, and then wealth, and then vice, and then corruption, and then barbarism, and then collapse." Using these downward steps as guidelines, the vision of Israel in verse 9 would probably fall somewhere between corruption and barbarism. There is no clearer prophetic teaching than that of a sodomite society in the last days. This subject is defined in detail by the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:21-32.

"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. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator who is blessed for ever. Amen. 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 recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do these things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder debate, deceit; malignity; whisperers, Back biters, haters of God, despiteful 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."

This reference is probably to the Ante-deluvians. Again the apostle couples it together with the apostatizing of the Church in II Timothy 3:1-8.

"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, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent; fierce, despisers of those that are good. Traitors, heady, highminded, 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. "(Incontinent, in verse 3, means "lacking in restraint especially over the sexual appetite.")

The Apostles Peter (II Peter 2:1-22) and Jude associate sodomy with false teachers who practice it while professing Christ in the last days. The greatest authority is the Lord Jesus. In no uncertain terms, He labels this great corrupting sin as one of the last signs of His near coming. (Luke 17:26-37)

Sodomy is little understood by those who are not involved or associated with it. Thus the Sodomites or "gay crowd" seek to eliminate the moral stigma from themselves by appealing to the public as sick, maladjusted, misunderstood, and mistreated. They advertise, lobby, and use the courts in their efforts to remove all barriers which prevent them from practicing this diabolical perversion. Sodomy is the lowest in human depravity and gives rise to barbaric principles. It is moral derangement with a hypnotic power. The prophet Isaiah declared it would show in their countenance, and with an unblushing arrogance defy anyone to condemn them. Society is now so imbued with this unremitting malignancy that it is a force to be dealt with. Concomitant with this evil is an endless list of evils from the same family of immorality. How repugnant to God! Because Sodomy is a moral disease, medical science and psychology cannot cope with it. Outside the power of the Gospel of Christ, there is no cure. Unless men and women warped by this evil seek deliverance through the Blood of Christ, the wrath of God abideth upon them.

D. Prominence of Woman

"A more sure word of prophecy" (II Peter 1:19a) is further unfolded by the prophet Isaiah in verse 12 of chapter 3. "As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths." Someone has said, "As the woman goes, so goes the world." If this is true, then it would apply equally to the Church -- "as woman goes, so goes the Church." Isaiah has outlined already the decline of man in leadership and authority -- not because of a weakness in man, but because of rebellion. Carnal womanhood from early human history has received her subjection to her husband as a second-rate life. On the other hand, godly womanhood has viewed her role as the strength giver to her husband. She is the inner strength of society -- the home builder. Her godliness and prayers have reached through to the Mediator when the storms of life were brewing. She has defied the encroachment of evils upon her children and home. Her soft touch, tears, and discipline have woven moral character into her young and were determining factors which made men great. With the erosion of man's authority and parental responsibility, carnal woman emerges as a stronger voice in the last days and becomes very forceful and determined in making drastic changes in social and religious patterns. She will be successful because she is motivated by opportunities which have been closed to her.

Several modern trends and movements substantiate all this: unisex, Equal Rights Amendment, political and business adventures, military policy changes, etc. Many have thought these developments to be fads and only temporary -- but they are mistaken. They are the beginning of a new era in social structure. Woman has made her bid for the masculine role and has come up winner. She has adopted man's dress and prerogatives. She means to rule. Of course, she does not see this because she is looking through natural eyes. To her it seems as though a long night has ended and she has been liberated from the misery of a second-rate existence. With relish she accepts her liberation. God, home, children, etc. are all viewed with a new interpretation. And what an interpretation is it! -- for she forfeits motherhood, holy piety, simplicity, beauty, purity, and a God-given task of building His Kingdom on Earth.

II. The Church World

A. The Involvements of Apostasy (Isaiah 3:16-26, 4:1, 5:1-7)

1. Outward Appearance

Beginning with verse 16, the prophet begins to enlarge upon the religious implications of the falling away, outwardly. Reverend W. M. Tidwell, who pastored for over a half century in Chattanooga, Tennessee, states that woman always represents the Church throughout the Bible. The holy woman typifies the Church in her purity and glory. The evil woman typifies the Church in its apostate condition. Knowing this truth helps clear up some very important references in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah refers to "the daughters of Zion," which could have been a well used expression for Jeremiah referred to the religious element as "the daughter of my people." (Jeremiah 8:11)

When the appetite for spiritual life begins to wane -- man must either revive or revert back to the fleshly life. Judah had not forsaken the worship of God in ceremony, but her heart life was shot through and through with material affluency and self-gratification. Her religion became shallow and proud. She began to adorn herself with the fetishes of the heathen world to exalt herself. The words "stretched forth necks" and "wanton eyes" suggest a sex appeal and lustful desires. The long list of items of adornment infer that she lost her spiritual identity with God and without restraint gorged herself with the vanities of the worldly heart.

What a picture of Christendom today. Almost without exception the composite elements of modern Christianity began with a simple, modest and spiritual approach to living. There was a separation from the world demanded of the transformed life. But now almost without exception they have rejected their early gospel for "another gospel" which has so compromised with the world that it has little identity with spiritual things. In fact, very few churches understand or bother to define worldliness. The less conservative movements have argued that the outward appearance is not so important for it is the heart that counts. It would be an indictment against God's wisdom to seek the preservation of one thing in the heart while at the same time giving approval to an opposite mode of behavior outwardly. The reproach of the "old rugged cross" has been circumvented by this space-age Christianity -- but it is God who will have the last say.

2. The Inner Heart Life (Isaiah 4:1, 5:1-7)

In order to make the Bible better understood, man has divided the various books into chapters and verses. The casual reader would never dream of the time and study involved in this great service. It is evident that mistakes were made and some chapters were broken at the wrong verse. The first verse of chapter four would appear to be one of these places, and should be the last verse of chapter three. However, it does not alter the meaning of the verse either way.

This verse has been a puzzle for many to understand. Contemporary fulfillment was physical. Before the "Babylonian Captivity," manhood was so depleted because of war that women were desperate for a husband and sought to become the wife of any man who would accept her even though he had other wives. It was a reproach to be a widow without children, for all women of Israel had aspirations of bringing forth the Messiah. Competition became so heated that

women proposed to support and clothe themselves just to be accepted as a wife with the hope of escaping reproach.

The far-reaching fulfillment of this prophecy has a much fuller meaning. It has been stated already that woman is a type of the Church in the Bible. In verse one of chapter four there are seven women. If woman represents the Church, then why seven? The answer is found in the word "seven" -- which means completion in the Hebrew language, and is used in this sense in the New Testament. This "seven" finds its fulfillment in the seven letters to the Churches in Asia Minor recorded in the Revelation, chapters two and three. The letters cover the seven prophetic periods of church history from the close of the Apostolic Age until the Rapture of the Bride of Christ. The chronology of the seven prophetic periods are: Ephesian Period A.D. 70-170; Smyrna Period A.D. 170-316; Pergamos Period A.D. 316-606; Thyatira Period A.D. 606-1517; Sardis Period A.D. 1517-1750; Philadelphia Period A.D. 1750-1900; and Laodicea Period A.D. 1900-.

Briefly stated the Ephesus Period followed the banishment to Patmos and the death of the Apostle John. It had been the last center of the Apostolic Era with this great Apostle as its leader. It is sorely condemned for leaving its first love, that of world evangelism. The early seeds of an earthly priesthood are condemned also -- for the true purposes of the Nicolaitanes is found in the meaning of the name: Nico (nikao -- to conquer) and laitanes (laos -- the people of laity.) The Smyrna Period covers the Roman persecutions of Christians. The Pergamos Period begins with the signing of an edict by Constantine to end persecutions. He becomes a Christian and unites the State and Church -- the word Pergamos means marriage. With this marriage, the Thyatira Period enters. This period covers the Rise and fall of the Catholic Church. It is also referred to as the Dark Ages. The Sardis Period begins with Martin Luther's break with the Church and initiating the Protestant Reformation, which was a revival of the doctrine of Justification by Faith. The Philadelphia Period begins with the Wesleyan Era. Philadelphia means "Brotherly Love," and this is the great missionary period. Great missionaries, such as Livingstone, Moffats, etc., opened up the nations to the gospel and spread the message around the world. About the turn of the twentieth century the Laodicea Period begins. It is the lukewarm age and closes the dispensation of the Church.

The seven women which Isaiah sees are the seven Church periods in completion. These seven women take hold of one man (Christ) saying, "We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach." They refuse to eat the Bread of Life -- but insist on eating their own bread. In other words, they want to feed their souls on what they wish and be independent of the Word. This description fits this apostate age like a glove. The word "apparel" refers to profession and infers an arrogance of spirit which challenges anyone to question their religion. Laborers in the Harvest can testify to this prevailing condition today -- a condition prophesied by Isaiah eight hundred years before Christ.

3. The Vineyard

"Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my

vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. (Isaiah 5:1-7)

Just as a minister today uses illustrations to add light to his messages -- so Isaiah gave the Parable of the Vineyard as a portraiture of Judah's inner heart life. The distant application is the Church, from her beginning to her falling away.

A good point to begin with in analyzing the parable is the ownership. It belongs to God, the "Well-beloved." He planted it in a "very fruitful hill" -- or a world ready for the truth. He built a fence around it for protection and separation. ("And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.") He gathered out the stones thereof. In other words, He removed all the obstacles which would hinder growth and development. The choicest vine is Christ through the ministry of the Holy Ghost. The Lord built a tower in the midst of the vineyard which speaks of the ministry of the Word in vision and warning. And a winepress was made which definitely testifies to His expectations. This parable became operative when "the day of Pentecost was fully come" and the dispensation of the Church began. The second Adam had rent the vail in twain and established an everlasting covenant that could reach deeper than the defilement of sin, and cleanse out inbred or original sin, totally, reconciling man to God. All the stones were gathered out and man had a free course to the abundant life in Christ.

With the exception of a few bright spots in the history of the Church, She has been on a continual decline since the close of the Apostolic Era, when ambitious humanity wrestled the leadership away from the Holy Ghost. The prophetic scene that Isaiah views is the closing period of the Church. God comes to gather His grapes. With brazenness and boldness, the grapes are testifying to be products of His care and grace. But when He tastes them they are "wild" -- an expression full of meaning. The word "wild" means they had humanized the gospel and nourished themselves on things that were foreign to the husbandry of God. Rather than be molded to the Will of God, they chose to determine the course of their religious life. While professing to know God, they were drinking from the fountains of the world.

The message to the Church at Laodicea reveals the deception which engulfs the Modern Church -- "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." (Revelation 3:17) But it reveals also the wrath of a faithful God -- "I will spue thee out of my mouth." (Revelation 3:16) Think of the multitude of haughty, worldly, self-contained, undisciplined in Christendom who will never be changed from this awful deception.

III. The Unseen World (Isaiah 5:13 and 14)

There are many warnings connected with hell. The Bible is very thorough and descriptive of the facts relating to hell. However, Isaiah pulls back the curtain of the unseen world and gazes

upon a hell that is in change. It is a created place and subject to change, but there has not been a need until now. He sees the area of hell greatly expanded and the mouth -- or entrance enlarged without measurement. Why all this expansion program? To receive the great mass of apostate Christendom that professes to know Christ but is not living in harmony with Him or His Word. (Matthew 7:21) Marching like a great army toward an expanded abyss awaiting them.

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Chapter 2 THE INVASIONS OF INSECTS

Introduction

Joel -- prophet of Judah -- about 800 B.C. is among the first of which we have written prophecy. He was contemporary with Elisha.

1. Joel gives us the fullest coverage of the consummation found in prophecy.

2. He deals with the invasion of Palestine from the North by Gentiles and the events which follow: (1) the destruction of the invaders; (2) the repentance of Judah; (3) the effusion of the Spirit in the last days; (4) the return of the Lord in glory and the setting up of the Kingdom; (5) the regathering of the Nation and the judgment of the Nations; and (6) the permanent blessing of the Kingdom.

The kingdom of Judah was blindly engrossed in a materialistic and affluent lifestyle. No doubt the words of Joel sounded as fanaticism to this materially secure people. They had long ago settled for an outward piety without regard for spiritual depth. Their earth-bound and self-oriented living had smothered spiritual desire. This self-satisfaction presented an impregnable wall to any approach of God in calling them to repentance.

THE INSECTS

By studying the symbolism connected with the insects, a comprehensive understanding of the vast reach and destruction of this invasion can be gained. It brings a sense of fear and awe just to realize the scope of the "falling away." Oh, that God will stir every heart who reads the message contained in these insects.

1. Palmerworm

The Palmerworm gets its name from an expression used in describing those who made a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. It was the fervent desire of every Israelite to visit the Temple at least once in his lifetime. For the Temple was the center of all religious life in Israel. This great edifice, built and dedicated by King Solomon, known the world over, and enjoyed the prestige which Solomon had bestowed upon it.

To each one who made the pilgrimage was given a palm branch. This palm branch represented the joy and satisfaction enjoyed by those who served the Lord. It meant victory, praise, glory and power to the individual, and to witness and participate in the worship of the Temple was breathtaking. On the return home the pilgrims witnessed to those by the wayside, which further whetted their desire to see the Temple.

The Prophet Joel sees the Palmerworm lying on the palm leaves devouring and stripping them of life and leaving nothing but a shredded stem. The shredding process depicts the loss of spiritual enthusiasm in the last days. The Church will be stripped of the fervent spirit. The demonstration of the Spirit will become almost extinct. The joy and romance of the transformed life fades into mere church regimentation, and the lives of people are programmed by law rather than the Spirit.

The richness of spiritual worship is the lifeline of the Church. The fervent "Amen," "Glorys," and "Praise the Lords" are born of hearts that are emotionally stirred. When God moves, people are moved. There is power to reproduce likeness in faith. But the spirit of the Palmerworm gnaws away until the best of churches feel the erosion of spiritual power.

The most tragic loss to the Palmerworm is the ministry. The ministry is a calling and is thus separated from all other professions and vocations. God's Word declares that His "ministers are flames of fire" (Psalms 104:4). This suggests that they are soundly converted and transformed, filled with the mighty Baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, called aside and separated to proclaim the message of God. Anything less would indicate that the Palmerworm has damaged God's process of producing "ministers of fire." In fact, the lack of power in the Church has almost negated the ability of God to call young people today. Many local churches have not seen a young person called to the ministry in several years. The inferior ministry of this day must be a heart-rending situation to God. This inferior ministry stands in the way of revival and does not have enough spiritual insight to recognize its lack. Most ministers are either so enmeshed in earthy things that their ministry is secondary, or they are simply rubber stamps to some religious persuasion. This peril is further illuminated because the laity seldom rises above its leader. May God of Heaven open the understanding of His people to detect and destroy the Palmerworm as he attacks the Church.

II. Locust

Whereas the Palmerworm works silently and many times undetected, the Locust is just the opposite. The Locust is a migratory insect. Locusts move in great numbers and ravage crops before they begin maturing for harvest, and leave them just stubble without the ability of regrowth.

The Locust represents the spirit of worldliness as it sweeps in upon a church devouring away the love for spiritual things and crippling its ability to reach the lost. This great destructive force has a multiplicity of avenues through which it operates. To many, worldliness is the departure from righteous standards to adopt the adornment and fashions of the world. Of course, this has been a constant battle for those movements that have sought to maintain a separation from the world. However, this last day invasion sweeps away not only the standards of righteousness -- but also the concept. Worldliness also is expressed through the desire of recognition. The desire to

succeed is legitimate -- but to succeed at the expense of spirituality is worldliness. An elite piety may satisfy the outward standards of righteousness, but at the same time, be deeply ashamed of the reproach associated with the Cross of Christ. Another major avenue of worldliness which devours the strength of the Church is materialism. Materialism has spun a web around the heart-strings of Christendom and has brought ease in Zion. Materialism has made slaves of the multitudes without their acknowledgment. The Apostle John, in his battle against Antinomianism, gave us a tremendous warning (I John 2:15-17). Whenever there is a shallow commitment to Christ -- there is personal involvement in material things. Jesus expresses the same warning in His reference to the seed that fell among thorns in the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:7).

This great Locust spirit brings with it the desire for entertainment -- the sports, music, travel, recreation, and many other things which rob the church of its power to reproduce the spiritual man.

III. Cankerworm

The onslaught of Satan takes on yet another aspect through the spirit of the Cankerworm. This insect gets its name from "canker," which means "a running sore." The New Testament usage would indicate to "corrode or corrupt." The Cankerworm is the spirit of strife, division, animosity, violence, etc. which will extend from the highest to the grassroots. (Matthew 24:4-13). It is only reasonable to expect that such a world-wide force will seriously affect the church and the personal life of every Christian. Satan's last-day onslaught upon the emotions so disrupts humanity that suspicion and fear will be the norm. The Apostle Paul's second letter to Timothy outlines in vivid detail this violent spirit as it dominates the religious scene (II Timothy 3:1-5). Good people, swept by emotions and deep convictions, unwittingly will become party to faction struggles in the church, and will contribute to the destruction of the Church, while at the same time thinking they are trying to save it. These proclaim the doctrine of perfect love but bear a retaliatory spirit and lash out at opposition as though they have special license from God. What a tragedy! Their vision is too feeble to see that they have become enmeshed in the great spirit of the Cankerworm, which Satan is flooding into this closing day.

IV. Caterpillar

Caterpillar means "one who takes a prey." There has been some speculation as to the proper part the spirit of the Caterpillar plays. It is quite sure that he follows behind the other insects in a sort of gleaning. He is thought to destroy any attempt at regrowth of the vegetation.

A more specific analysis of the Caterpillar is that he is the "larva" or offspring of the Locust. In other words he is the worldly youth which gain control of the Church leaving it helpless in spiritual strength or concept to have revival. The Locust today does not bear "larva" but lay eggs and hatch "nymphs," and some feel this analysis breaks down. However, a thorough study will reveal that there were Locusts in Joel's day that did bear their own, and this seems to be the correct interpretation.

The fundamental religious movements in modern history started with a simple piety and separation from the world. The Spirit of the Lord blessed their efforts and spiritual discipline was

a major force in their preaching and daily lives. But in just a few years a complete turn-about has taken place. These same movements whose beginnings were simple, modest, and God-blessed, are now so diluted and polluted with worldliness that they bear no likeness to their original commission. What has happened? Is there an answer to this? They, no doubt, would explain that development brings on new interpretations and emphasis -- that all new movements are composed of strong-willed individuals who impose their feelings upon the new beginnings, rather than a broadminded and realistic approach. So they have merely outgrown the "limited concept" of their forebears.

The biblical reason for this turn-around is that they have become victims to these anti-Christ spirits which have brought Christendom into captivity to an earthbound, humanistic gospel that has no power nor vision to transform the lost. A proud youth has taken over the reins of the churches. He can see only what he has been taught to see -- a worldly, proud, and pleasure-oriented church -- thus the hopes of revival are shattered.

Conclusion

This great invasion of insects continues to bring havoc, confusion and disruption in the Church. There have been some gallant efforts to counter this collapse. Lay groups in some of the major denominations have been organized -- but have been contained. The Charismatic movement has merely polluted the doctrine situation and further confused the religious scene. Splinter movements from the major holiness denominations have sprung up seeking to keep a clear fundamental position before the world, and to initiate revival. Apostasy is at floodstage level and from the human view -- it looks dark. However, true disciples always look to God. The true Church will survive, and He has promised to deliver! "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19).

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Chapter 3

THE SIX MAJOR PITFALLS OF THE LAST DAYS

Introduction

"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. 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. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example,

suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." (Jude: 1-11)

Some scriptures take on deeper significance during the last days because of their prophetic implications. As in the cases of II Timothy and II Peter, the message of the Book of Jude is very pertinent for our times. It is a message of strong warning to the church collectively and to the individual. The casual reader of Jude, because of its brevity, is tempted to overlook its import. A thorough study will reveal an in-depth comprehension of the apostasy which befalls the Church at the closing of this age. Using brief historical illustrations and biblical personalities, Jude explodes his desperate appeal to apostatizing Christendom -- "it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude: 3)

THE FAITH

John Wesley declares the Faith (v-3) to be "all the fundamental truths" expressed in the gospel of Christ. Most commentaries render "once delivered" as "once for all delivered," making it the only source for divine truth relative to our salvation. The Apostle Jude further identifies this faith as pure, totally committed to God and preserved in (reserved or kept for the coming of) Jesus Christ. (v-1)

How explicitly he describes the attack of Satan upon the Church, and that attack begins with fundamentals. The spiritual battlefields are covered with the slain -- robbed of the fundamentals of the gospel and left faithless to face the Judge of eternity. Ecclesiastical molds have defused the power of the Church by making disciples to religious orders rather than Christ. History proves that religious movements compromise their primitive teachings by a gradual usurpation of human leadership for that of the Spirit. The only hope for a modern fundamental movement to maintain its standing with God is that its leaders and people seek and honor the leadership of the Holy Ghost. Thank God for the true faith -- the Bloodwashed Saints. They are fundamentally and spiritually sound, wherever they may reside.

THE SPEARHEAD AGAINST FUNDAMENTALS

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jude: 4)

The word "lasciviousness" is a word of wide and evil application, denoting every species of unbridled conduct, but particularly unblushing licentiousness. Of course, this licentiousness takes on the depraved form of homosexuality as described in Romans, chapter one. They deny Jesus as Lord and Master. It is not a theoretical denial -- but a practical disavowal of God's

displeasure with them. They profess to know Him while living such lewdness -- but have rejected any discipline to the Lordship of Christ's holiness. How utterly revolting to think of -- yet this monster stalks the Church, and will soon become widespread within the ranks of Christendom.

Parents should be on the alert -- wise and courageous in protecting their children. Particular care should be exercised in detecting tendencies toward impropriety with others. The attitude towards sexual immorality is far more relaxed today than just a few years ago. The climate is right for people to entertain opinions and ideals concerning marriage and divorce, promiscuousness, and many other things involved in immorality, and feel they are not out of spiritual context. But the Word of God will never change. The moral landslide is on, humanity is caught, and the Church is staggering and reeling under the onslaught of Satan. God help the saints to earnestly contend for the fundamental truths of the gospel which have power to unshackle the sinner, transform him, and preserve him until the coming of Christ which is imminent.

There are many pitfalls which face the Church in these climactic days. The satanic forces are like a thousand octopuses plying their sucker-bearing arms in every direction -- a myriad well organized, inspired, and ordained for the destruction of the Church. However, the Apostle Jude lists six pitfalls which cover the major areas of the falling away and which snare the majority of Christendom.

1. Unbelief

"I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." (Jude: 5) The word "unbelief" has several usages in the scripture, but there is no question as to its meaning here, for Jude refers to a particular situation. God had marvelously delivered the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt -- had sought to discipline them by leading them through the wilderness of Mt. Sinai. He further bound them closer by giving them the law, only to be sorely disappointed when this discipline failed to produce the desired results. At Kadesh-barnea, they refused to enter into the Promised Land. The refusal to possess by faith leads to the sin of unbelief. In fact it is the sin of unbelief. The God that had heard their cries in bondage and worked in miraculous ways proving Himself, swore in His wrath that they should not enter into Canaan. Thus all over the age of nineteen years, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, died in the wilderness.

The apostle sees this great Pitfall of Unbelief as one of the major sins which will grip Christendom in the closing of this Laodicean Church period. The "sure word of prophecy" has certainly hit its mark again. Unbelief hangs like a morning fog over the Church. The concept of true Bible discipleship has been smothered by fear, laziness and self-indulgence. The general run of the Church seek emotion, religious entertainment and controversy. Anything that demands sacrifice, burden, and contacting the lost is tactfully avoided.

To possess the Christian life is an all consuming task. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12) It is achieving faith coupled with total commitment to Christ. It is to be inflamed with "another spirit" like Caleb. (Numbers 14:24) This is the promise and out-working of Pentecost. (Acts 1:8) What less can be considered biblical discipleship? The Baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire is the enduement of power in every Christian for service.

Many view the "born again" experience as this endowment of power. To be "born again" means the transformation out of spiritual death into spiritual life (II Corinthians 5:17) through repentance and confession of sins. This is the act whereby man is forgiven and reconciled unto God. However, it does not deal with the cause of sin. The cause of sin is the inherited depravity or principle of rebellion inhabiting every person born into this world because of the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden. The blood of Christ shed on Calvary has two functions: (1) remitting sins, (committed); and (2) cleansing sin, (inherited). The Holy Ghost is the agent in both. He forgives and quickens in Regeneration and sanctifies or cleanses in the Baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire. The cleansing of the inherited sin principle is replaced with the Holy Ghost Himself as He fills and dwells in the heart. The power of possession is realized and carnal fear, laziness, and self-indulgence give way to the holy abandonment of true discipleship.

Some theologians share the belief that God's cup of wrath is about full again. While those who promote and propagate pseudo and erroneous gospels are inspired for personal evangelisms -- those who know and enjoy the truth are either sitting idle in the marketplace or have become enamored and enmeshed with earthly trivia. Scriptural evangelism demands action in reaching the lost, and is the Great Commission of the Church. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15 and 16)

II. Discontentment

"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: 6) Discontentment is the state of mind which drives people to seek satisfaction through pursuits outside their present status or situation. Discontentment became the open door to the first sin in the Universe. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregations, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (Isaiah 14:12-14)

Lucifer apparently was created one of the cherubim and was given or assigned great authority -- possibly the most powerful outside the Godhead. It is also apparent that he was very popular with the angelic host, and living so close to the Throne of God allowed thoughts of how it would be to sit on the Throne of God. These thoughts festered into discontentment and as he shared these thoughts with others, it is evident he received encouragement to pursue the Throne of God. His "I will ascend" (Isaiah 14:13) marks the introduction of sin into the Universe. A great host of angels allied themselves with Lucifer's ambition and made war in Heaven. Of course, this rebellion failed, they were cast out of Heaven and Lucifer became Satan -- the devil, arch-enemy of God. The Earth and air became the scene of his satanic and tireless activity against God. After the creation of man, he entered into the serpent and beguiled Eve, secured the downfall of Adam, and through him, the race, and the entrance of sin into the world. Then began his long warfare against the work of God in behalf of humanity, which still continues in gigantic proportions. He is the "god of this world" and is highly organized upon the principles of force, greed, selfishness,

ambition and sensual pleasure. As "prince of the power of the air," he is the head of a vast army of demons committed to the harassment and subjection of humanity.

The discontentment which caused such havoc in Heaven has caused equal havoc on Earth. There is no way to calculate the damage caused by the discontent since that early band of Spirit-filled disciples rushed from the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost and initiated the Christian Church. The Apostle Jude sees discontentment as another great Pitfall which ensnares the multitudes in these last days.

Millions are unhappy, unsettled, restless and hostile towards their present state in life. Millions are traversing the nations seeking pleasure, enjoyment and interests which will give them satisfaction. The grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence. Family life is being ripped apart by this awful disease which drives people to forget their vows and violate their own. Discontentment is robbing the churches of potential preachers, teachers and workers because they will not allow themselves to be harnessed to positions and responsibilities in the church.

This demand for gratification is causing the world to become wilder and bolder in creating thrills for excitement. Sadism is on the horizon in sports, music and ideologies. Modern communications -- especially television -- have brought the world into one focus. The same fashions and ideals are seen the world over. Cultures which have not changed for centuries are changing. Lust has become a language communicated worldwide. The shallow concepts of happiness have started a gigantic parade of discontentment which will never be satisfied.

Christ is the only One that can satisfy the longings of the soul. He makes a new creation out of us whereby old things pass away and all things become new. (II Corinthians 5:17) Only then do the pursuits of life become normal. Discipleship brings happiness and spiritual satisfaction. Godliness is contentment in the Lord -- and this is great gain. (I Timothy 6:6) Oh! how precious is this contentment. The Child of God has gained a fulfillment to the longings of his life -- and escaped the devastation of discontentment.

The amatorial implications of the angels cannot be overlooked here. The Jewish belief -- as proposed by Josephus, the historian, relative to Genesis 6:1-4 is that the angels forsook their own kingdom and entered into unnatural relations with the beautiful daughters of men. This interpretation is given special distinction in the Apocryphal Book of Enoch.

With the rapid pre-eminence of women becoming a reality -- this interpretation cannot be ruled too strange for last day fulfillment. The modern swing to unisex attire is a forthright argument for the severe loss of masculinity in manhood. As the sex drive in womanhood grows in intensity and the masculinity of man diminishes, it will create a vacuum of unsatisfied lust and sexual craving which could possibly open up a new arena of relationships before unheard of.

III. Immorality

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (Jude: 7) The third Pitfall prophesied by Jude is that of Immorality. The

"even as" of this verse connects with verse 6, and expresses a definite likeness. There are many references to Sodom and Gomorrah in both the Old and New Testaments. These evil cities of the plain had become centers of sexual impurities and homosexuality. The verbs used in this verse bring out the intense sinfulness of the sin -- and express an unreserved surrender to these impure departures from the law of nature.

What a hideous picture of what lies before the world. Jesus declares in prophetic certainty that this condition will exist before He returns again. "And as it was in the days of Noe, 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 Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife." (Luke 17:26-32) The Apostle Paul evidently had in mind the Ante-diluvian falling away when he penned the awful description of apostate light rejection. "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. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." (Romans 1:21-25)

The force which accompanies this devastating moral corruption is the spirit of belligerency which defies and mocks offers of divine help. Of course, the only restraining power which contains this immorality is the spiritual power of the Church. With apostatizing of the Church the door is opened wide for this belligerency to express itself. The subject is certainly in view in Paul's writing to Timothy. (II Timothy 3:1-8) The ability of the Church in the future to contest the rising tide of homosexuality will be drastically cut because of marches, protests and physical abuse -- possibly riots. This is inferred in Paul's illustration of Jannes and Jambres, the Egyptian magicians who withstood Moses.

The growing clamor for recognition of Gay Movements is being heard already around the world. Some major religious denominations have ordained known homosexuals to the ministry. Several gay churches with homosexual pastors exist with hardly a protest. Pornography book stores and adult movie houses populate the cities of this nation and the Church does not raise its voice because of the promiscuous spirit prevailing in Christendom.

IV. Light Rejection

"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain," (Jude: 11a) Cain offers several lessons in scripture. He typifies the murderous envy and the persecuting spirit toward those whose righteousness offended him. But Jude reveals him as the rejecter of divine light which could have placed him righteously equal with Abel. "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and

bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted: and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." (Genesis 4:1-7) These offerings introduce the two approaches of man in his service to God -- the Death Route and the Self Route. By previous instructions both Cain and Abel were familiar with the offering that God demanded. It was to be the "firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." (Genesis 4:4) Abel, whose name means "exaltation," is a type of the spiritual man. His sacrifice, in which the atoning blood was shed, expresses his utter submission to God's will and demands. It spoke of death to his personal sins, desires and . wishes -- a complete rejection of anything which would frustrate the plan of God for his life.

On the other hand, Cain brought an offering "of the fruit of the ground." (Genesis 4:3) Being a tiller of the ground, the offering would be a product of his own ability. The offering, within itself, was no doubt an excellent one, but it was not an offering of death and shedding of blood, as commanded by the Lord. . It is apparent that Cain sought to be exalted. His name means "acquisition," and is a type of the earth-bound man. His approach to God was one that reserved for himself the will to choose a man-made plan of Salvation. Had God accepted his offering, He would have approved the carnality of man which was inherited from the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Of course, God rejected Cain's offering, but extended to him the opportunity to bring an acceptable sacrifice as Abel. This opportunity was spurned -- Cain rejected Light and initiated a course of rebellion that culminated in the mighty Deluge. (Genesis 4:16-24)

Light Rejection is a vast Pitfall that spreads its pseudo net trapping multitudes in this Laodicean age. Parenthood of this generation rebelled against the spiritual training it received in childhood and has produced a new generation ignorant of these values. The grandparents of today are the weak link in the chain of spiritual light. Most were reared in rural circumstances where the humble and spiritual values were practiced. But the migration to urban life placed a test upon their spiritual light and the breakdown was catastrophic. The family altar was forgotten. Worship changed from the unpretentious to pretentious. Worldliness was rationalized and religious life took on an air of pride and respectability. The "Mystery of Iniquity" (II Thessalonians 2:7) found the open door and springboard for apostasy- and aided by modern communications, has filled the Earth with a rejection of light that repudiates biblical repentance.

V. Materialism

"And ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward," (Jude: 11b) The analogy of the "error" of Balaam as used here is not that of enticing Israel to idolatry or to immorality -- but the covetous spirit which was the motivating factor behind his acts. Of all of the Pitfalls of these last days, this one probably affects more people. The Word of God is very clear to warn concerning the corrupting effect of riches. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let

us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." (I Timothy 6:6-12)

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." (James 5:1-3) Greed for material things has filled our prisons, mental institutions, and the land with organizations promising better ways to accumulate and enjoy wealth. Greed has caused this nation and others around the world to pollute the Sabbath of God. Greed has robbed the Church of untold attendance, power and finance. It has corrupted every facet of life and sown suspicion worldwide. The Prophet Jeremiah described our day with prophetic clarity. "For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, (author's note: They have closed the breach or division between godliness and sin.) saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:13 and 14) Materialism makes traitors -- and ministers who cave in to the pressures of materialism become an abomination to God. (Proverbs 17:15)

Materialism inspires pride, independency and spiritual arrogance. Its hunger pangs can only be satisfied with more. While the appetite for more grows -- the desire to share with others diminishes. Someone has aptly described the goal of a materialist as show, blow or stow.

The test of materialism for the Child of God is found in the Sermon on the Mount -- which lays down the principles of our Christian discipleship. "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33) In other words, the Spirit must take precedence over all else. The spiritual life must be promoted above the material. Spiritual values must be the prevailing emphasis in the home. All training, vocations, professions or callings must be regulated by spiritual values. The home is the spawning grounds for spiritual disciples or religious materialists. The battle of materialism is settled in the soul. Moses settled it -- "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." (Hebrews 11:24-26); John the Baptist settled it -- "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey." (Matthew 3:1-4); Achan settled it "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it." (Joshua 7:21); and, Balaam settled it -- "Behold, these

caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord." (Numbers 31:16)

The issue of personal sacrifice is a lost one within the Church today. Prosperity is the cherished goal of almost everyone. Christ's message to the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:21) has become very revealing in the light of material oriented Christendom. The Christian ministry has become victim to the entanglements of material affluency. The ministry would not want to accept this indictment -- but materialism has dulled its desire for spiritual things, dulled the cutting edge of its message, and dulled its compassion for a lost and dying world.

VI. Bitterness

"And perished in the gainsaying of Core." (Jude: 11c) This Pitfall seems a bit out of context with the others -- and yet it is in complete harmony with our Lord's prophecy of the last days. The plague of division and strife has struck with all its fury upon humanity. Distrust and suspicion interlace society worldwide and include every facet of life. The church world has become embroiled in all manner of controversy and has set the stage for personal involvements. Emotions have propelled ethnic groups and political entities into hatred. In fact, society has become so diseased by a complication of maladies that any proposed remedy dissipates quickly. The only remedy, of course, is a real revival of old-time religion.

It is painful to watch the spirit of bitterness infiltrating the most spiritual segments of Christendom. Satan must thrill to see tempers flare and the hot exchange of words from those who preach and profess perfect love. Leaders are unfaithful to the Word who promote suspicion and distrust of others engaged in the struggle against Satan and sin. Preachers are unwise who allow themselves to become centers of controversy. Discord is about the only seed some people sow. Sweet morsels of rumor seem to travel by satellite, while the "good news" sails by slow boat if it sails at all. The only good news some desire is bad news.

Fundamentalism is the last bastion of the disciplined life for God in this last hour. The shallow gospel of the evangelicals has slidden into neo-evangelism which has no power to challenge a sin-cursed world back to God. The Charismatic Movement has polluted the emotions of a multitude of spiritually hungry people who are grabbing at straws, and have given them absolutely nothing to build upon. This movement has closed its eyes to worldliness and spiritual discipline and is rapidly becoming the ecumenical standard for the harlot church. Satan is taking advantage of the Fundamentalists by igniting their spiritual patriotism on things that are not essential to salvation and revival. The fear of compromise has put many Fundamentalists in spiritual straight-jackets. This fear has caused a climate of bickering and judging to drug the unity of good and godly men.

The proportions of bitterness have reached from the highest level to the grass-root level of the Church -- the periphery is well supplied. Temptation to bitterness looms over every local congregation. When the Church is at a lowtide spiritually, the ability of Satan to irritate or excite it is greatly enhanced. For this reason, many have become obsessed with attitudes that are critical, censorious and divisive. Opinions about people and situations are expressed without restraint.

How subtly Satan has provided such disguised pitfalls for well meaning people. May the Lord help His own to see and recognize this devastating evil of these closing days.

Conclusion

Is there a way to escape these pitfalls? Yes! Jude does not leave a hopeless defeatism for the Church, but a rich challenge in Christ. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." (Jude: 24 and 25)

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Chapter 4

DIVINE INDICTMENTS UPON A FAILING CHURCH

Introduction

"The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel. A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour: and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon thine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee: In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen." (Malachi 1:1-8, 13-14)

The name Malachi is found nowhere else in scripture. The meaning is thought to be "Messenger of Jehovah." Absolutely nothing is known of his history, which is not unusual, because the histories of other writers are not given either, such as Obadiah and Habakkuk.

The peculiarity of his writings have an originality all their own. He employs a style of interrogation and reply. A dialogue is introduced between God and the people or priests; the questions or complaints are stated, amplified, and answered with a powerful indictment from the prophet as God's spokesman. His reasoning penetrates to the core of Israel's backslidings.

Malachi ministered during Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem as Governor. He was not rough-hewn nor a novice, but a polished and practiced orator who challenged the religious authorities of his day. He was called to minister in a day not unlike this age. Religion had degenerated into simple mechanics without heart interest. Thus, they were taking the least line of resistance and infringing upon the Law and the vows they had made to God.

Malachi was the last prophet sent of God to Israel until John came as the Forerunner of Christ. He endeavored to arouse the people to revival but to little avail. His message is pertinent to this great hour in Christendom because it is a picture of the failures which befall the Church just prior to the Rapture -- a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. The "whereins" asked by the people of Malachi's day in response to God's indictments are being asked by a failing Church today.

1. Indictment No. 1 -- Lost Love For Their Heritage

"The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever." (Malachi 1:1-4)

One test of fidelity is gratitude for heritage. The heritage of God's people is a covenant-making God, and whatever is enjoined in this covenant, He works in mysterious ways to fulfill. The person that is on the stretch for God understands this and enjoys the challenge and romance of trusting an all-wise God. He accepts Romans 8:28 as the guidepost of his walk with God. The obstacles, temptations, battles, and hardships do not blur his vision of God nor corrupt his commitment to Him. However, this is not true when an individual begins to backslide. Selfishness replaces selflessness, and immediately the love of God is judged in relation to how favorable things are to him. Human ideals replace divine ideals and a deep-seated ashamedness of godly heritage develops inside the heart. The blessings of divine light are viewed as restrictions to personal enjoyment -- and the loathsome disease of ingratitude develops in the soul.

Malachi brings God's indictment upon this lack of love by declaring that God loved them. They responded, "Wherein has thou loved us?" The Lord then responds by reminding them of the story of Esau and Jacob. The message is that had not God intervened many years before by rescuing the Abrahamic Promise from the hands of a profane Esau, they would not be privileged to enjoy the blessings of Israel. The warning is also very keen because they are in danger of profaning their heritage and ending up in divine rejection as Esau.

The Holy Ghost is making this sad indictment in this hour against the multitude who feel no relevancy to their heritage. Modern innovations have supplanted their love for primitive heritage, and they are happy the old-fashioned stigma is gone. But there is no greater extension of God's love than the light of a fundamental salvation which delivers from the death, guilt, and

contamination of sin, and the failure to cherish this light by those who profess to love Christ is inciting the wrath of God, and judgment is inevitable.

II. Indictment No. 2 -- A Lack of Discipline

"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?" (Malachi 1:6)

The message of this indictment would be understood readily by Israel because of the family authority established by the Word of God. The father was the undisputed head of the family. The family was taught to reverence him as a father and also as head over the family. It was both personal and positional. This obedience developed a love for him as a person and a reverence for him as the authority over the family. This relationship would become meaningless without love.

The people were publicly and ceremonially calling God their Father -- but it was not true honor nor the real expression of their religious heart-life. This mechanical palaver merely soothed the conscience, for their true affections were self-centered.

This indictment further used the relationship of Master-Servant to strike at the failing discipleship of the people. The Father-Son relationship deals basically with love and reverence, while the Master-Servant relationship deals with duty and service. The Master owned and had full authority over the Servant. The duty and service of the Servant was simply to fulfill the will of the Master. The Servants readily obeyed because they feared the Master and the consequence of disobedience. But even though the people referred to God as Master, they had lost their fear of Him and the consequence of their disobedience.

What a picture of our religious world! Heart discipline is almost a thing of the past. The Prophet Jeremiah expressed it uniquely: "thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins." (Jeremiah 12:2c)

The Letter to the church in Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22) records the Lord's attitude towards this loveless age: "So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue (to vomit) you out of my mouth." (Revelation 3:16) This is the most heart-rending expression in the Bible because it deals with the most subtle of all deceptions -- Lukewarmness. Lukewarmness is more than a lack of spiritual fervor -- it is a lack of love for Jesus which repudiates the demands for discipleship. It is a state developed upon human reason that lays claims to Heaven without the supernatural fruit which identifies citizenship there. It is a state of the religiously proud that have built a fence around themselves to ward off any attack upon the authenticity of their profession.

III. Indictment No. 3 -- Their Worship Was Polluted

"Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be

pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen." (Malachi 1:7 and 8, 12-14)

The half-hearted attitude spells treachery and becomes the open invitation to profanation of the vows made in covenant with God. Malachi accused the ministry of a lackadaisical weariness in fulfilling their responsibilities before God and the people. Rather than discipline themselves and demand discipline of the people, they allowed inferior sacrifices to be substituted for the biblical demands for sacrifice. They were all familiar with God's demand for sacrifice -- "a lamb without blemish, a male of the first year." (Exodus 12:5) However, it had become an accepted practice to keep for themselves the best and offer to God those animals which were worthless.

The prophet described these worthless sacrifices, and in so doing revealed the heart condition of Israel. There were the blind that were offered. These represented the spiritual darkness that had dimmed their understanding and left them without discernment. The lame depicted those whose infractions had crippled them and made them unfit for acceptance -- but they offered them anyway. They could have fallen from a ledge and broken a leg. A poisonous snake could have bitten them. Many things could have happened to them. Malachi included the sick which were diseased. Some malady had fastened itself upon them and they were nigh unto death. Their appetite was gone and the loss of weight was evidenced by the outline of their ribs. Nevertheless, they were offered as sacrifice to God. Then lastly, he mentioned the torn. This group had been attacked by wolves or some enemy and had escaped, but were disqualified as sacrifices worthy to be offered to the Lord -- but they were offered anyway.

The prophet further denounced their sacrilege by inviting them to present them to the governor -- evidently for taxes or to pay their obligations to the State. He declared the governor would not think of accepting them as payment of obligations. If that be true, he reasoned -- why do they think God would accept them when they had vowed to offer to Him their very best? This great polluting of their worship was bringing the curse of God upon them, and could only be rectified by repentance and obedience to the vows they had made with God.

What a description of the Church today! The rejection of spiritual discipline by the Church is so widespread that the best of fundamental congregations and movements are freighted with lukewarmness and wearied professors of grace. The Letter to the church at Laodicea outlines the only hope of correcting this lukewarmness: (1) The Church must buy of Christ gold tried in the fire. This is an experience with God whereby all foreign matter is removed from the gold and it is pure. It is the regenerating and transforming fire of God separating the individual from earthly and sinful involvement which pollutes his commitment to God; (2) The Church must buy of Christ white raiment to be clothed. This is total identity with Christ in holiness before a sinful and defiled world -- testifying of the power of God to cleanse and keep through the shed Blood of Christ; and (3) The Church must buy of Christ eyesalve that its eyes may be anointed to see. This is the special, spiritual comprehension which is bestowed only upon those who are unreservedly

committed to Christ. It is the anointing of the Holy Spirit who endues the believer with spiritual insight for fulfilling the will of God. (Revelation 3:18)

Worship is a heart exercise, and for that reason, law and ceremony cannot satisfy the worshipper regardless of how beautiful and elaborate they may be. On the contrary, law and ceremony may become vehicles of deception and spiritual decline. Too many have been willing to substitute orthodoxy for a true heart interest in building the kingdom of God. The romance of the gospel is maintained only by a life that is hid in Christ -- a new creation through His transforming Blood. What a thrill and challenge to experience light and spiritual fellowship with the Saviour! What an honor to give to Him the very best! His commandments are not grievous to the Sanctified, for they have discovered the secret of spiritual satisfaction -- total identification with the Son of God and His will.

IV. Indictment No. 4 -- Deceitful Handling of God's Word

"Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" (Malachi 2:17)

The only God-blessed route open to a failing people is that of repentance. It is not impossible, but it is inconsistent with history that religious movements take the way of repentance after having fallen from Grace. Almost without exception, they will take the route of self-justification and make themselves believe that God approves of their compromise.

Judah had wearied God with her words -- or elaborate arguments defending her involvement in things which violated the commands of God. They had become guilty of allowing sorcerers (occult) to affect their decisions. Heathen marriages had been accepted again. The love of money was causing them to swear falsely and to oppress the laborer. They had neglected the widows, fatherless, and the strangers who were protected and cared for under the law. Compromise had become so widespread that the people lost any fear of God and judgment. (Malachi 3:5 and 6) Self-justification creates a spirit of belligerency in religious professors against the restrictions of God, (Malachi 3:13-15), Amos 6:3) which defies the approaches of God to them in His effort to revive them spiritually.

In the light of the apostasy, this indictment falls with full weight upon the Church. The deceitful handling of God's Word has brought spiritual disaster to millions of church goers in these last days. The abandonment to fleshly things has catapulted the religious world into new straits of moral estrangement. The Church is being forced to think about areas of ethics which have not presented themselves before in modern history. Gone are the days of a calm social world. The battle with sin has been real all along the route of Church history, but much of it has been undercover or disguised in inoffensive packaging. However, sin has become raw and unashamed within a very short span of time. The 1960's opened the doors to a flood of satanic spirits which have engulfed the Church in all their fury. Ministers are caught in the crucible of identity. They will either stand upon the inerrancy of the Scriptures and separation from the world, or be victimized by the pressure of it all. Raw sin has shocked even the seasoned student of prophecy with its rapid growth and acceptance. The political pressure of the Gay and Feminist Movements

has become so powerful in some areas that major candidates cannot be elected without their support. This disgraceful peril has embroiled several church denominations into ethical battles as to the ordination of homosexual ministers. Of course, the homosexuals have won the day and have brought about the most unthinkable position the Church has faced in its history -- the ordination of ministers whose moral and spiritual condition is so revolting that God declares in His Word that He has given them up to uncleanness and vile affections. (Romans 1:24 and 25) The Days of Lot (Luke 17:28-30) are here now! The riotous homosexuals are being heard in the streets. The Wrath of God is sure to come upon this nation because it is protecting and encouraging modern Sodomy. Affluency is conditioning and softening a multitude of Christians for ultimate personal defeat as Lot's wife. (Luke 17:32) While they proclaim to be delivered and headed for higher ground, they have inner longings that have never been destroyed. Their words may declare in glowing terms their devotion to God -- but He sees their inner sympathy for the forbidden.

V. Indictment No. 5 -- Dishonest Stewardship

The final indictment is a sad one for it brings to memory one of the chief reasons why Judah was sent into Babylonian Captivity -- covetousness. (Jeremiah 6:13) Covetousness became the foundational motivation for their lives as a nation, thus, it was popular and accepted to be selfishly involved in the accumulation of material wealth and influence. And because almost everyone was involved, fear and guilt hardly registered upon their hearts. Their robbery of God of tithes and offerings was nationwide, and therefore they felt no personal guilt. So when the call of God came, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts," they exclaimed, "Wherein shall we return?" (Malachi 3:7)

They first lost their love for their heritage. This was followed by a lack of discipline and reverence for God and divine ethics. Next came the half-hearted worship by offering unto God polluted sacrifices, which had the curse of God attached to them. In spite of all these indictments, they argued against these restrictions by putting their approval upon evil and calling it good. Thus, having rejected these indictments of God, it seems natural to reject this final one -- even though a curse was also attached to it.

God's final appeal reveals His great love. He promises restoration and abundant blessings if they will return and bring their tithes and offerings into the storehouse. The windows of Heaven will be opened upon them. The devourer will be rebuked (Joel 1:4), and all nations shall call them blessed. But their hunger for spiritual things was gone -- and so was revival.

Just as covetousness paralyzed Judah, so it has developed a death grip upon the Church. Materialism has seized control of the masses, and its power has reached the grass roots of the Church. Multitudes of preachers have allowed material things to pollute and pervert their commission and vows to God. While performing the mechanics of the ministry, it is nevertheless half-hearted because their affections are geared to earthly things. Many young men and women have received calls to special service, but their hopes and aspirations are so earthbound that they will not acknowledge their calls. Sacrifice and deprivation are viewed as the worst things that could happen to them.

On the other hand, the Church has become lazy, visionless, and self-indulgent because it has not been motivated and challenged into the harvest fields for God. Their cars, homes, salaries, and desires for self-entertainment grow, while their devotion and giving to God slackens. The spiritual paralysis of the Church can be charged to the ministry. The voice of authority is seldom heard, and the people have become a law unto themselves. With conditions such as these, there can be no revival. There may be spurts of spiritual energy spotted here and there -- but these cannot be revival.

VI. The Remnant

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." (Malachi 3:16-18)

God will always have a people who will serve Him. Praise the Lord! In the midst of apostate Judah -- there were those who would not cave in to spiritual decline, but kept alive for God, and their heart interest was the Kingdom. The spiritual decline only pushed them nearer to God. They were encouragers -- for they spake often one to another with words of comfort and exhortation. They were like a sergeant on the front lines rallying his troops.

There is a Remnant today who love God. They, too, are encouragers. Their eyes are set on God and their lives geared to faith. They refuse to become victims to the falling away. As the consummation of this age closes in, it will take superior courage to cope with the awful confusion and sin. But the Remnant will adjust to whatever price is necessary to fulfill the will of God.

The Remnant cannot make Who's Who in the Bible (Hebrews 11), but they can make the Book of Remembrance (Malachi 3:16) and be a jewel for God for eternity. Oh! for grace to be on its pages.

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Chapter 5 PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

Introduction

"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 usward 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, 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 filleth all in all. (Ephesians 1:15-23)

Living Beyond the Moral Divide demands that the Blood-washed continually think negatively in confronting a world of sin and contesting compromise within the ranks of Christendom. Surrounded by enemy forces whose power and successes seem overwhelming at times, stimulates a psychological climate for defeat. Any general whose army is forced to retreat knows the effect it has upon the morale of the soldier. This psychological climate is further augmented by material affluence which destroys the will power to suffer. Apostasy provokes serious questions to believers who relate transforming, revolutionizing, empowering gospel to the spiritual deadness of this modern church age. One of God's choice warriors as a Judge of Israel faced these mental battles which almost defeated him. He was none other than Gideon. (Judges 6:11-16) In response to the angel's statement that God was with him, Gideon began to reveal the pent-up questions that obsessed his mind: "if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" and "where be all his miracles which our father told us of?" God did not explain the apostasy to him, neither did He perform miracles to prove His power, but simply explained that His promises were true to those who would obey and trust Him. When Gideon responded, God schooled and polished him into an example of faith, and then miracles began to happen. He and three hundred men defeated a satanic conspiracy and saved the nation.

The Apostle Paul wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians from his prison cell in Rome about 62 or 63 A.D. There has been much speculation about this Epistle. Some claim that in the original it is not addressed to the Ephesians, but that it is an Epistle written to the Laodiceans referred to in Colossians 4:16. However, the weight of evidence lends itself to being written to the Ephesians.

The apostle made two journeys to this city and the last time while on his third missionary journey, he pastored the church over two years. Under his anointed ministry, the city was mightily moved and a great visitation of God struck. The Temple of Diana was located here, and the revival challenged the very existence of this heathen religion. Many burned books and objects of heathen worship. The silversmiths were enraged because it was destroying their business. But God delivered the disciples and established the church. Ephesus became the last Church center of the apostolic period, and the Ephesian church was later pastored by the Apostle John before his banishment to Patmos.

The message of the Epistle is not correction or doctrine -- but unity and admonition. The frequent occurrence of such expressions as "fullness," "riches," "abounded," "exceeding riches," "riches of glory," "exceeding abundantly," and such like were no doubt intended to bolster the faith of this wonderful crowd. It is also evident that as a former leader, the apostle was aware of weaknesses within the church. The Letter to the Church at Ephesus recorded by the Apostle John (Revelation 2:1-7) pinpoints the primary weakness as "thou hast left thy first love" or the motivation to evangelize. The church had settled down to orthodoxy without the burden for lost souls. Could it have been that the Apostle Paul recognized this weakness creeping into this future center of the early Church? There is much credence to suggest that, and the message of the Epistle agrees.

1. The Will of God

Before the Apostle enters into his prayer for the Church, he lays a brief but comprehensive foundation of the Will of God concerning the Church. He uses three expressions to explain what is involved in God's will concerning them:

A. First, he refers to "the good pleasure of his will." (Ephesians 1:5) This great part of His will preceded their adoption as children of Jesus Christ and is expressed in Ephesians 1:4. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:" What a birthright! This scripture forever describes the requirements to be reconciled and justified before God.

B. Secondly, he refers to "the mystery of his will." (Ephesians 1:9) The mystery of His will is the gathering together of all things in Christ in the dispensation of the fulness 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:" (Ephesians 1:10) In other words, the Church, which is the Bride of Christ, will be joined together with all those in all dispensations who have fit into the purposes of God, and will be one with Christ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords for eternity. Praise the Lord!

C. Thirdly, he refers to "the counsel of his own will." (Ephesians 1:11) It is wonderful to have a birthright of holiness and to understand the conditions of adoption as expressed in "the good pleasure of his will." Then, it is thrilling to know that in "the mystery of his will" this great transport takes place. But how are these realities experienced? He explains it in "the counsel of his own will." "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:11-14) Notice first the "saved" or "born again" experience in verse 13a. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." Then, there is the second experience of "sanctification" or "the filling of the Holy Spirit" -- "in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

D. The sealing of the Holy Spirit is that final act of reconciliation and cleansing whereby the believer is totally identified with the purity, power, and purposes of Heaven. This "earnest of our inheritance" is a little bit of Heaven to go to Heaven in. It is the enduement with credentials of grace to perform the will of God on Earth as "strangers and pilgrims" (I Peter 2:11) -- "until the redemption of the possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:14)

II. The Prayer (Ephesians 1:15-23)

This great prayer, even though addressed to the Ephesians, is for the Church in all ages. It is in harmony with the Great Commission and includes everything necessary to the maintenance of a biblical and God-blessed ministry to the Church and a lost world.

A. "The spirit of wisdom" (Ephesians 1:17)

Wisdom is the ability to put into practical application the knowledge gained through knowing and serving Christ. The Apostle prays that God would endow the Church with a power of discernment and communication for the dissemination of the great truths contained in the will of God.

To the unregenerate world great biblical truths and doctrines such as regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, trinity, etc. are confusing, but God gives wisdom to believers for relating them through the power of the Holy Spirit to those who are spiritually hungry. This wisdom is sensitive, alert, and essential to the continual power and growth of the Church. This wisdom is the vital channel through which the Church establishes contact with the needs of humanity. Without wisdom a bottleneck is created and the Church is alienated from those to whom it is called to enlighten. A church that allows the great truths of the gospel to be contained within its walls, is frustrating the very reason for which it exists.

B. "Revelation in the knowledge (or for the acknowledgment) of him." (Ephesians 1:17)

Whereas wisdom is the power of discernment in making known practical great truths -- revelation deals with methods and ways of revealing Christ to others. There are no patterns given, but it alludes to the "earnest of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:14) or the Baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire. In order to get the full import, there should be an understanding of this mighty experience recorded on the Day of Pentecost. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4) There are several things to note: (1) The sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind (Hebrew -- Ruwach or Breath of God) and the Holy Ghost filled their hearts. This was the empowering of the disciples to carry forth God's program for the Church; (2) There sat upon each of them cloven tongues like as of fire. This expresses the purging, refining, and purifying fire of God as He cleansed the nature of inherited sin and readied the vessel for His use; and (3) They spake with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. This was the gift of communicating the message and love of God to all the world with certainty and boldness.

Where the zeal of revelation is put forth, God provides ways and methods for opening the hearts of the multitudes to the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. The Apostle Paul expresses this very forcibly in his letter to the Romans. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; 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." (Romans 1:16 and 17)

Fundamentalism can be rightly defined as biblical conservatism. Those who hold to this conservative persuasion are energetic in "rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Timothy 2:15) Their one weakness stems from their strongest tenet -- spiritual patriotism. This position leaves

little room for sufferance. However well-meaning this lack of tolerance may be, it nevertheless . develops schisms and cliques, and the latter end can be as destructive as compromise. It has been conjectured that Satan is not too concerned with the power of fundamentalism since he feels it will neutralize itself through divisions and strife. What a tragedy!

Is it possible for conservative holiness movements to experience real revival? Is dogma stronger than the desire for revival? Have laws spawned a false sense of security so deeply engrained that people no longer perceive the need of genuine revival? President Woodrow Wilson coined a unique expression which fits conservative holiness people today: "We are losing the battle through secondary victories." To win secondary victories is not enough. A similar feeling could have been the motivation which prompted the Apostle Paul to pray for a spirit of Wisdom and Revelation upon the Church at Ephesus. Wisdom would equip with supernatural know-how -- a practical discernment for the task of soul winning. The revelation in the knowledge of Christ would equip them with the mighty power from high in presenting Him as the only Hope. This revelation empowers God's people for war against Satan and the powers of darkness. Pentecost was the revealing of this supernatural extension of Christ's power on Earth for the fulfillment of His purposes. What an abuse and misappropriation of His Mercy and Light for conservative holiness movements to wrap themselves into monastic separation and fail to evangelize the dying world. What excuse will they give for their failure? The great Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) and the Parable of the Pound (Luke 19:11-27) deal very forcibly with this very subject. It is inconceivable that pastors fail or refuse to organize their churches into calling bands for personal evangelism. Most pastors involve themselves with secondary victories which may be needful and important, but they fail miserably in carrying out the Divine Commission. Many of them are experts on the failures of others and yet are content to shepherd flocks which have made no gains in ten years or more. This is no mathematical mystery. They just have not put two and two together to make four. The only hope of this Earthbound, Laodicean ministry is to be awakened. Time and concept jeopardize that awakening, How awful to have spent a God-called and ordained ministry barren of fruit!

C. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." (Ephesians 1:18a)

The casual reader of this verse will not detect the burden which is expressed in this part of his prayer. The word "eyes" refers to the inner comprehension of the spiritual intellect of the Christian. It is a petition for God to further extend the spirit of wisdom . and revelation whereby the Church will properly evaluate the reliance which God has placed within her. The Apostle seems anxious for them to understand that, if they fail, God fails. This responsibility must seize the heartstrings of the Church or its motivation will be limited. Without divine illumination the Church will not understand the sacred trust which God has bestowed upon Her. The stakes are enormous -- the souls of lost humanity.

Satan is doubtless aware of these tremendous stakes and seeks to cloud the spiritual "eyes" of the Church. The bulk of Christendom rests entirely upon direction from its hierarchy, however, conservative, evangelical Christians claim direction from God and it is within this segment of Christendom that the hope of revival rests. Even with conservatism a peril has arisen through regimentation because of the necessity to maintain biblical standards of righteousness. While battling to uphold an outward conformity to the standards, the throttle of evangelism has been

sorely neglected. Thus, a weakness has developed because this negative regimentation has not been accompanied with positive soul winning efforts. The evangelistic effort is designed more to refine the Church rather than win the lost. While both are necessary, neither should be neglected. A negative regimentation without the positive thrust to evangelize the lost creates stagnation, and stagnation is the breeding ground for sickness, disease, and death. The Apostle evidently was conscious of this possibility as he wrote this Epistle.

1. "that we may know the hope of his calling" (Ephesians 1:18b)

It should be noted that he does not say -- the hope of our calling. The expression "his calling" has nothing to do with salvation, but to their acceptance of the great benefits at their disposal in fulfilling the will of God. So, the hope of his calling is an enlightened and empowered Church possessing through "the earnest of our inheritance" enemy territory seeking to rescue those who are captive to Satan. It is militant holiness at war with the powers of darkness for the souls of men. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." (John 14:12) The Church today can hardly digest this promise because She has changed from militancy to doctrinal and denominational regimentation. Lukewarmness hangs over her like a morning fog and unless the Sun of enlightenment can burn through this fog, the Church will mill around nearsighted and half-hearted. The Apostle's admonition to Timothy sets forth conditions for personal discipleship expected of every person professing the name of Christ: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say: and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." (II Timothy 2:1-6)

2. "what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18c)

This expression follows the same vein of thought as the previous one. For Christ to have riches in His saints depends upon their fruitfulness. A defeated, unfruitful Church brings no glory to God, neither is She enjoying spiritual blessings. The inheritance of the saints is (1) holiness provided before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), and (2) holiness experienced as provided in the "earnest of our inheritance" or sanctification. (Ephesians 1:14) When saints are not being made through these provisions which Christ has given the Church, then His glory in the saints is curtailed. But when the Church is on fire, reaching out for lost souls and enjoying the graces of God, She becomes the depository for the riches of glory and fulfills the purpose of God for Her existence.

D. "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power" (Eph. 1:19)

There is the ever present temptation in this holy war to lean upon the arm of flesh rather than upon God. It is easier for the Church to excuse Her failures in the light of the great task She

has been called to perform. The more hesitant the Church becomes, the more fearful She becomes. There are no easy ways to fight wars. Combat demands courage and preparation. The Lord left no doubt as to the necessary preparations both mentally and spiritually for the Church to fulfill the task laid out for Her: "If any man come to me and hate not (love less) his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish, Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26-33)

The message of this passage is simple. There is no way to build the kingdom of God to His glory without a full commitment to Him and without the divine assistance which comes only through this total dependence upon Him. This refers to the positive side of building the Kingdom of God. On the negative side, He declares that the uncommitted Church (ten thousand soldiers) cannot hope to defeat Satan (twenty thousand soldiers) without the power of God working in Her behalf, and this help only comes by total obedience and dependence upon Christ.

What the Lord expressed through inference in the above passage, the Apostle Paul elaborated upon -- the mighty power that is placed at the disposal of the Church in readiness to assist Her in spreading the gospel, and he declared this mighty power to be a working power. (Ephesians 1:19b)

1. "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead," (Ephesians 1:20a) The first working power is RESURRECTION POWER. Through the Resurrection, Christ has perfected the provisions and power through which the "good news" of the gospel becomes the hope of lost humanity. Christ was the first-fruit and through Him all men can be made alive. The Resurrection became the battle cry for the early Church, and it challenged a world that was filled with demon possession and unmentionable practices of men. The Resurrection was the theme of the Apostle Paul as he took the message of hope into the stronghold of sin and planted churches for Christ. Time and time again, he tells of victories won through his unreserved and daring commitment to follow the leadership of God -- through the Resurrection power. To the Corinthians he relates having fought with the beasts of Ephesus. (I Corinthians 15:32) The term "beasts" deals with wicked men who live lower than regular humanity: (1) sensual -- those who live by the rule of their senses; and (2) devilish -- those who have the power to get lower than beasts and kindle their passions into a diabolical heat which generates and nourishes unnatural appetites.

This working Resurrected Power is supernatural might which brings heavy conviction upon captive, rebellious man and lays hold on his soul in delivering power. (Romans 1:16 and 17) It is the power of transformation whereby sinful man is made into a new creation. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." (II Corinthians 5:17) This power is not only the life-giving source for those dead in sins, but

is the revolutionary power for the Church militant in its commission to go into all the world and make disciples. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matthew 28:19 and 20) "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (II Corinthians 5:18-20)

It would be foolish to contend that the working Resurrection Power is in much evidence today. Disciples are being made by those inspired by erroneous gospels. The formula is there -- and it is yet workable. While Satan uses the formula to deceive millions, the Church sits with folded arms cloistered within Her walls. She has been idle so long that Her pastors have lost the vision and Her laymen are ignorant of soul winning. Will this Resurrection Power work for those who bestir themselves? Yes, a thousand times! The Power has never changed -- it is the lukewarm Church that has changed. Oh, that She could be awakened!

2. "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places," (Ephesians 1:20b)

The second working power is Mediatorial Power. Christ is the Mediator of a Covenant. In the strict sense, there can be but two forms of a covenant -- the legal and evangelical. The first is based upon justice, the second upon mercy. The fall of man in the Garden of Eden made the first inoperative -- consequently, the evangelical covenant is the only one that can be established. This covenant may be spoken of in different terms -- such as redemptive or grace.

Christ as the Mediator of the Covenant fulfills three offices -- prophet, priest, and King. Christians, individually and collectively, seldom come to the understanding of this awesome and yet glorious power which God has placed before His people as a working power for their assured success. Only a state of unbelief can so dull the spiritual perception of the Church and cause such insipidness.

a. Prophet

As Prophet, Christ is the Logos, the true Light and revealer of divine truth. Through the personality of the Holy Ghost. He is our Guide into all truth. (John 16:13) This is the element of safety in a world of darkness, confusion, sin, and hatred. This mighty working power convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. (John 16:8) When the Church, through faith and obedience, claims these blessed benefits from the Mediator, the power and anointing of God will rest upon Her. The conservative holiness element of the Church, which represents the hope of true New Testament revival, is prone to make a clean church the ideal -- and this is the primary reason for its lack of aggressiveness. The ideal is a clean, soul winning Church. Stagnation causes the host of churches to die. Christ as Prophet, through His Mediatorial Power purposes to give His saints authority over the forces of evil as they seek to wrestle lost souls from the clutches of Satan.

b. Priest

As Priest, Christ is concerned with objective mediation, which includes both sacrifice and intercession. His death became the establishment of the New Covenant, and thus is the basis of his mediation. (Colossians 1:20) As a working power, He intercedes for His saints. He declared that the Father always hears Him. (John 12:42) He has promised help to all who are troubled and tossed by the storms of life: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: (including Satan) but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:12-16) This great Advocate (I John 2:1) defeats the enemy of the soul, interprets justly the desires of the heart, provides the needed strength, mentally, spiritually, and physically, and assures His saints by answering prayer and communing with them.

With access to the Throne of God like this, how can His people excuse defeat and fruitfulness? When Jesus cursed the fig tree in response to its lack of fruit, it withered up. The following day, Peter draws attention to it, and the Master gave an eternal warning to His followers: "Have faith in God." (Mark 11:22) This expression carries with it both a promise and a warning. The promise declared that through faith the disciples could move mountains and obtain answers to prayer from the Father for whatever they asked, (Mark 11:23-25) This precious promise is as much in effect today as when He uttered it.

c. King

As King, Christ exercises at the right hand of God, rule over all things in heaven and in earth for the extension of His Kingdom. He declared this working power when He ascended: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18) This great declaration was made in conjunction with the Divine Commission, and is given to insure the disciples of His power and presence with them. (Matthew 28:19 and 20)

The Apostle Paul includes this subjective power in his prayer for the Church: "For 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." (Ephesians 1:21 and 22a) Hallelujah! That should thrill every Child of God! That should awaken and arouse the sluggish and set holy desires aflame in their hearts! Oh Lord, make it so!

3. "and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." (Ephesians 1:22b)

Christ is Head of the Church, and Head over all things for the Church. As Head of the Church, He is the sole Fountain of authority, grace, influence, and blessing. As Head over all things for the Church puts Him in complete control. He is over all the angels to command their

services in behalf of the Church. He is over all rulers, governments, nature, and the whole realm of the mind -- philosophy, science, etc.

This working personal power is comfort and healing to the saints. Christ sticketh closer than a brother. He is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. (Hebrews 13:20) He declared Himself to be a good shepherd (John 10:14) who knows His sheep and they know Him. As Shepherd and Bishop, He safeguards the spiritual state of the Church -- and as chief Shepherd, He is coming again as the Blessed Hope of His Church. (I Peter 2:25) The Apostle Paul declares a crown of righteousness for those who love His appearing. (II Timothy 4:8)

Something for Jesus

Savior, Thy dying love Thou gavest me
Nor should I aught withhold Dear Lord from Thee
In love my soul would bow, My heart fulfill its vow
Some offering bring Thee now, Something for Thee.

At the blest mercy-seat, Pleading for me
My feeble faith looks up, Jesus to Thee:
Help me the cross to bear, Thy wondrous love declare,
Some song to raise or prayer, Something for Thee.

Give me a faithful heart, Likeness to Thee,
That each departing day Henceforth may see
Some work of love begun, Some deed of kindness done,
Some wanderer sought and won, Something for Thee.

All that I am and have, Thy gifts so free,
In joy, in grief, thro' life, Dear Lord, for Thee!
And when Thy face I see, My ransomed soul shall be,
Thro' all eternity, Something for Thee.

-- Robert Lowry --

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THE END