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HOLY CHARACTER VERSUS HANDSOME CHARISMA
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I spoke with a man on the phone today, and later emailed him. In that email I conveyed to him that I never did consider him a man of "CHARISMA" but rather a man of "CHARACTER". And NO, I did not consider this to be, in the slightest, an insult, but rather -- a compliment. While he was well qualified to be promoted to the highest position in his church, he never was, and probably never will be. Others, with perhaps more "charisma" were promoted above him, but across the decades he has sacrificially served God well -- in a number of capacities, and in a number of places. Thus it often is with men of holy character, who seek, not "A Place To Shine" but rather "A Place To Serve" the Christ they love. And, it should not surprise any in glory -- if this man, along with his devout wife, have much higher places of honor in Christ's Eternal Kingdom than some who "out-shined" them on earth, but did not "out-serve" them in Christ's earthly fields of labor.

In God's eyes, and in Christ's Kingdom, HOLY CHARACTER always "trumps" HANDSOME CHARISMA! In fact, those with Holy Character shall fill the highest places in Heaven -- beginning with Jesus -- while many who had a Handsome Charisma on earth shall occupy some of the lowest places in Heaven, and, horror of

all horrors, some of the lowest places in the Lake of Fire -- and that, even though they held some of the highest places of honor ecclesiastically on earth! Indeed, the one who once had the most handsome charisma of all of God's created beings: -- Lucifer -- shall occupy the deepest depths of the Lake of Fire in the Bottomless Pit!

Consider Lucifer, as typically described in the person of the King of Tyrus in Ezekiel 28:12-15:

"12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

"13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

"14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

"15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee."

Here we see Heaven's most Handsome Charisma, given by the Creator to Lucifer before his rebellion and fall. Then, in the 17th and 18th verses we see his horrible corruption (because of his "brightness" or great beauty), and in prophetically typical language we read of the Fallen Lucifer's casting out of Heaven and the damning fire which shall utterly burn him to ashes (before the eyes of all who were deceived by him), his final abode, and eternal suffering to be in the deepest depths of the Lake of Fire!

"17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

"18 Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

Many times I have thought about just how it was that Lucifer was tempted to sin, and then fell into sin. I think part of the answer is found in the above Ezekiel 28:17 -- "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness."

The most Handsome Charisma in Heaven (among all of the angels created by Christ) was Lucifer. But, Lucifer's attention was turned from the Father of his beauty to the Fact of his surpassing beauty. No doubt God warned him repeatedly: -- "Lucifer! you have turned your gaze away from the Myself, the Father of your

Handsome Charisma toward the Fact of your Handsome Charisma! Lucifer! Lucifer! TURN YOUR GAZE BACK TOWARD ME! For if you continue to dwell upon your beauty and yourself, you will next sin against me, your Creator!

Do I hear someone say, "I doubt that God told Lucifer this."

I reply, I do not say that these were God's exact words, but we have reason to believe from Ezekiel 28:17 that Lucifer was "corrupted" by the wrongful attention he paid to his Handsome Charisma -- His Exceedingly Great Beauty -- and I believe that God did not allow Lucifer to continue doing this without warning him, so that he need not have fallen into sin -- had he heeded Christ, His Creator's warnings!

What was it that made Lucifer the Devil?

Consider Proverbs 31:30 -- "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

FAVOR and BEAUTY ARE DECEITFUL! If one dwells upon his or her beauty in a self-absorbing way, that person will be DECEIVED! -- YES, DECEIVED INTO THINKING THAT HE, OR SHE, IS SO FAVORED AS TO BE SUPERIOR TO ALL OTHERS!

This is precisely what happened to Lucifer!

Do you ask: -- Why did God create beauty to have in it the possibility of deceiving one possessing it?

My answer is: -- Just as Human Beings in this world are now on Probation before God, even so God ordained that every angel in Heaven pass through a time of probation. God Himself created the possibility of sinning against Him, but not the necessity of so doing.

One of those avenues of possible transgression against the Creator was His placing within the Handsome Charisma -- The Exceedingly Great Beauty" of his created angels -- an element of deceitfulness which, if they failed to turn from, would cause them to think themselves to be what they were not -- SUPERIOR TO OTHER ANGELS -- AND, YEA, EVEN SUPERIOR TO GOD HIMSELF!

Thus, Lucifer, being the brightest and most beautiful of all of the angels of Christ, His Creator, was permitted to chose whether he would obediently focus his attention upon His Creator (THE GREATEST, MOST BEAUTIFUL BEING WHO EVER WAS AND EVER SHALL BE), or whether he (Lucifer) would begin to turn his attention away from the Father of his Beauty to the Fact of his beauty -- and begin to wrongfully focus upon it so as to come within the power of its deception.

This, I believe, was probably an essential part of Lucifer's probation -- the Divinely created possibility for him to obediently turn his focus away from the Fact of his beauty back to the Father of his beauty. And, sadly, Lucifer failed the test! After repeated warnings and commands from from Christ to turn his attention back to the Father of his beauty and away from the Fact of his beauty, Lucifer decided, by his own choice, to rebel, to continue to focus upon the Fact of his Beauty -- and His Great Beauty deceived him into thinking that he was superior to all other angels in Heaven, and yea -- EVEN SUPERIOR TO GOD HIMSELF!

Then, in utter rebellion against God, Isaiah 14:13 took place within him: -- "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 congregation, in the sides of the north."

War broke loose in Heaven, Fallen Lucifer, now the Fiendish Devil, or Dragon, having managed to deceive one-third of God's angels that they too were superior to God, and that they should join him in rebellion against the Triune God. Revelation 12:7 -- "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven."

Jesus said in Luke 10:18 -- "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." What Jesus did not say, but what was still true: -- Jesus is the one Who cast Satan out of heaven! He also is the one who bound Satan by His death on the cross: 2 Peter 2:4 -- "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." Jude 1:6 -- "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."

The fact that Jesus bound Satan at Calvary is also borne out by his statement in both Matthew 12:29 -- "How can One [Christ] enter into a strong man's [Satan's] house, and spoil his goods, except he first BIND the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." -- and Mark 3:27 "No man can enter into a strong man's house [Satan's house], and spoil his goods, except he will first BIND the strong man [Satan]; and then he will spoil his house."

Just before his death on Calvary, Jesus said in John 12:31 -- "Now is the judgment of this world: NOW SHALL THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD BE CAST OUT."

Commenting upon this, John Wesley wrote: -- " Now shall the prince of this world-Satan, who had gained possession of it [this world] by sin and death, be cast out-That is, judged, condemned, cast out of his possession, and out of the bounds of Christ's kingdom."

With His death, Christ BOUND THE DEVIL and ever since that time --down across the years of the Church Age, Christ has been entering into the Strong Man's House [Satan's Earthly Domain] and spoiling Satan of his goods -- i.e. robbing the devil of the souls whom Satan holds in captivity. Hallelujah!

But, back to this matter of Handsome Charisma versus Holy Character:

The prophet Isaiah told us that when Christ (THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND SUPERIOR BEING WHO EVER EXISTED AS PART OF THE TRIUNE GODHEAD) -- when Christ came to redeem fallen Mankind He would not appear in his great Beauty in Glory: -- "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath NO FORM NOR COMELINESS; and when we shall see him, there is NO BEAUTY THAT WE SHOULD DESIRE HIM."

God sent forth His Son into this sin-cursed world in the form of an HOLY CHARACTER -- not in the form of one with an HANDSOME CHARISMA.

The Jews expected their long-awaited Messiah to come in HANDSOME CHARISMA. Instead, He came with inward, and hidden beauty, with a very plain outward appearance, but WITH THE MOST HOLY CHARACTER that ever walked upon this earth!

Repeatedly, before Christ's First Coming, those with Handsome Charisma failed to be godly leaders, and proved themselves to be a curse rather than a blessing.

You will recall Saul, as described in 1 Samuel 10: -- "They ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward."

Before his crowning as Israel's first king, Saul, while shy and humble, was a prime example of Handsome Charisma. But, once he was exalted to that high position, like Lucifer, his Handsome Charisma and High Position robbed him of his humility -- and his Holy Character, if indeed he ever did have the latter.

Then, you will remember the story of how when God sent Samuel to anoint one of the sons of Jesse to succeed the backslidden Saul, Jesse paraded each of his more handsome sons before Samuel, but all to no avail:

"Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these. 11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither..." Then, when little diminutive David was brought forth, "the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he" (1 Samuel 16:10-12).

While it is true that this very same chapter describes little David's appearance, in so many words, as comely, David was not chosen be reason of an impressive, Handsome Charisma, but because God saw in him an Holy Character.

But then, ah, once again -- here came David's Handsome Charismatic son, Absalom. "In all Israel THERE WAS NONE TO BE SO MUCH PRAISED AS ABSALOM FOR HIS BEAUTY: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him" (2 Samuel 14:25).

But with all of his Handsome Charisma, Absalom totally lacked what Israel needed most in a leader: -- Holy Character -- and, you know the sad story of his conspiracy to unseat his father David from the throne, which resulted in his death via three darts through the heart from the hand of Joab!

I am thinking this very moment of a man under whose ministry I sat when I was a young Christian. He was a man of Handsome Charisma. Tall, trim, and manly, he was very attractive pulpiteer -- always dressed in neat and clean suits, a white shirt, and a colorful tie to compliment his suit. He could preach rousing messages, which seemed to be ever so devout and earnest. He striking appearance seemed to be the perfect picture of both Handsome Charisma and Holy Character -- combined all in one very impressive and attractive package!

But I recall the time, a short time later when an hidden, inner ugliness seemed to manifest itself in a shocking manner. He closed down a Holy Ghost revival, and sent the evangelist packing. This was followed by an abrupt departure from that place of honor he held while I sat under his charismatic preaching -- and also by his withdrawal from the holiness group in which he had filled such a prominent position. Then also, came negative aspersions written against those who had not approved of his slamming the door shut on one of the greatest, Holy Ghost revivals in which I have ever been a part. One of those who became a target of his ecclesiastic arrows was none other than my now sainted brother, I. Parker Maxey.

While all of this was taking place, at winter time, I had a vision of sorts, -- a vision which I related to my brother Parker: -- In my vision I saw a black leather glove lying on the snow. It had been worn by a man so frequently that the leather had taken on the shape of his hand. But now, glove had fallen from the hand of the man. It was empty, lying there on the cold, white snow, while still retaining the shape of the hand that had once filled it.

My brother felt that it was a vision, perhaps given me of God, to describe what had taken place regarding the Handsome Charismatic minister who had shut down the Holy Ghost revival and suddenly departed both from the place of honor he had filled when I sat under his ministry, and then also departed from our denomination.

A man can fit his hand into a glove, and flex that hand within it using that glove so long, that even after the glove has fallen to the ground, emptied and lost to its owner, IT STILL RETAINS THE SHAPE OF THAT MAN'S HAND -- just as much as if his living hand was still within it.

Even so, God can fill a man with His Spirit, flex His Divine hand through that man and use him -- to the point that even after that man has dropped from the hand of the Living God, and like a lost and emptied glove is lying void of the Holy Ghost upon the cold ground of spiritual death. Outwardly he may still look the same as he did when he was spiritually alive, warmed, and filled with the Spirit of the Living God, when in fact he is like the fallen, emptied, void, and lost glove like the one I saw in my vision.

How often, how very, very often, when the attention of some leader with Handsome Charisma becomes focused upon that Charisma, instead of upon the Christ who gave that Handsome Charisma to him, that minister, that leader, becomes self-absorbed, rebels against God, and while His Handsome Charisma remains, his Holy Character is forfeited, and he is a curse, rather than a blessing to Christ's work on earth.

This, I believe, is one of the reasons why at Jesus' First Coming, he appeared as a lowly carpenter's son, "without form nor comeliness," so those who looked upon him saw no beauty that they should desire him.

In His appearance, He was the total antithesis of the Messiah for which most in Israel looked. And, it is among those reasons why the Jews of Jesus' earthly time "despised and rejected" him, "turned their faces from him," and "did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:3-4).

With them, it was Handsome Charisma versus Holy Character. In viewing him, they say "no beauty that [they] should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2) to be their long sought-for Messiah.

But, PRAISE BE UNTO THE NAME OF JESUS FOREVER AND EVER, while he then manifested no Handsome Charisma, He DID manifest His HOLY CHARACTER as God Incarnate in Human Flesh! And, that Man of Holy Character, that MAN OF ALL MEN, through His death for us on Calvary's despised cross made it possible for all men to be saved, to be sanctified wholly, to be made inwardly BEAUTIFUL LIKE HIMSELF.

When it comes to HOLY CHARACTER VERSUS HANDSOME CHARISMA, the former, not the latter, has always gained the victory in this old wicked world.

The man who now occupies our Whitehouse, in the eyes of millions, appeared to have a lot of outward, Handsome Charisma, but his rulership is

doomed to eternal destruction because, like virtually all other earthly kingdoms and governments, it is VOID OF HOLY CHARACTER!

Saints of God, ye who may be in the eyes of the world as ugly as a mud fence, be of good cheer. When it comes to the final triumph, HOLY CHARACTER, THROUGH THE BLOOD OF JESUS, SHALL REJOICE IN THAT ETERNAL VICTORY!

But, OH, WHAT A DAY THAT WILL BE! WHEN JESUS COMES BACK! It shall not be as that one who has no beauty that anyone shall desire Him. No! Ten Million Times NO! He is coming back in all of His Beauty, Splendor, and Glory -- WITH AN ETERNAL CHARISMA THAT SHALL NEVER FADE AWAY, WORLD WITHOUT END!

Who is it that is going to thus "SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY" in that "far off" Heavenly Land?

Isaiah 47:15-17 answers that:

"15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

"16 He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.

"17 THINE EYES SHALL SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY: they shall behold the land that is very far off."

PRAISE GOD FOREVER AND EVER -- FOR ALL OF GOD'S CHILDREN, WHAT A DAY, GLORIOUS DAY, THAT SHALL BE!

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THE END