

**CHRIST'S CHURCH THEN . . .**  
**CHRIST'S CHURCH NOW**  
CONDENSED VERSION

by

Terry S. Ross

*Christ's Church Then . . . Christ's Church Now*

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Terry & Cathy Ross  
Servants of the Saviour  
P. O. Box 7277  
Citrus Heights, CA 95621-7277 USA  
E-fax: (630) 839-8411  
E-fax international: 00 111 630 839-8411  
E-mail: W84Gsus7@aol.com

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## Acknowledgments

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## Introduction

No longer is it the sound of distant rumblings. No longer is it from afar that we witness an attack on Christian standards and values. The greatest battle ever to be fought in these last days has already begun! It rages even now. It has come to our shores and is being waged on a global scale. It will take us into the darkest hours of earth's history since there was a nation. Wishing it away will not change it or help us.

Even non-Christians understand that something is not right. Something is amiss. Uncertainty and fear for the future is in the very air we breathe. Something is wrong in America and no one seems able to fix it. They may not realize exactly what it is but the last battle between Christ and Satan for the souls of men has already commenced. The startling truth that a growing number of sincere Christians are discovering is that while we thought it would be “us against the world”—we have more to fear from within the “church” than without. The “Trojan Horse” of heresy and apostasy is already inside the gate!

In Revelation chapter three, Jesus said I want you to be hot or cold. Either be 100% or zero. But because you are lukewarm; because you want to have one foot in the world and one in the church, I will spew you out of my mouth. You make me sick!

The shaking of the church has begun! It is decision time. Do we want to be hot or cold? The choice is ours. The choice we make will decide our eternal destiny. It is now that we must take serious inventory of ourselves. No longer can we fool those around us as we “play” church. For we have entered a time of individual examination in the courts of — not man — but God. A court where all human veneer is stripped away. If we hope to retain Jesus as our friend and advocate during this trial, we must ask ourselves the most serious

questions of our lives —and answer them honestly.

Do you know what you believe and why? I'm not asking if you know what your pastor believes or what your denominational creed is or what your parents believe. I'm not asking what some prominent television personality who has written “a really great book” thinks. I am asking if you know what YOU believe and the biblical reasons why you believe it.

This book is a wake-up call to Laodicea. Laodicea is the last church mentioned in the book of Revelation.

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Revelation 3:14-18).

We are living in the time of the last church—the “Laodicean” church. The Lord's return is closer than we even dare to hope for—even at the door. Are we ready? Have we studied the Bible for ourselves? I don't mean the kind of study that consists of spoon-fed sections given to support a point of view held by church headquarters, leaders, and pastors; I mean the kind of study where YOU find, on your own, scriptural support for what you believe.

We must not think we can acquire a saving knowledge of the Lord based upon the study of others. You have to “. . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). We each have to dig into God's word for ourselves and see what it says to us personally. We shouldn't think that we can be ready for the Lord's

return by merely giving money to the church, attending services once or even twice a week (or more), and then put our Bible back on the shelf when we get home without doing our own study. We have to know FOR OURSELVES what it says.

We can't entrust television preachers or even our own pastors with our salvation. We have to work it out ourselves—the Bible says so! I have heard statements made and even Bible verses quoted from the pulpit and on television that were misquoted or taken out of context to prove a piece of faulty theology. The speaker was trying to make a point that was, at best, scripturally unsound, and, at worst, downright heresy! You must study for yourself—the “arm of flesh will fail you.”

There are many tried and true ministers of God out there in the churches. There are many who are standing strongly for Bible truth and are living up to the light they know. These are the faithful “watchmen on the wall” mentioned in Ezekiel 33:1-7. But there are many others who are not part of the “true and faithful” who make up God's true church. Many are finding out today that placing a sign that reads “CHURCH” on the outside of a building does not make it one. Profession without possession is worse than worthless. In fact, Jesus said that one who makes a profession of Christianity without possessing the living, active faith of Christianity, is worse than an infidel. In the judgment it will have been better if he had never been born or if he had a millstone tied around his neck and had been cast into the depths of the sea.

Jesus came to make clear in person, who and what constitutes His true church. CHRIST'S CHURCH THEN... CHRIST'S CHURCH NOW has helped thousands to come to the understanding that Jesus came personally to bring the wonderful news that today we can know what constitutes God's true church! But we must also realize that this life-saving discovery comes with all the ingredients the disciples had to swallow. The Lord asked them if they were able to drink of the same bitter cup He was going to drink from. Now we discover that we as individuals must face the same question.

Those pastors who do not take the time to do their homework

are in the group discussed here. Those denominational leaders and church committee members who do not take time to know what God's word truly says are also in this group. Also in this group are those preachers who predominantly read books by high profile Christian celebrities that give man's "I think" instead of a plain "thus saith the Lord." These authors often base entire doctrinal positions on one or two isolated texts, frequently taken out of context and unsupported by the many other Scriptures pertaining to that subject. It also includes those who are "policy" men rather than those of principle. Not a few in this group know a whole lot more than they are telling.

The pastors in our churches are to be the "watchmen on the wall" mentioned by the prophet Ezekiel. There is danger coming and they are to warn the people. But who is sounding the alarm?

"But if the watchmen see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; THEREFORE THOU SHALT HEAR THE WORD AT MY MOUTH, AND WARN THEM FROM ME. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezekiel 33:6-8).

The Bible interprets itself. "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10). If there is a passage of Scripture that seems to contradict another passage of Scripture, you can be sure that it is not the Bible that is contradicting itself, but a faulty understanding of what the Bible says. The ENTIRE BIBLE must be used to understand the principles God has laid out before us. And we must search this out for ourselves. We must ask God to remove our preconceived opinions and to give us the Holy Spirit to be our

teacher. Preconceived opinion must be laid at the door of investigation. Remember what we are told in 1 John 2:27:

“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”

If you are in doubt about a certain topic, take your concordance and do a word study about it. Pray about it. Ask God to send the Holy Spirit to enlighten you about it. And most important of all, don't just take someone's word for it, even if it happens to be a close friend. See what the Bible says. You may be surprised what the Bible teaches and it may totally be the opposite of what you have been taught. But make no mistake—Bible truth is not subject to what your pastor “thinks” it says, nor is Bible truth subject to popular vote! It is not majority opinion that determines the truth of Scriptures, **BUT WHAT THE SCRIPTURES ACTUALLY SAY.** Be not deceived!

As you choose to serve God first and relegate to man a second position, the study in **CHRIST'S CHURCH THEN... CHRIST'S CHURCH NOW**, rightly understood, will be a blessing from the Lord. In Christ's day the “church” had strangely changed leaders and the people rejected the Originator of their movement. In our day we face this same tragedy. Most “ancient believers in God” (ancient Israel) — our spiritual ancestors — were lost because of their misplaced loyalty in a leadership (priesthood) that had become corrupt. Today their history has once again become our (Modern Israel's - in the spiritual sense) reality.

It is now your privilege to discover and understand that this same Jesus who existed throughout the history of our ancestors, in His grace and mercy toward us, has had the Bible written not just to show us what love is, but for much deeper reasons. He is giving us a last chance to learn from the mistakes of others and take heed. Whether or not you decide to enroll in the school of Christ as an active, honest student will determine your eternal destiny!

Our prayers are with you and it is our hope and desire that you

will find the freedom that our Saviour died to give you — only then will you be free indeed. But if not, you are in danger of being chained to men who have no higher concept of Christianity than did their ancient counterparts (the Sanhedrin) in the “denominational headquarters” of the ancient church.

This book is primarily dedicated to those men and women who have through the ages taken their stand on the side of the Lord at the cost of their reputation, of being misunderstood, and being persecuted for the name and cause of Christ and our Heavenly Father.

This book is also dedicated to such men as the disciples, who after the Upper Room experience went boldly forward proclaiming the truth for their day in the face of deadly opposition from a corrupt priesthood that called itself the “church”; to the first martyr, Stephen, who told it like it was but had no spirit of hatred in him, who was not blind, nor bitter; to Saul, the conference leader who became Paul the church leader, who although obeying man instead of God at first, saw the light on the Damascus road and was converted to follow Jesus anywhere He led; Paul, who became an honorable defender of Jesus and who quite possibly understood the purifying effects of trial more than any other man; to these and the many others who have sacrificed so much that God's word might continue to shine in a world of darkness; and to those who will yet hear the call of the Master's voice, pick up the blood-stained banner and contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Our study will take us through the heart of the four Gospels and into some Old Testament references. When you have finished, we hope you will be much richer and wiser for your study. May the Lord be with you.

Terry S. Ross

# Chapter 1

## “Thy King Cometh . . .”

“ . . . thou knewest not the time of thy visitation”  
(Luke 19:44).

How many times have you heard it said or have said yourself: “We shouldn’t criticize?” I can remember when there used to be what was called “constructive criticism.” We are so far removed from those days of honest correction that we no longer use such terminology. Why? I believe it is because when someone in the church today says we shouldn’t criticize, they mean we should keep from speaking anything that’s “negative,” especially if it’s directed at the “leadership” of the “church.” Almost always on the heels of this comment you will hear someone say that Jesus never condemned anybody. And once again this comment is calculated to place a grim opinion on anyone who would proceed to prove that the church is out of step with what Jesus would have done. Maybe you have been in your Bible study class and have tried to make a critical point on the lesson to uphold the principles of truth. Then someone says (on cue), “Jesus never condemned anyone.” You could then almost hear the minds of all the members of the class slam shut and you would not be heard for the rest of the session. Your influence has just been killed.

But to make such statements, in reality, shows the prejudice of the comment and exposes the ignorance of the one who makes it. If Jesus never condemned anyone, then why did the “church” crucify Him! It doesn’t take a genius to realize that saying Jesus never condemned anyone shows that the one saying this doesn’t know the Bible.

Most ministers are “nice folks.” But if you are observant, you may see that a growing number of them soon reveal in different ways that their primary interest is pleasing the denominational headquarters with “numbers,” toeing the “party line,” and, for the most part, preaching what they believe the people want to hear. If you dare to disagree on any points of doctrine, they will quickly put you in your place because “you don’t know the Greek,” or they’ll give

you some other kind of “intellectual” snow job, such as, “you have to understand proper hermeneutical procedures to be able to interpret what’s written in the Bible.”

If you have a red-letter edition Bible, read through the four Gospels and pay attention to the red lettering. I guarantee you will find in a big way that Jesus was, in fact, condemning the leadership of the church headquarters of His day. To deny this obvious fact is to deny the simplest historical accounts of the New Testament. Jesus called the apostate leaders of His day, sons of “the devil” (John 8:44), “hypocrites” (Matthew 6:2, 15:7, 23:13 and numerous other places), and “whited sepulchers” (Matthew 23:27). He certainly agreed with John the Baptist, His cousin, who called the leaders a “generation of snakes” in Matthew 3:7. As a matter of fact, Jesus spoke of John as the greatest prophet that ever lived (Matthew 11:11). We could cite many more situations when Jesus did things that if He had come for the first time in our day, would shock today’s Christians, such as overthrowing the money tables in the courts of the “church.” This should demonstrate that most people either don’t know what Jesus is like or that they really don’t want to “be just like Jesus,” as they claim they want to be. They want the God of mercy but reject the God of Justice. Words are indeed so cheap.

In the end, those who are part of God’s true church in reality will be just like Jesus; and like the disciples 2,000 years ago will find out that being just like Jesus means much more than most will be willing to become. Spiritual Israel is about to find out what ancient Israel found out; not just with a head knowledge but through actual living experiential knowledge. This life or death issue as in days of old, is being brought to the forefront one last time, by the same Jesus so many now say they want to be like.

At the time of Christ’s arrival the “church” had a misconception of His first coming and of who He was. And where did they get this misconception? From their leaders, of course.

Many among Christ’s hearers were dwellers at Jerusalem. They were not ignorant of the plots of the rulers against Him, but felt themselves drawn to Him by an irresistible power. They were

convicted that He was the Son of God. But Satan was ready to suggest doubt; and to this end the way was prepared by their erroneous ideas of the Messiah and His coming. It was generally believed that Christ would be born at Bethlehem, but after a time He would disappear, and at His second appearance none would know where He came from. There were many who held that the Messiah would have no natural relationship to humanity. And because the popular conception of the glory of the Messiah was not met by Jesus of Nazareth, many gave heed to the suggestion, "Howbeit we know this man whence he is; but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is" (John 7:27).

Five hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Zechariah foretold the coming of the King to Israel. The hope of the new kingdom was again springing up. So for five hundred years God had brought to view the reality that the Messiah was on His way. But do you know what happened before He arrived? The educational system of God's people became polluted. Hundreds of years before when Israel had chosen a king it was because they wished to be like other nations. This humanistic approach and attitude had proven to be a constant plague throughout their history. Now at the most crucial point in their existence this plague of placing the opinions of man above the word of God was about to be their utter downfall. We often address our real concerns about the "peer pressure" our youth are influenced by and how it is destroying them. One thing that would give our young people strength to endure and overcome evil peer pressure is for us to gain the victory ourselves as adults. Sadly, as in ancient times, the vast majority of God's professed people are still placing the opinions of man above that of God's word.

By the time Jesus arrived on the scene, the church leaders were of the opinion that they knew more than He did! Remember, they asked Him what authority He had to preach (Matthew 21:23; Mark 11:28; Luke 20:2). They made the charge that He had no authority because He had not attended any of their schools and they had not given Him any authority. These same apostate leaders later made the same charges against the disciples (Acts 4:7).

While they were thus wavering between doubt and faith, Jesus took up their thoughts and answered them, “Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not (John 7:28).” They claimed a knowledge of what the origin of Christ should be, but they were in utter ignorance of it. If they had lived in accordance with the will of God, they would have known His Son when He came.

So you see, God’s “chosen people” had disregarded the manner in which He had said He would come. They could not rightly discern spiritual things because they had not lived in accordance with the will of God. When Christ arrived on the scene, the “church” had been polluted with the leading of faulty teachers who had become self-serving. Their priorities had turned from living according to the standards and principles of heaven to the policies and approbation of man.

Because we are studying prophetic parallels, this might be a good place to establish some ground rules. Now I’m going to make the claim in this study that we will discover nothing has changed between the days of Christ and those of our own. What happened 2,000 years ago is happening today—history is repeating itself. I’m making the claim that Jesus has graciously brought this insight to the forefront now because it’s time to do so. In keeping with this, let’s pause to discuss the “players” in this drama.

If we had lived 2,000 years ago and had only the knowledge that the Jews possessed then, the identity of the “church” would have been obvious to us. Most of us would have recognized that the “church” was the Sanhedrin. We would have said that Jerusalem was “church headquarters” and the priests, scribes, and Pharisees—those in the Sanhedrin—were the church leaders of our day—conference men. Now we realize that not all denominations or congregations have a conference structure but to simplify things, the term “conference” or “conference men” will mean official leadership. The term modern Israel is used in a spiritual sense and applies to all claiming Christianity.

It should also be recognized that the subject matter of

CHRIST'S CHURCH THEN... CHRIST'S CHURCH NOW deals with principles which are eternal and consistent. Claims of apostasy will therefore be strongly and clearly stated but housed in general language. The claim that the conference leaders are in apostasy is very true but the reader should not assume that ALL official leaders are in apostasy. Not all the leaders in ancient Israel were in apostasy, but the majority were. Christ came to break the chains of bondage that their apostate pastors had placed upon the laity. Only those who found salvation were those who came to understand that it is what God says that matters most, not what man thinks or feels.

CHRIST'S CHURCH THEN... CHRIST'S CHURCH NOW repeats this exact work at the door of His second coming. The pursuit, discovery and acceptance of truth, no matter how painful or startling, will determine the destiny of each soul. Time ran out for the ancient conference who claimed to be "the church." The claim of being "the church" is being heard again and only those who discover who and what God's REAL church is and with total conviction and commitment will become a part of it, can or will be saved in the end. Taking on Christ's name "Christian" means far more than most have ever imagined. And although salvation is free, by grace alone, and although we could never earn it, it will cost us everything we have. By far and away, as in ancient times, the majority of common people today have placed the most precious gift of eternal life in the hands of apostate leadership. The work of Christ showed that those who continued this practice would go to ruin with them. God is still the same today, yesterday and always. It is not He who will change to accommodate the apostasy that's rampant in modern Israel. The change, if any, must come from within you and me. We have a very short time in which to unlearn the error and learn the vital, saving truths which Christ brings to this last generation in a dying world. This is obvious as illustrated by verses in Scripture already mentioned and by statements from the disciples themselves such as "Don't you know, Jesus, You just offended the pastors?" (see Matthew 15:12). And you may also want to note Jesus' corresponding response which was, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall

be rooted up” (Matthew 15:13).

If we would have been like most who were not diligently heeding the warning “studying to shew thyself approved” (2 Timothy 2:15), and if we had been part of the popular thought of that day 2,000 years ago, we would have definitely believed that the conference corporate structure (the temple) in Jerusalem was “the church” and that “the true leaders” were found at headquarters, the Sanhedrin. This was the claim of those ancient leaders and the same is true of modern leadership as well.

In His day, how would Christ and His disciples have been identified? They would have been recognized by most of us as self-supporting, independent ministers. They would not have been recognized as having authority to give their messages by the “mainstream church” because they were not affiliated with a recognized denomination officially. They hadn’t received any credentials from the conference headquarters and so they had no “authority” to preach.

The surprising fact is that it was only those who began to look for truth for themselves who discovered that the church leaders of their day were wrong. Most of those who held onto the self-promoted idea that the church (headquartered in Jerusalem) was the final authority, died in the slaughter of 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed. Not only were they removed that day from the face of earth but also from the Lamb’s Book of Life! They had rejected the message that their Messiah had indeed come in the person of the humble Carpenter from Nazareth.

Do we realize, brothers and sisters, that if it hadn’t been for the self-supporting, independent ministers, the message of Christ’s coming would not have been preached?

And what was it that originally put in action the downfall of the conference corporate structure in ancient times? It was the choosing of a king—a human leader. The Scriptures plainly teach that this was never God’s plan. Let’s read about it in I Samuel 8:5-8:

“And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk

not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee."

"Modern day Israel," present-day Christians, have followed in the same footsteps and are in the same trouble. The reason God didn't desire for Israel to have a king is a good one. Having one man at the head is not God's plan, because nearly every time this has been the case, the "king" ends up protecting his kingdom, not God's kingdom.

Now back to Jesus with His disciples. It is the day of His "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem that final week before His crucifixion. This day, which seemed to the disciples the crowning day of their lives, would have been shadowed with gloomy clouds had they known that this scene of rejoicing was but a prelude to the suffering and death of their Master. Although He had repeatedly told them of His certain sacrifice, yet in the glad triumph of the present they forgot His sorrowful words, and looked forward to His prosperous reign on David's throne.

The church was looking to years of prosperity but sudden destruction came. You see, Jesus had tried to warn them, but their minds were so full of preconceived ideas placed there by the corrupt priesthood that His words fell on deaf ears. Christ has renewed His warnings to His professed people by way of the Bible, however, for the most part, in our day as in the past, His words are falling on deaf ears. In a time when "the church" is crying peace and safety, in a time when "the church" is looking forward to years of prosperity, sudden destruction is about to fall.

Many Pharisees witnessed Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and, burning with envy and malice they sought to turn the

current of popular feeling. With all their authority they tried to silence the people, but their appeals and threats only increased the enthusiasm. They feared that this multitude, in the strength of their numbers, would make Jesus king. They declared that such demonstrations were unlawful, and would not be permitted by the authorities.

“Malice” is defined as “hatred or intense hatred.” Why did the “pastors” hate Jesus, the very One who they were claiming to worship? These same pastors feared that the multitude would make JESUS their king. Why would a pastor fear that the laity would make Jesus their king?

I’ll tell you why, and the reason hasn’t changed over the last 2,000 years! The Jewish “pastors” feared that if the people made Jesus their king, they would have found out the truth about who they really were and what their style of pastoring was really all about. They feared that their own authority would be nullified and they would be without a job! They would lose control of the money and lose all their authority.

Do you want to know something? They were right! This experience is paralleled in our own day in many churches.

This is the reason the standards over the years have been lowered time and time again. I don’t have to tell those of you with the gray hair all of this. You realize that in many cases, the church you are in is vastly different than the one you took your baptismal vows in years ago. The sermons are much different too. The pastors of today are paying more attention to being “politically correct” with the immoral populace than to the challenging, inspired word of God. They are preaching smooth things to itching ears because it’s popular and brings more people to church.

But be not deceived! More people in church doesn’t mean more people in heaven. It does mean more of that evil peer pressure we mentioned before which continues to lower the standards even further.

For several years now we have witnessed what the conferences have labeled “revival.” But a revival of what? For several years we

have actively researched and kept a close eye on the Christian community. I tell you that we are not witnessing Christian revival but the erosion of the true spirit of what the reformation brought.

Many of you are distressed deeply on a spiritual level as you have witnessed a departure from historic, sacred worship in your church. What is being labeled "revival" is really heresy as worship services are being lowered to the level of just above the ambiance of the nightclub scene. I came out of the world from that culture and in the past ten years, I have watched the sacred pulpits of many churches change into platforms of performers—from the "nightclub" lighting right down to the "Christian rock" music (which is anything but Christian).

Our station on the walls of Zion has revealed to us that the line of demarcation between the world and Christianity has been blurred to such an alarming degree that open warfare has broken loose within the community of believers. This actually gives us a reason to have faith in the word of God that states His plan will be accomplished regardless of hindrances or apostasies.

But the last great struggle between Christ and Satan has indeed commenced! It shows itself in recent events such as entire mainline fundamental denominations being split on issues such as ordaining homosexuals to the ministry along with numerous other issues. The enemy is within the gate and we must not only recognize this truth but know what Christ wants us to do about it!

In the midst of a scene of rejoicing, where all were paying Jesus homage, Israel's King was in mourning but not in anticipation of His own suffering. Jesus had some very real and deadly enemies but His was always the spirit of unselfish love. His sorrow was for a lost people. It broke His heart to know that God's chosen people, His church, the very church which He Himself had raised up, had rejected Him. His tears were shed not for himself—they were for the people who claimed to be "the church" but who were sadly blinded by their own pride and stubbornness.

The thought of His own agony did not intimidate that noble, self-sacrificing soul. It was the sight of Jerusalem that pierced the

heart of Jesus—Jerusalem (the church headquarters) —that had rejected the Son of God and scorned His love, that refused to be convinced by His mighty miracles and was about to take His life. He saw what she was in her guilt of rejecting her Redeemer, and what she might have been had she accepted Him who alone could heal her wound.

The record of more than a thousand years of Christ's guardian care and tender love, such as a father bears his only child, was there. In that temple the prophets had uttered their solemn warnings. There had the burning censers waved, while incense, mingled with the prayers of the worshipers, had ascended to God. There the blood of beasts had flowed, pointing to the blood of Christ that would be shed. There Jehovah had manifested His glory above the mercy seat. There the priests had officiated and the pomp of symbol and ceremony had gone on for ages. But all this must have an end.

Christ does not easily give up on people nor does He cast them aside. What happens is THEY leave HIM. For centuries He had labored and cared for this church He had started, but it all had to come to an end. You might say "Well yes, the sacrifices of lambs and animals did have to come to an end," and you would be right; but go back and read all of the above paragraph. It says that the "church" in Christ's day had to come to an end. Why? Because they had rejected Him and become so corrupt that they had placed themselves above God. They made of no effect the law of God by teaching for doctrine the commandments of men. The apostasy had closed their minds so tightly that they were now literally telling God (Christ) that He had no authority to speak unless they gave it!

Although the church had been raised by Christ, the people of the church no longer represented the work and purpose for their original existence and it had to stop. God no longer accepted their apostasy and He no longer recognized them as His church. Are there any parallels today? If the circumstances of our day are the same, will not the results be the same as they were in the days of our spiritual forefathers? To the honest, truth-seeking Christian, the answer is clear.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37)

Here the Saviour paused, and left unsaid what might have been the condition of Jerusalem had she accepted the help that God desired to give her. The glorious destiny that might have blessed Jerusalem had she accepted her Redeemer rose before the Son of God.

But the bright picture of what Jerusalem might have been fades from the Saviour's sight. He realizes that she now is under the Roman yoke, bearing the frown of God, doomed to His retributive judgment that will be realized in the tragedy of her destruction in 70 A.D.

Did you read that friend? Are you thinking of the parallels between Christ's Church then, and Christ's Church now? We have far more to be concerned about from within the "church" than from without! The hindrances to strength and success are far greater from those in the "church" itself than those in the world. Unbelievers have a right to expect that those who profess to be true to the Bible and following Jesus will do more than any other class to promote and honor, by their consistent lives, by their godly example and their active influence, the cause which they represent. But how often have the professed advocates of the Gospel proved the greatest obstacle to its advancement! The unbelief indulged, the doubts expressed, the darkness cherished, encourage the presence of evil angels, and open the way for the accomplishment of Satan's devices.

Is there any doubt in your mind that this is speaking about fearing those who claim to be Christians, but who don't live up to the name? We don't need to fear the true Christians, only those who don't live up to the name. But, of course, (and here is where the rub comes in) the only way to really distinguish the true from the false is to "study to shew yourself approved" (2 Timothy 2:15). It is so sad but so true that most "Christians" give the lowest priority to their highest opportunity—eternal life. Now does that make any sense to you? It doesn't to me either.

Christ came to save Jerusalem with her children; but pharisaical (pastoral) pride, hypocrisy, jealousy, and malice has prevented Him from accomplishing His purpose.

Jesus couldn't save the headquarters of the church. Why? Because of pride, hypocrisy (teaching the laity one thing and doing another themselves), jealousy (the love of self over the love of other men and God), and malice (hatred). Because of these things Jesus could not accomplish what He otherwise could have.

Do you realize the gravity of what's being said here? Jesus came to give the people the very message that would have put them in His kingdom, but the leadership of the church actively blocked Him from doing this vital work. If we were to rewrite this in a slightly different way, this is how it might read: Christ came to save the church and all those in the denominational headquarters, but pastoral pride (placing themselves above the laity—"I'm the Pastor!"), protecting their jobs but not protecting others and the truth, and hatred for anything (sacred or common) that got in their way or threatened their position, prevented many from knowing the truth who otherwise might have been saved.

Jerusalem had been the child of His care, and as a tender father mourns over a wayward son, so Jesus wept over the beloved city. "How can I give thee up? How can I see thee devoted to destruction?" When the fast setting sun passed from sight, Jerusalem's significance in religious history would be ended.

Jerusalem represented the headquarters of the system of religion that Christ Himself had raised up. Israel, the church then, was indeed the "chosen" people who Christ had entrusted to do a special work. He had also promised they would be His people "forever." But as with every other promise, these chosen people had either forgotten or ignored the detail that God's promises were based on obedience to His instructions.

History is repeating itself and we should consider ourselves to be in worse condition today than they. If God has not changed, then this "chosen" generation of Christians who profess to believe in all of

the Bible, along with its denominations' headquarters, will suffer the same end as did their unbelieving forefathers if they are not teaching or living what Christ teaches. But we can count on the constancy of God. Remember: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8).

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6).

Allow me to ask you this question: Do you believe in "once saved, always saved"? You may say no, but are you sure? If you believe that the church will be saved no matter how corrupt it becomes, then you indeed do believe in "once saved always saved." Let's take a familiar story out of the Bible to illustrate the point:

"Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:4-7).

Did you know that one of the major steps the leaders of Israel took which put them on the road to apostasy was to choose a king to rule over them? The Bible has many things to say regarding this subject and kingly power. We'll address this more later on in the coming chapters.

Praise the Lord, however, for He does not easily cast us aside! Right from the start the Lord has always had a Plan "A" to follow. If we would follow this plan, we would have far fewer concerns than we do presently. Also, right from the start the Lord usually has had a Plan "B" to implement if Plan "A" is not followed by His people. I am

so thankful that the Lord loves us with this kind of love, aren't you?

Plan "B" is never the best plan, but God sometimes allows Himself to be "forced" into Plan "B" because of the hardness of our hearts. Usually whenever we insist on any plan besides Plan "A" we suffer the consequences. But we human beings seem to have to learn things the hard way so instead of just casting us aside, the Lord condescends to Plan "B" in order to save some who will learn from their mistakes and rebellion.

So Israel's leaders had insisted on having a king rule over them. God had told Samuel that they had rejected Him by making this request, but nonetheless, He implemented Plan "B" rather than casting them aside at this time.

"Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people" (I Samuel 9:15-17).

So the Lord went to Plan "B." Now, did the Lord handpick Saul? Yes! And was there to be an ordination for this man who was handpicked by God? Yes. Let's continue.

I Samuel 10:1 "Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?"

So indeed the Lord handpicked Saul and the Lord ordained him, through the prophet Samuel, to the mission of ruling over His people.

I Samuel 10:6 "And the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man."

Brothers and sisters, this has to be one of the most amazing stories in all of the Bible! Here we have a man who is handpicked by God—He is ordained to his mission by the prophet Samuel and now

he is given the promise that the Holy Spirit will fill him and he will be changed into another man! How would you like a true prophet to promise you a quick, total conversion? Not maybe, but for sure! Let's see what happened:

"And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day. And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Samuel 10:9-11).

What a story! I dare say that with few exceptions, you won't find too many more stories like this one anywhere. So to recap: Saul had been handpicked; he was anointed to the position; he was filled with the Holy Spirit; he prophesied; and he was given a new heart. If this isn't a total conversion experience from God, I don't know what is! But sadly this is not all of the story. Here is what happened later:

"Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For

rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king” (1 Samuel 15:16-23).

One last time. Saul was handpicked. He was appointed and anointed. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. He prophesied among the other prophets before witnesses who knew him. He was in fact given a new heart. Brother and sister, you just can’t get any more saved than this!

“But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die” (Ezekiel 18:24).

“Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die . . .” (Ezekiel 3:20).

It’s quite obvious that a righteous person can choose to turn from his righteousness. Was he truly righteous to begin with? The Bible says he was. The Bible also says that if he turns from his righteousness HE WILL DIE IN HIS SINS. This is pretty clear that a person can be in a right relationship with God, but if he turns away and stays away—in his sins—he will not be in a saved condition (see also Hebrew 6:4-6). But here again, don’t take my word for it. Study this out for yourself. Your own Bible study on this issue as well as any other issues mentioned in this book is very important.

Perhaps many of you thought that you have never believed in “once saved, always saved.” Perhaps many of you DO believe in “once saved, always saved.” In the light of the story we just read, I think many do believe, as far as the church leadership and headquarters is concerned, that these people cannot be lost because God has chosen them. If you believe that, then you don’t believe the story of Saul to be true or inspired! If this is the case, I implore you to please get on your knees and beg God to give you the eyesalve of Revelation 3:18.

Saul broke his contract of salvation with God. When he

rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord rejected him. His course took him into spiritualism and he sought the counsel of a witch over asking God's counsel. Things have not changed over the centuries, for if we choose not to go to the Lord for wisdom, if we go to worldly humanistic methods and use worldly techniques to solve our problems, then the fate of Saul awaits us.

Just as Samuel told King Saul that God rejected him as ruler of the laity in his day, so Jesus rejected the leadership whose kingly and corrupted power were in the service of another master in His day.

Once again, as startling as it may seem, my claim so far that what has happened in the history of ancient Israel is happening again today is right on target. Saul's pride and apostasy took him finally into spiritualism. In modern Israel, the witches of Endor are still counseling God's people—to their demise. The infiltration of New Age thought and technique within Christianity is startling proof that the enemy has and continues to gain, a strong foothold among us. And this foothold is not complacent, remaining in the pews, but to a great degree, is wielding the power and influence of prominent positions within our ranks, and in our pulpits.

## Chapter 2

### “Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . .”

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37)

The priests and rulers heard Christ's pointed rebukes. They could not refute His charges. But they were only the more determined to entrap Him, and with this object they sent out their spies. We have seen this kind of behavior in our present day. These priests and rulers were not interested in the truth. They were interested in entrapping Jesus. They could not refute His charges. For many years the evidence has continued to pile up against the corrupt priesthood of our day and yet they cannot and will not refute the charges with a “thus saith the Lord,” for in their attempt they would expose themselves all the more.

The evidence has become overwhelming that there is an agenda with those who have position and power (remember these are general statements) within the Christian community today to undermine and finally destroy historic Christianity. They realize that (at least to one who knows their Bible) they cannot refute the charges of heresy and apostasy against them, so they use a different tactic. One way that is effective is to do just what they did to Christ (as well as His prophets before Him and His disciples after Him)—say He was a trouble maker and was trying to split the church!

Depending on how deep your experience and to what extent you have voiced your valid concerns (based on biblical truths and principles), I can say with clear conscience that it will have a direct bearing onto what degree you understand this method of the enemy to kill the truth. It is not hard to witness the mounting tensions and now open struggles between leaders who support a historical position and those who are working to undermine it. If you haven't experienced some sort of wrongful persecution for taking a stand for truth in your church, I guarantee you, a leader who is truly standing for truth could speak with you for hours about how he is being made the villain and the frustration (and breaking heart) he lives with

because of a large number who swallow (without proper investigation) these claims of sedition.

Christ declared that since they were living under the protection of the Roman power, they should render to that power the support it claimed, so long as it did not conflict with a higher duty. But while peaceably subject to the laws of the land, they should at all times give their first allegiance to God. The reason for mentioning this is that there are some conservative Christians as well as others today who advocate and promote such lawbreaking as refraining from obtaining a marriage license or paying taxes. They say that if you get a marriage license, your children become a "product" of the state because it was the state which "allowed" you to become married. The marriage license, therefore, becomes a tool of the state, enabling it to seize from you your children when and if it chooses to do so.

The Lord declared that we should obey the laws of the land as long as they do not conflict with the higher duties of a Christian. This includes doing things that are morally correct and shunning the appearance of evil. Certainly a piece of paper does not give a person grounds for divorce. Nevertheless, Jesus said that when it is appropriate to do so, we should obtain such papers, so as to do things in order. I guarantee that if the state decides to take your children away from you, it will do so whether you have a marriage license or not.

Some also say that, because the government is corrupt, we should not be paying taxes. I will admit I don't know very many people who believe that the way taxes are collected is totally fair or anyone who enjoys paying them, but that is not the bigger point. The Lord told us to "render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" (Matthew 22:21). Also, I have yet to run into these nonpaying advocates who refuse to use the highways or the many conveniences the tax dollars subsidize. Unfortunately, these folks are bringing on a time of trouble before they should, and their actions bring reproach to the cause of God in the process.

The Pharisees were rigid adherents to tradition but Christ declared that they made void the law, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9 and Mark 7:7). You will notice, the Pharisees were rigid adherents to tradition. Tradition is

not bad in and of itself. But in this case, tradition was the man-made rules that had been passed on from generation to generation. This man-made rule book became more important than God's word and actually took the place of biblical doctrine. Tradition became the test of accepted fellowship among believers. If you did not uphold the man-made creed (church manual), even if it was AGAINST biblical doctrine, you were subject to discipline and eventually disfellowshipping.

Christ brought charges against the conference of His day clearly telling them in effect that they had replaced the Bible with the church manual. Those who refused to reverse the process (the majority) were lost. Their church manual could not save them! Once again the traditions of men are making of none effect the commandments of God, and as in the end, the church manuals will be consigned to the flames by a Higher Authority — so will those be who support them above God's word.

A nineteenth century missionary once said: "The first step in religious dictatorship is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth is to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed, and fifth, to begin persecution against them."

Could anyone have expressed a truer summation of what is happening today? One of the greatest charges ever leveled at the church by Christ was that they made void the law of God by TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN. In other words, making of none effect the testimonies of the Spirit of God—the Bible.

Satan is constantly slipping in his counterfeits to lead away from the truth. THE VERY LAST DECEPTION OF SATAN will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). Satan will work ingeniously in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's people in the true testimony found in inspired writings.

This is the major reason for the fall of the church in Jesus' day

two thousand years ago, and this will be one of Satan's major deceptions in the last days. If you cannot see that we are squarely living within the borders of this prediction, I beg you to get on your knees and plead with the Lord for help.

Now instead of telling you where I think the churches today are headed, let me ask you an honest question. All I ask in return is for you to give an honest answer. If the Lord rejected the church back in Jesus' day—the one He had raised up—because they made of none effect the testimony of God, and the conditions are the same today, would we expect the same results from a God who never changes but who is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8)?

In the law is embodied the same principle that is revealed in the Gospel. The law points out man's duty and shows him his guilt. To Christ he must look for pardon and power to do what is required ("... keep my commandments," John 14:15 and John 15:10). As a matter of biblical fact this is what the two-faceted doctrine of grace is all about. One side of grace is unmerited favor. We cannot earn salvation. But the other face of grace is the POWER to overcome the world, also a gift of the Lord. One brings us into the good "graces" of the Lord; the other, the ability to show our appreciation by living a life in the strength of Christ, that overcomes the power of the enemy—Satan.

One cannot look to God's law with success without looking to God's Son. The reason for a large number of the problems in many structured churches today is because of the self-righteousness of the "scribes" and "Pharisees" within those churches. They refuse to operate the church structure in the power of Jesus Christ. They are trying to assert their own power and in so doing have set themselves higher than Christ. They will fail, as did the Jews.

Christ had set before these leaders their real condition, and the retribution sure to follow if they persisted in their evil deeds. The warning had been faithfully given. Yet another work remained for Christ to do. Another purpose was still to be accomplished.

The interest of the people in Christ and His work steadily increased. They were charmed with His teaching. They were also greatly perplexed. They had respected the priests and rabbis for their intelligence and apparent piety. In all religious matters they had

yielded implicit obedience to their authority. Yet they now saw these men trying to cast discredit upon Jesus, a teacher whose virtue and knowledge shone forth the brighter after every assault. They looked upon the frowning faces of the priests and elders, and there saw discomfiture and confusion. THEY MARVELED THAT THE RULERS WOULD NOT BELIEVE ON JESUS, WHEN HIS TEACHINGS WERE SO PLAIN AND SIMPLE. They themselves did not know what course to take. With eager anxiety they watched the movements of those whose counsel they had always followed.

What a fitting description of the atmosphere in churches today! The people have respected their pastors and leaders for their intelligence and apparent piety. In all religious matters, they have given implicit obedience to their authority. This is where the problem lies. Things are so bad today in a large number of churches that you can get away with almost any sin inside the church with little or no repercussions—except for one. The cardinal “sin” of modern Christianity is to challenge your pastor. The quickest way to be permanently ushered to and through the nearest exit is to take your pastor to task over his theology.

This is what Christ did. He was not only “shown the door” of His local, hometown church (the incident in Nazareth found in Luke 4:24-30) but also at the national, corporate church level that took Him through the ultimate disfellowshipping —crucifixion!!

Much is being said today by church leaders about respecting “properly constituted church authority” and how those of us who have challenged them have not had, as we should, the proper respect for their authority. We certainly want to do everything in order and according to the principles that the Lord has laid before us. Jesus manifested proper respect where it was due; However, He was not intimidated by men who were trying to manipulate people into doing that which dishonored His Father.

Let's take an example from the word of God to illustrate how Jesus handled the same problem in the same atmosphere that parallels our day. This example will also illustrate that even the disciples did not initially understand how to properly handle the issues or where certain principles lay.

“Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of

Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias [Isaiah] prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, KNOWEST THOU THAT THE PHARISEES WERE OFFENDED, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. LET THEM ALONE: THEY BE BLIND LEADERS OF THE BLIND. AND IF THE BLIND LEAD THE BLIND, BOTH SHALL FALL INTO THE DITCH. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, ARE YE ALSO YET WITHOUT UNDER-STANDING?" (Matthew 15:1-16).

First of all, it might be well for us to remember that the One who set forth this system of religion certainly had respect for it. But it wasn't a lack of respect He showed toward the church of His day when He denounced the corrupt leadership. It was a lack of respect for the apostasy they promoted. It was a disdain for the way they were leading and a hatred for what it was doing to the people. Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Father do not like, approve, nor respect deception. They certainly are not in the business of supporting those who claim to be leaders in a system which is involved in deceptive practices. Our Father represents just the express opposite—honesty and forthrightness.

Please notice as well, although the laity (including the

disciples) equated their church leaders as being men of God, Jesus plainly stated that this was not the case. "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13). In other words, Jesus was informing His disciples that while they might have been taught that being a church leader automatically made them of God's choosing, His Son said it was not so. This is something we desperately need to get straight in our own minds today. Just because a church leader or a church committee or a pastor insists on respect "because God chose them" and because they told you so, does not mean anything unless you believe it!

As a marriage license does not make a marriage, credentials does not make a pastor. Although marriage certainly has its origin from the God of Christianity, most marriages are not Christian. And although most pastors may hold papers "proving" they are pastors, it does not make them any truer to their vows than unchristian marriages prove to be. The "credentials" from God are the only ones that will prove to have spiritual and eternal value.

The proof is: HOW leaders lead and WHERE they lead. It is not: "I told you I was chosen and that's the end of it, now keep quiet and follow me! And if you don't, I'll have you kicked out of the church!"

These conference men had come to Jesus and asked Him why His disciples did not follow the "Church Manual—the Church Creed." Jesus asked them in return the same thing many are asking the present-day leaders of the structured churches, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? (Matthew 15:3)."

As God brought forth the Commandments, they were just and good. But the church leaders commanded control of the people and they formulated a creed to gain an authority they would not otherwise have had—the authority which belongs to God alone. This authority, as it developed, actually kept the people from a true knowledge of God! This is the "authority" Jesus not only disapproved of and did not respect, but openly attacked and rebuked! Jesus rightly understood that the "leadership" was standing in the way of the people's salvation. They were actively keeping the flock from an experiential knowledge which would have allowed them to enter the kingdom of God (we'll

prove this later). This is the meaning of verse nine, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

The people and even the disciples were confused and questioned Jesus (God Himself) as if to ask, "Do you know what you are doing?" When His disciples pointed out to Him that He had just offended the church leaders, Jesus admitted His lack of respect for "properly constituted church authority" and He went to them immediately to apologize, right? Wrong! If He had, He would have been doing the work of the devil, not of His Father! He told His disciples that if they expected to find the heavenly path, they must AVOID THE ERRORS OF THE "LEADERSHIP." It was not Jesus who misunderstood the work, but those who had put their trust in a corrupt priesthood. Jesus had an extremely difficult time convincing people (even His disciples) because they had so much unfounded faith (blind faith) in the professed leadership of their day.

I certainly pray that you are seeing the parallels of this in our present-day situation. If you are, you are starting to come to the knowledge Jesus so wanted His disciples to have. As a matter of fact, we will learn later that until these men came to this knowledge, they could not be effective in bringing others to salvation. I hope you are beginning to realize that the confusion of their day and the reasons for it are the same as in our own day. This understanding is just as vital now as it was then. This is why Jesus has brought (and is bringing) this information to you just now.

Dear brother and sister, we are passing through the exact portal that the disciples passed through, and it is the way of Christ's leading. This is the road that leads to the feet of Him who has traveled this road before us. I hope that you will trust Him, as did His disciples, and that you will follow. The way of the cross leads home. I am confident that as we move through this transition, the Lord will eventually have a people who will understand and follow Him wherever He leads, regardless of the traditions of men that are so often substituted for Bible truth.

In the parables Christ had spoken, it was His purpose both to warn the rulers and to instruct the people who were willing to be taught. But there was need to speak more plainly. Through their reverence for tradition and blind faith in a corrupt priesthood, the

people were enslaved. THESE CHAINS CHRIST MUST BREAK. THE CHARACTER OF THE PRIESTS, RULERS, AND PHARISEES MUST BE MORE FULLY EXPOSED. At times it is easy for an author to over emphasize a point, but I must stress that this is one which cannot be. These few words are loaded with information which will take us down the path of understanding if we desire to know the truth of the matter.

Many have said that they want to be “just like Jesus” and “do the same work Jesus did.” Do we really realize what we are saying when we make such statements or is this just an assent to some dreamy ideal? Are we just trying to impress others with these statements, or could it be we do not understand what Jesus was really like? It seems that perhaps the latter is the most appropriate. We have been taught that Jesus is just “love and hugs.” This sounds wonderful but it can be a deadly deception if we are not on our toes. In this “Dr. Spock, if-it-feels-good-do-it generation,” we don't want anything to do with discipline because it is so “negative.” Unfortunately these same sentiments rule in the “church.” Those of us who care to see the reality of where this has led us, understand all too well why our society is in so much trouble and why double-standard government does not work except for evil. Unfortunately, the same problem exists to a gross extent among those who claim to be “the church.”

Bible truth shows us that when Jesus was on earth His work was twofold. As we study the biblical history of Christ's life and ministry, this fact is plain for everyone to see. It's not hidden and you certainly do not have to have a “master's” degree in theology to discover it!

It was His purpose both to WARN THE RULERS and to instruct the people WHO WERE WILLING TO BE TAUGHT. This is exactly what many “independent” ministers have been doing for many years. Jesus understood that He had come to a professed church whose people, through their REVERENCE FOR TRADITION and their BLIND FAITH IN A CORRUPT PRIESTHOOD, WERE ENSLAVED.

You see, Jesus was in the business of saving people, not playing politics. Because He came to the church did not mean that He had to “bow” to the leadership when they walked into the room. It did

not mean that He had to get their corrupted opinions before He could press on with the job His Father had given Him to do. It did not mean He had to seek unity at all costs with "the church." It did not mean He had to exchange heavenly principles for earthly power. It did not mean He had to obtain a majority vote. It did not mean that paying attention to "properly constituted church authority" was more important than paying attention to His Father's authority. But He came to a people who had placed their faith in corrupt men instead of a Holy God.

Today, my friend, we find ourselves in this carbon copy dilemma. As a matter of fact, for the very reasons we are discussing, it was a primary goal of our Lord to tear away the veneer and expose the deadly deception for what it was (and still is!). "All that glitters is not gold" as the saying goes. This was a matter of life or death, and God came to take the reigns into His own hands.

By the time Christ showed up on the earthly scene (and it is a shame to have to say it) He had to save the people FROM their church, not IN their church! Was this His fault? Was He to blame for all the trouble His message of reform brought? Was He the rebellious One? You know the answers to those questions. Are you willing to answer the same questions that are their present-day parallels just as honestly? I believe our eternal salvation depends on it!

If Christ was going to save His people, if Jesus was going to bring the people to a balanced knowledge of His Father, if He was going to instruct those who were willing to be taught but who were enslaved to a corrupt priesthood by their blind loyalty, what was He to do?

In order for Jesus to give the people a real opportunity to come to a knowledge of salvation, He must break the chains of bondage the priesthood had over them. Jesus did not like being in this type of predicament—loving the people so much. He knew He must break this stranglehold the church leaders had on the laity. If the people were going to have an opportunity to hear what was truth, He would have to break the confidence the people had placed in these men who were leading them away from God, not toward Him as they claimed. And how was the strength of these chains to be overcome? THE

CHARACTER OF THE PRIESTS, RULERS, AND PHARISEES  
MUST BE FULLY EXPOSED.

Now are you sure you want to be just like Jesus? Many have said and continue to say that it is the work of the devil to “speak against the leadership of the church,” but if this is true, Jesus did the work of the devil! The problem is not what Christ did. The problem concerns the prejudice He had to deal with. This is like trying to convince someone who is an alcoholic that he has a drinking problem. The problem lends itself to denial and in turn, to misunderstanding, making it almost impossible to overcome. We should be careful how we treat the leadership of the church. We had better make sure, however, we realize what they are teaching, who they are, and what the real church is.

Christ was not “anti-leadership” as history certainly proves. But He was most assuredly “anti-APOSTATE leadership!” And He still is at this very moment. His true followers, following His perfect example and will, are not ashamed to walk in His steps even if they are opposed (as He was) by nearly everyone.

Christ stood His ground and performed the disagreeable duty, even though at the time hardly anyone understood, supported, or agreed with what He was doing. I am so glad that Jesus did what He had to do, aren't you? We must learn what is hard to learn, and unlearn some of that which we've been taught. We must understand what was so difficult for the disciples to understand.

The work of Christ is freeing people to live for His Father and His Father only. The work of Jesus is showing people that they are to follow and worship not man, but God. As long as the leaders whom Christ raised showed the people these truths, everything was as it should have been. But when a priesthood becomes corrupt and leads those for whom Christ died to the one who killed Him (the devil), He has no choice but to go to the next step, exposing apostasy and breaking the chains of bondage.

These leaders were willing to sacrifice Christ—God Himself—in order to save their precious church authority. They said that it was better to sacrifice one man (meaning Jesus) in order to save the nation (meaning their church) (see John 11:50). They were saying that they were willing to sacrifice the truth in order to

maintain their status. Jesus had no choice but to break the chains of enslavement. The character of these "pastors" and "denominational leaders" must be more fully exposed.

Should you have any remaining doubt regarding what you are reading, let's take a quick look at Ezekiel, chapter 8:

Ezekiel 8:6-9: "He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations. And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here."

I could write a small book on this topic alone. It is full of information for our present-day understanding and I hope you will take the time to study it. The Bible tells us that judgment starts with the house of God (1 Peter 4:17) meaning those who claim to be Christians, beginning with the leaders, down through the ranks. Folks, we are witnessing the living expression of Ezekiel, chapter 8! We are living in this chapter's day of fulfillment. Read this chapter for yourself and see if it speaks to you as it does to me.

We need to understand that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). This does not mean He does not respect or love people. It simply means that His judgment is fair and does not make exceptions to the eternal principles He has set forth. If the rules or principles can be changed, they are flawed—and this is not possible because God is perfect.

God is not going to let Brother A into His kingdom because He loves him more, and shut Brother B out because church leaders view him as being "difficult." The reverse is true as well. The Father is not going to keep a genuine gospel worker out of the kingdom just because popular opinion "votes" to censure or disfellowship him. And God will not let an apostate leader in just because he has the majority vote of a particular church.

When we are standing at the judgment bar, spiritually speaking, God is not going to ask our pastor or the members of our

church committee if it's all right to let us in. It will work the same for those who should be kept out. This may come as a shock, but nobody—nobody—is going to heaven except those who follow Jesus! It does not matter what position we may have held in our church or how long we have held it. The requirements for entrance are the same for every single individual. The only difference is that if you claim to be a leader and DO NOT LEAD OTHERS TO JESUS, you only condemn yourself more.

The work of Ezekiel 8 Jesus did while here, and that same work is being done for the last time, right now. I strongly encourage you to take a look at the next event to take place which is found in the next chapter of Ezekiel. This will be LITERALLY FULFILLED. Yet the time is passing, and the people are asleep. They refuse to humble their souls and to be converted. Not a great while longer will the Lord bear with the people who have such great and important truths revealed to them but who refuse to bring these truths into their individual experience.

The time is short. God is calling. Will we hear? Will we receive His message? Will we be converted before it is too late? Soon, very soon, every case will be decided for eternity.

The Lord reads the heart as an open book. The men who are not connected with God have done many things after the imagination of their hearts. The Lord declares concerning them, "They have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction" (Jeremiah 32:33). We are amid the perils of the last days, the time will soon come when the prophecy of Ezekiel 9 will be fulfilled; that prophecy should be carefully studied because it WILL BE FULFILLED TO THE VERY LETTER.

The only way for the people to be free to follow the Father was if their chains were broken. The only way the chains could be broken was for Jesus to expose the character of the leaders. And this same work is in process today even as you read these words. Please ask the One who led His disciples to the path of life to guide you just now to the same path. He certainly will if you let Him.

"The scribes and the Pharisees" Jesus said, "sit in Moses' seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do;

but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matthew 23:3). The scribes and Pharisees claimed to be invested with divine authority similar to that of Moses. They assumed to take his place as expounders of the law and judges of the people. As such they claimed from the people the utmost deference and obedience. Jesus bade His hearers do that which the rabbis taught according to the law, but not to follow their example. They themselves did not practice their own teachings.

And they taught much that was contrary to the Scriptures. Jesus said "they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:4). The Pharisees instigated a MULTITUDE OF REGULATIONS, HAVING THEIR FOUNDATION IN TRADITION, AND UNREASONABLE RESTRICTION OF PERSONAL LIBERTY. And certain portions of the law they so explained as to impose upon the people observances which they themselves secretly ignored, and from which, when it served their purpose, they actually claimed exemption.

As Jesus plainly stated again and again, we are to follow only those things leaders teach which uphold God's law and are His requirements. He told the people however, not to follow their example. Why? Because they were not following the truth or the law of God themselves. They were not even following their own teachings when it did not suit their purpose or when it was inconvenient.

When persons were invited to a feast, the guests were seated according to their rank, and those who were given the most honorable place received the first attention and special favors. The Pharisees were ever scheming to secure these honors. This practice Jesus rebuked.

He also reproved the vanity shown in coveting the title rabbi or master. Such a title, He declared, belonged not to men but to Christ. Priests, scribes, and rulers, expounders and administrators of the law were all brethren, children of one Father. Jesus impressed upon the people that they were to give no man a title of honor INDICATING HIS CONTROL OF THEIR CONSCIENCE OR THEIR FAITH.

If Christ were on earth today, surrounded by those who bear

the title of Reverend or Right Reverend, would He not repeat His saying, "Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ" (Matthew 23:10)?

Something has bothered me for many years and this may be an appropriate place to share it with you. I don't intend to give it much space but I do ask for your prayerful consideration and I also wish to demonstrate how, to the letter, we are living in the parallel of Christ's day. I will place my concern in the form of yet another question. How can any Christian accept the title of Master or Doctor of Divinity? If bestowing such titles to any human on earth today is not dangerously close to open blasphemy and in direct violation of Jesus' expressed command concerning this subject, I don't know what is. I will be the first to confess I did not attend the "rabbinical" schools, but I can read simple English in the inspired word of God that says only the Godhead has any right to claim the title of Master of Divinity!

Now we come to something that is quite revealing. This ancient experience gives us an invaluable modern-day lesson. This is for all the "New Theology" believers and their pastors. Those who want to be set free, may indeed know and understand what the Lord, through His word, the Bible, is trying to tell us. By perverting the Scriptures, the priests and lawyers blinded the minds of those WHO WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE RECEIVED A KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND THAT INWARD, DIVINE LIFE WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO TRUE HOLINESS.

Dear Christian friend, what is Jesus telling us today? It seems to me He is revealing that these apostate leaders are perverting the Scriptures in such a way so as to not only deceive people but to actually keep them from GAINING A KNOWLEDGE THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BRING THEM TO PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO HOLINESS.

Are apostate leaders bringing people to an understanding that there is no excuse for sin, not even one? Are they showing that God leads His people on step by step? The Christian life is a constant battle and march. There is no rest from the warfare. It is by constant unceasing effort that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan. As a people we are triumphant in the clearness and strength of the truth. This is fully sustained by an overwhelming Scriptural

testimony. If you doubt it, just read the following passages: 2 Timothy 2:3; 4:5; 1 Timothy 6:12; Hebrews 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; James 5:11; Mark 13:13, etc.

We are very much in need of the kind of humility the Bible speaks of, in patience, faith, love, self-denial, watchfulness, and the spirit of sacrifice. We need to cultivate Bible holiness. Sin prevails among the people of God. The plain message of rebuke to the Laodiceans is not received. Many cling to their doubts and their darling sins while they are in so great a deception as to talk and feel that they are in need of nothing. They think the testimony of the Spirit of God in reproof is uncalled for or that it does not mean them. Such are in the greatest need of the grace of God and spiritual discernment that they may discover their deficiency in spiritual knowledge. They lack almost every qualification necessary to achieve Christian maturity. **THEY LACK A PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF BIBLE TRUTH, WHICH LEADS TO LOWLINESS OF LIFE AND A CONFORMITY OF THEIR WILL TO THE WILL OF CHRIST.** They are not living in obedience to all of God's requirements.

This is just as serious as your next breath! As a matter of fact it is even more important! Jesus told His disciples to flee from the errors of the pastors of His day. He told them they were being led by these leaders in the way of death, not the way of life. It took them, admittedly, a while before they listened, but they did listen and were saved! Are we listening today? Are we determining to follow Jesus even if it leads in the same direction it led the disciples? I pray that we are, because, in fact and in reality, we must be as dedicated as the disciples or we will end up in a place that we would rather not be. Better to be alone in heaven than to be in unity with the crowd in the lake of fire!

The "New Theology" of today is not new at all. It is as ancient as the father of lies himself. New Theology pastors are preaching with alarming success the same lie that Lucifer told in the Garden of Eden. He told Eve that God really didn't mean what He said and that the wages of sin were not death. Today a majority of pastors are repeating this lie and convincing the lay people that Satan is actually more powerful than God.

After making such a statement I can almost hear someone saying "Now you've gone and really stuck your foot in your mouth Terry! Making such statements will only convince people that you are some kind of wild fanatic." Although I would be less than in the realm of reality to be convinced that the majority will ever see the truth, I am thoroughly persuaded that God will give discernment to all honest souls seeking for truth. The statement that most pastors are convincing their congregations that Satan is ultimately more powerful than God is neither a wild or fanatical one, though at first it may seem to be.

Jesus plainly says "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:21). Overcome what?

Today pastors are not preaching the word of God to those who are seeking it. They are telling their congregations that God understands that we are sinners and that we always will be. They are perverting the Scriptures as did the apostate leadership of ancient Israel and making void the law of God by teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.

When a person is convinced that he cannot overcome the sin in his life and that it won't cost him anything if he doesn't — HE WON'T!

It is true that all have sinned for the Bible plainly says so but there is not one verse in all the Bible that upholds the "New Theology" claim that God supports or is indifferent to wilful rebellion. God winks (does not judge against us) at our true ignorance and He is longsuffering with us even at those times when we are rebellious, but the wages of sin ARE death and through God's strength we are admonished to overcome in this present world.

When a pastor says we cannot overcome the sin in our life, he is actually saying that Lucifer (a created being) who became Satan (because of rebellion in his own heart) is more powerful than God who created him! It is this theology which is wild and fanatic! It is this theology of sinful man, apostate leadership, those who cherish their darling sins, that is standing directly in the way of an experiential knowledge of God's word that the overcomer must have in order to successfully defeat the enemy.

It is truly an incredible thing to witness the hypocrisy of sermons which state that we serve a God who continually holds countless worlds in space, is responsible for every breath of every living thing, knows the number of hairs on every head, has been, is, and ever will be eternal, but is NOT powerful enough to overcome the power of a being He, Himself, created!! This is not only lunacy but makes not one shred of sense to anyone who has the basic ability to simply think it through.

The only reason, let me repeat that, the only reason we continue to commit known, wilful sin is because we love the sin more than we love the Saviour—not because God lacks the power.

I would like you to seriously and prayerfully consider a couple of simple questions which demonstrate the point. Which sin in your life is too strong for God's saving power to overcome? If Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden of Eden (which they were) and died (which they did) for eating forbidden fruit, then which sin is too small that God will overlook?

These my friend, are neither difficult questions nor are they hard to answer. However, the conclusive, simple, truthful answer to them must and will be met by every honest soul who is safe to be saved and taken into the kingdom of God.

In context, it is not the size of the sin that is the issue of exile but the rebellion demonstrated in sin which bars the soul from open communion with God. If I knowingly choose to continue in the open rebellion of cherished sin and God allows me to have eternal, free access to a home He has prepared for the redeemed, then how fair was He to Adam and Eve who, as far as the sin itself is concerned, was much less guilty than some of us may be?

The Bible says that God is the same now as He was then. We must quit checking our brains at the door of the church and use them as God intended. God will help us to resolve some of these obvious conflicts that many of us have had with ourselves over the years. As we ask the Lord for a knowledge from His word that sanctifies the life, then the peace that passes all understanding will be ours. But this peace will be possessed while in the midst of much controversy, similar to that of the Saviour's day for the same reasons.

The Pharisees had great influence with the people, and of this

they took advantage to serve their own interests. They gained the confidence of pious widows, and then represented it as duty for them to devote their property to religious purposes. Having secured control of their money, the wily schemers used it for their own benefit. To cover their dishonesty, they offered long prayers in public, and made a great show of piety (see Matthew 23:14). This hypocrisy Christ declared would bring them greater damnation. The same rebuke falls upon many in our day who make a high profession of piety. Their lives are stained by selfishness and avarice, yet they throw a garment of seeming purity over it all, and thus for a time, deceive their fellowmen.

The Saviour continued His denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees! "Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?" (Matthew 23:16-19).

The priests interpreted God's requirements according to their own false and narrow standards. They presumed to make distinctions comparing various sins, passing over some lightly, and treating others of perhaps less consequence as unpardonable. For a monetary consideration they excused persons from their vows. And for large sums of money they sometimes passed over aggravated crimes. At the same time these priests and rulers would, in other cases pronounce severe judgment for trivial offenses.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42).

In these words Christ again condemns the abuse of sacred obligation. The obligation itself He does not set aside. The tithing system was ordained by God, and it had been observed from the earliest times. Abraham, the father of the faithful, paid tithes of all

that he possessed. The Jewish rulers recognized the obligation of tithing, and this was right; but THEY DID NOT LEAVE THE PEOPLE TO CARRY OUT THEIR OWN CONVICTIONS OF DUTY. Arbitrary rules were laid down for every case. The requirements had become so complicated that it was impossible for them to be fulfilled. None knew when their obligations were met. As God gave it, the system was just and reasonable; but the priests and rabbis had made it a wearisome burden.

Money, especially tithe paying, should not be a test of fellowship. This money problem and the manipulation of the people through this medium is nothing new. Two thousand years ago the apostate leadership of Christ's day also used God's money to manipulate the people. They censored and disfellowshipped those who would not support them and they made money a test of fellowship.

Many pastors use Malachi, chapter 3, extensively to support their view using specifically verses 8 and 10: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. . . . Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

When it comes to money, leaders are to lift up before the people the biblical standard by preaching the truth. But they are to leave the people to carry out their own convictions of duty. They are not to set up arbitrary rules and then use money as a weapon against the members of their congregation.

We believe that people should leave others alone regarding this subject, except for trying to guide them in the right path. This principle of tithe-paying is right and it should be shared with the people. Here's an interesting point: How often have you heard from the pulpit that the Lord was reproofing the LEADERSHIP for mishandling money according to Malachi 3?! The reproofs and promises of Malachi are for the leadership as well as to the laity. Read chapter two and you will see whom the Lord is speaking to and about.

Also, look at verse 3 of chapter 3: "And he shall sit as a refiner

and purifier of silver: and he shall purify THE SONS OF LEVI, AND PURGE THEM as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." The Levites were the tribe chosen to minister in the temple. You could say they are equivalent to the ministers today.

Why is the Lord saying in Malachi that He must purify these pastors? Because they were not pure. Of course, the laymen were not pure either. Purity was an individual responsibility, but impurity was largely the fault of the leadership because it is a fact that the CHURCH MEMBERS WILL RARELY TAKE A HIGHER STAND THAN IS TAKEN BY THE MINISTERS. We need a converted ministry and a converted people. Shepherds who watch for souls as they that must give account will lead the flock in paths of peace and holiness. Their success in this work will be in proportion to their own growth in grace and knowledge of the truth. When the teachers are sanctified, soul, body, and spirit, they can impress upon the people the importance of sanctification.

The Pharisees built the tombs of the prophets, and adorned these sepulchers. They said to one another, "If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have united with them in shedding the blood of God's servants." At the same time they were planning to take the life of His Son. This should be a lesson to us. IT SHOULD OPEN OUR EYES TO THE POWER OF SATAN TO DECEIVE THE MIND THAT TURNS FROM THE LIGHT OF TRUTH.

Many follow in the track of the Pharisees. They revere the martyrs—those who have died for their faith. They wonder at the blindness of the Jews in rejecting Christ. "Had we lived in His day," they declare, "we would gladly have received His teaching; we would never have been partakers in the guilt of those who rejected the Saviour." BUT WHEN OBEDIENCE TO GOD REQUIRES SELF-DENIAL AND HUMILIATION, THESE VERY PERSONS STIFLE THEIR CONVICTIONS, AND REFUSE OBEDIENCE. THUS THEY MANIFEST THE SAME SPIRIT AS DID THE PHARISEES WHOM CHRIST CONDEMNED.

We need to have a healthy respect for the power of the enemy. Satan was as much a roaring lion then as he is today and he is very angry, especially toward those who are determined to maintain

the truth as it is in Jesus. The Laodicean condition is the most dangerous position to be in. It is a position where persons really do not study for themselves, but rather place their trust in those who seem to. They are riding on the shirrtails of someone else's experience.

I should add that this condition exists in people no matter which group they may be in. One can be in the Laodicean condition (see Revelation 3) in conservative Christian circles just as easily as in liberal ones. Truth-filled books, magazines, audio tapes, and videos are good. They should be utilized as tools to further one's knowledge, but these should not be the only experience. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness and show ourselves approved as 2 Timothy 2:15 states: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

We must know for ourselves what and why we believe the way we do. We cannot get to heaven by hitching a ride on the shirrtails of someone else's experience. A personal, living relationship with Jesus Christ is the only way. We must allow Him to develop in us a love for the truth which is the only way we can be sanctified. (See John 17:19.)

Many find it so easy to speak of the stupidity of the ancient Jews and how we would never do what they did. At the same time we are doing things far worse than what they did! How can this happen? How can we have the record of their failures written out for our admonition (1 Corinthians 10:11) and STILL be making the same mistakes, having the same spiritual pride and persecuting the same people within our own ranks? It boggles the mind to try to comprehend. When obedience to God requires self-denial and humiliation, people stifle their convictions, and refuse obedience. Thus they manifest the same spirit as did the Pharisees whom Christ condemned.

Next time you hear someone insisting that Jesus never condemned people, ask him or her to reread Matthew 23. If honest people are around you, it should take care of the argument, or at least let everyone know who is interested in truth and who is not.

How often have you heard of someone reading a simple and plain, "thus saith the Lord" to someone, just to hear the response, "I

haven't been convicted on that." These things should open our eyes to the power of Satan to deceive those who have turned away from the light. We should ask the True Witness for all the help He has promised to give us (see Revelation 3:18) that we might discern what is truth.

Remember these four little words: NOT BLIND, NOR BITTER. Although we are in a real struggle, although we must fight the enemy for every inch of ground, although the Christian walk is a battle and a march, although we must expose apostasy and call sin by its right name, and although we will end up being hated, persecuted, and possibly killed by those who once said they loved us, we need to maintain our Christian dignity and spirit of salvation toward others, even our enemies.

In the Spirit of Christ we want to be "NOT BLIND, NOR BITTER." These four little words, rightly understood, will bring into our lives the true Christian balance we need. They will also define, purify and maintain a proper motive in our daily intercourse with God and our fellow man.

Christ's indignation was directed against the hypocrisy and the gross sins by which men were destroying their own souls, deceiving the people, and dishonoring God. In the deceptive reasoning of the priests and rulers, He discerned the working of Satanic agencies. Keen and searching had been His denunciation of sin; but He spoke no words of retaliation. He had a holy wrath against the prince of darkness, but He manifested no irritated temper. This should also be true of the Christian who lives in harmony with God, possessing the sweet attributes of love and mercy. The true Christian will feel a righteous indignation against sin but will not be roused by human passion and desire revenge. Even in meeting those who are moved by a power from beneath to maintain falsehood, in Christ the true Christian will still preserve calmness and self-possession.

Our struggle must be fought on a higher level than that of our enemies. We must always have the best interests of others in mind even in times of rejection; even in times when others refuse to recognize our motives for what they are; even in times of persecution and slander, and in the face of death. Yes, we have real, live enemies. Yes, they can hurt us and break our hearts. They can cause us undue

pain and grief. But our Lord and Saviour gave up all that He possessed to travel this road before us. He showed the way that leads home and He has demonstrated that to live His life is the best and only way. He revealed that even in meeting those who are controlled by Satan and lie about us, by His example and power we will still preserve calmness and self-possession.

Dear brother and sister, see Jesus in Gethsemane's garden. See Him being taken by that brutal mob and betrayed by one of His own. View our lovely Jesus in the hall at His trial. How calm and self-possessed is His behavior. By His example, isn't it this calmness and self-possession that draws you to Him? Isn't it this that is partly the reason Jesus is so much your hero? Don't you wish to be this way in the face of adversity? Then enter the battle you must. There is no other way but through the garden, to the trial, and on up Golgotha's hill. We must be "crucified" to self and given totally to Jesus. (Please study Matthew 26:36 - 27:31.) This is not to say that our Lord never raised His voice or became angry in the proper sense, for He did. But it was not during times of self-defense, for this was not the work of our Lord. His work on earth was not to defend His reputation in human passion but to defend His Father's reputation with holy anger or indignation. There is a big difference!!

But praise the Lord! He will "resurrect" us anew. He has provided for our every need and He so much wants to give us, each one, of His Spirit. Just take that which He offers, friend. It matters not what our heritage may be. We can continue to excuse our wrong habits, justify cherished sins, and our bad tempers and be lost, or we can give them to Jesus and be saved. The decision is as simple as that. But if we choose to trust ourselves to Jesus, if we are willing enough to place our life into His nail-scarred hands, He will finish in us that which He has started.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

## Chapter 3

### Who and What Is *THE* Church?

As we continue our study on the subject of Christ's Church Then... Christ's Church Now, let us pause for just a moment of silent prayer. Will you ask just now, as I have done so many times, for the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth. Please ask the True and Faithful Witness of Revelation (see Revelation 1:1,5 - 3:14) for the eyesalve (spiritual discernment) He offers in Revelation 3:18. Will you take just a moment to do that before we continue our study?

Now let us ask the Lord for HIS definition of HIS church, and who are those who really are His church. We cannot afford to guess or as many of us are painfully becoming aware of, we dare not leave it in the hands of the majority of the leadership to guide us into the truth on this matter. Especially in the atmosphere of these last days of "political correctness," "the new morality," situation ethics, "if it feels good do it" generation which now wields much power in conference churches, it is imperative that we go to the word of the Lord to establish who and what the church is. And that is just what we are going to do.

It is alarming to find so many people who profess to be Christians tossing aside inspiration, the true word of God, for the opinions of men. Dozens of times I have asked dear folks in different congregations and of different persuasions the reasons they do things certain ways. I have been almost overwhelmed at times to hear the same response repeatedly from the majority I have spoken with in this fashion. The response which alarms me is "Well, my pastor says..."

In the book of Acts we will discover the plain, simple truth about who and what the church is. We will better see if people are throwing out only the word of God to exchange it for the popular opinions of leading men. Actually, this will prove that those who do not want to accept the truth will throw it aside no matter where it is found.

The good news is that this little study in Acts is amazingly clear and the honest Christian searching for truth and direction from the Lord will praise His name! Now remember that one of the reasons this study is so valuable to us today is that Cathy's and my

investigation over the last several years has uncovered what has now become “open season” on fundamental or historic Christianity.

There is a planned agenda (now in full operation) from WITHIN THE CHURCH to lower all the standards of TRUE Christianity and bring all churches under one roof—a global church. This is the reason for the big push for “Unity.” This is why many of you who are reading this book are becoming alarmed and distressed as you see your beloved church change (away from God) right before your eyes!! This is also the reason you are starting to witness the persecution of those who challenge this agenda. The bad news is that it is going to get really ugly before it gets eternally better. The good news is that God and everyone who invests themselves, body, mind and soul, will win!!

If you are anything like Cathy and me, a few years ago you may have looked upon home schooling or even private schools with a skeptical eye, or perhaps open disapproval. But not so anymore! Even many non-Christians are screaming at what the public education systems are doing to the young people in this country.

A similar phenomena is taking place as it pertains to the way many of us used to view home churches, independent churches, independent ministries, and independent ministers. But what is happening, although new and alarming to us, is paralleled in the days of Christ. So let us continue our study.

You know the story of Stephen. Now, was Stephen a conference man or an independent man? Well, of course, Stephen had been chosen by the disciples (independent preachers). The conference did not recognize these men and told them they had no authority to preach. They forbade them to preach in the name of Christ.

The independent preachers (including Stephen) preached anyway because they did not get their orders from the conference, but from the Lord. Stephen was “called in” by the “conference committee” and as he was explaining to them the prophecies concerning Christ, the conference men became very angry. In fact, Acts 7:54 says, they “gnashed on him with their teeth.” Let's pick up the story in verse 55.

Acts 7:55-60: "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord [UNITY], And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

Now we know that those who stoned Stephen were conference leaders. And we know that Stephen was an independent preacher who was being murdered by the conference leaders for preaching for the cause of Jesus.

Who was Saul? Was he a conference man or an independent? Saul, of course, was a conference man in whom the conference put a lot of confidence. His future with the conference looked bright indeed. Saul was gifted in the ability of argumentation and he was bold.

One important lesson we surely do not want to miss is the spirit Stephen possessed as the conference was literally stoning him for taking a stand for Jesus. Stephen rather than being bitter, rather than being vengeful, asked the Lord not to lay this sin against their charge. This is the same spirit that Jesus Himself demonstrated as He was being martyred by the same conference people. Neither one of these men shunned the duty of exposing the true character of this apostate conference and neither took on the spirit of hate while doing it. Both Jesus and Stephen truly were "not blind, nor bitter," but let's read on.

Acts 8:1-4: "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against THE CHURCH which was at Jerusalem;" STOP!

Let's look at this closely because in these few words is a great truth and revelation! "And at that time there was a great persecution against..." whom? Yes! The church! Now who was persecuting whom in Jerusalem? Were the Romans persecuting the conference men? No. The conference men were persecuting the independents and

here the Bible, God's word, plainly says that this was THE church. Not A church but THE church. Brothers and sisters, can it be any plainer than this? Here it is right in the word of God, and to dismiss these plain words you will have to throw away your Bibles! But let's read on. There's more.

"And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, EXCEPT THE APOSTLES." STOP!

Do you see it? The Bible plainly states that THE church being persecuted which was scattered abroad had the Apostles in it. This proves beyond any doubt whatsoever that THE church in Christ's day was NOT the conference but those who followed Jesus or whom the conference would have called the independents at that time. The conference hated the Apostles and the other independent leaders who had been chosen. This is why they were persecuting them and this is why Saul was persecuting them. But hate them or not, recognize their authority to preach Christ or not, the conference plainly did not have the say. God did! God said they were THE CHURCH! But we are not done yet!

"And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of THE CHURCH..." STOP!

Saul made havoc of whom? Yes! THE church. Now just whom was Saul making havoc of? Was Saul making havoc of the ancient conference leaders? Of course not, for he was employed by the ancient conference, he being an ancient conference man. You know, Saul was making havoc of the independents and those who supported them for taking a stand for Jesus. Going on...

"And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of THE church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."

Folks, it just doesn't get any more simple than this. Here we see clearly that although the ancient conference had originally been

raised by Christ Himself and was claiming, "The church is going through, the church is going through," it was NOT THE CHURCH THAT WAS GOING THROUGH.

Most Christians (modern day Jews) have fallen into the same trap that the Jews of Christ's day (ancient Christians) fell into. Their pride influenced them to trust wholly in the conference which had been raised by Christ. But when the conference became corrupt the people which did not adhere to principle became corrupt with them and with blind loyalty followed after these men. That is why Jesus had so much trouble while He was here. That is why Jesus was rejected by the conference while He was here. That is why Jesus rejected and brought to an end the conference HE HAD RAISED (they had not raised themselves) while He was here. That's why Jesus chose independent leaders and told them to move on with the work while He was here. AND THAT IS EXACTLY THE REASON HE IS DOING THE SAME THING TODAY.

Later in the same story of Saul, what happened to him? He was on his way to Damascus continuing his persecution of THE church. He was on his way there to find those who were following the independents and to throw them in jail. We read about it in Acts 9:1-2: "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."

So what Saul was doing was securing the authority from the conference to go down to the local churches to disfellowship people in the strongest way. He was going to take care of these troublemakers of Israel who followed Jesus Christ, those whom the conference rejected. But Saul never got the job done. Something happened out of the ordinary and we read about it in the very next verses.

Acts 9:3-5: "And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined around about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest:..."

And so on the road to Damascus Saul literally sees the light and realizes that although he may have thought he was doing the proper work, he was actually persecuting the wrong people. The story goes on, as you know, and because of this experience on the Damascus road, Saul is blinded and spends a few days in Damascus. While there the Lord sends a disciple, Ananias, to him who gave him back his sight and he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 9:17-18: "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."

This is where the story of Saul's intended work takes a drastic change and also where the prior claims which the Bible sets forth regarding who was THE CHURCH is verified once again.

Acts 9:19-21: "And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that DESTROYED THEM WHICH CALLED ON THIS NAME IN JERUSALEM, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?"

Can there be any doubt about what the Bible is clearly saying here?

I think not. God's word is expressing in Acts 9 exactly what it did in Acts 7 & 8. God's church was being persecuted in Jerusalem and that church was NOT the conference.

Understandably, the church in Damascus (the followers of Jesus) was very apprehensive of Saul. They rightly stated that this was the same man who was persecuting the church in Jerusalem and they were nervous about trusting this conference man. They were concerned that his intent was to drag them off to the conference committee that had already killed Jesus and stoned Stephen. It is true that this was Saul's original intent but the Lord had other plans, praise His name!

Acts 9:22: "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."

So, I think Saul understood the situation and was willing to take up his new duties immediately to prove his new loyalty. You might want to ponder the point that Jesus, through His Holy Spirit, lead Saul to preach in His name rather than send him back to some literary institution. What happens next is very interesting and proves that the apostate conference will, in the end, even turn on its own men rather than listen to plain words of truth.

Act 9:23: "And after that many days were fulfilled, the JEWS TOOK COUNSEL TO KILL HIM."

The story goes on, of course, and Saul tries to work with the disciples in Jerusalem but they are nervous about his intentions. The Lord eventually works out the details and Saul becomes Paul — one of our heroes.

In this story we can learn many things and I want to ask a few questions which will give opportunity for you to reflect upon some important points. Why did the Jews now want to kill Paul, (Saul)? When he saw the truth as it is in Jesus, what was his course of action? Did Saul, who became Paul, continue to persecute THE church or did he support it and which church after his conversion was it that he supported? Did Saul remain a conference leader or did he become an independent leader? Did the ancient professed "Christian" conference support his decision? Will Saul, who became Paul, who became an independent leader for Jesus, be in heaven or will the

ancient conference leaders?

I cannot place enough emphasis on the above scriptures and the vital lessons that are clearly in them. What a glorious God we serve Who has made provision for our every need. Most will end up like the ancient conference Leaders and their supporters—the popular majority within the “church”— did, unfortunately. God’s word tells us this and we who love the truth as it is in Jesus, seek the truth as hidden treasure, need not be deceived. Now let’s continue our study of the parallels between Christ’s church then and Christ’s church now.

Speaking of treasure, perhaps this is an ideal time to unveil another parallel. Both in Timothy and Titus (there are other places we could add), God’s word reveals a definite concern about “filthy lucre.” Some may wonder what filthy lucre is. It’s money or goods gained in a dishonest, shameful or greedy manner.

By the time of Christ’s visitation to His own church, filthy lucre had become a real problem within the Levite Tribe—the clergy. This is why Paul (who knew all about it, first hand) warned of and openly rebuked the practice as well as those pastors who were guilty of it. Now nothing like pastors squandering millions of dollars for themselves while preaching sacrificial giving to the laity is happening today, right? (Wrong.)

There was one other concern spoken of, that ranks right along with stealing God’s money. In fact it is one of the primary reasons that the chosen people of the ancient church became the rejected church. We read Christ’s own words from Matthew 7:3-14:

“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and

he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Dear brothers and sisters, the problem we are facing today is exactly what it was when Christ was here the first time and it boils down to two words — power and money.

Jesus who is the Founder and Finisher of the Real Christian Church will reject apostate leaders who are preaching the popular messages of “peace and safety.” Who are purposely distorting “love” preaching it from the “Dr. Spock Bible” instead of God’s holy word. Who have an agenda which removes the discipline (disciple) out of love and makes an open mockery of mercy and justice which is sorely demonstrated in churches and our society. Christ continues to reject and tells His followers also to reject apostate leaders who are turning God’s churches into unsanctified businesses for the love of personal gain or glory.

Christ came to save His people but ended up in an open confrontation with apostate leadership who had seized power (human) in it. They stole His church and as a direct result of their preaching, they turned the people aside from the saving knowledge which God’s word provides. Today NOTHING HAS CHANGED!

Did you know that although most of us have been caught sleeping on these matters (just as did the Lord’s disciples) that Jesus said we should expect it? Let’s read Matthew 10:16,17,21-25. “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;... And the brother shall deliver up the brother

to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?"

If we plan to fair well in the judgment soon to come we had better be spending some valuable time preparing for the testing time just around future's corner. We know that many of you (as we once did) have felt that the most painful persecution would come from the world. But not so! It was not the world that killed Christ but His church! Allow me to slip in a little supposed secret that is directly tied to this topic. A "secret" that was a part of the agenda of the largest religious system during the dark ages. A "secret" which many churches are purposely withholding from you!! The "secret" that was believed, proved from God's word, preached in every Protestant church in this nation 150 years ago, is the very reason for the Protestant Reformation, and the very essence of its total existence!

For the last several decades, Christians have been taught from the pulpits of their churches that the books of Daniel and Revelation can't be understood by anyone other than preachers or theologians. This is exactly what Christians were told during the Dark Ages and this lie is the very reason that Protestant churches came into being.

My heart aches every time I hear another soul (who represents millions with the same problem) is scared out of his wits because something out in the world ends up with the numbers 666 on it. The reason many are so scared is because first they believe the pastors who tell them that laymen cannot understand the books of Daniel and Revelation. I will admit that the last book of the Bible takes some work, like geometry or physics, etc. But the name of the book itself speaks against those who wish to keep it hidden. Open your Bible and look at the name — REVELATION — now ask the Lord to help

you to understand and believe the name of His last book means just what it says.

The second reason may be more painful but nonetheless true. Most people in churches claiming to be followers of God's word are too indolent to find out for themselves what matters to Him and what He warns us about. Here is the painful part. Do you know what the word "indolent" means? L-A-Z-Y. It's incredible but folks around the globe will spend years studying to ensure themselves a better life, a temporary life. While comparatively speaking almost nobody is spending any real time much less years of hard study to ensure THE better life, eternal life! At the judgment bar, many will blame an apostate pastor for leading them astray, rightfully so, but it will not save them. If we expect to reap the rewards of God's true children, then we must act as God's true children act. We will 'study to show ourselves approved.'

Are you still waiting for that secret? All right, without any further delay here it is:

If you are looking for the number of the beast, 666, in the world (meaning from a worldly source) you are searching outside the REVEALED word of God and in vain. The number of the beast, 666, is plainly revealed in Revelation 13:18. I am purposely not placing the verse here so you will go look it up. I will not be at all offended. Now lay down this book and open your Bible to Revelation 13:18.

To what does God's word plainly, in full view, say the number 666 belongs? "For it is the number of a \_ \_ \_ ." What else does it say in that same verse? That you have to be a scholar or theologian to understand this verse? No! It does not say that at all. You do have to be a student to figure out the entire equation but all subjects are like that. As a matter of fact, Revelation starts out in chapter one, verse three, by saying "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and KEEP those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

Well at least for those of you who will choose belief over unbelief, part of the equation has now been unraveled and you don't have to worry about taking the Mark of the Beast on some license plate, or in some bar code, or by some monster computer called the

beast in Europe.

Satan laughs as he tosses us around like spiritual rag dolls when we through neglect or laziness allow it. But it does not have to be that way! The reason the gospel of Jesus is Good News is because it reveals to us that God loves us so much that He has left us with enough revealed truth to save us from the deceptions of Satan, IF we choose to do our part.

Now I want to give you another piece of the prophetic puzzle. Jeremiah, in chapter six, verse two of his book reveals that God likens His church to a comely woman. Isaiah also speaks of God's church being as a woman, better still, a virgin, meaning a pure church (see Isaiah 62:1-5).

Paul following Divine representation, speaking to the Corinthian church says "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Jesus Himself says, speaking of His redeemed church in (guess where?) Revelation 14:4 "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins..." Now don't leave Revelation just yet. We will come back to it in just a moment.

Now you can easily see that God, in slightly different ways has used a pure woman in many different parts of His word, both Old and New Testaments. We have given you only a very few verses, but if you have ever wondered why Jesus uses ten virgins in His parable about His coming, now you know. He is talking about those who get ready and those who say they are Christians but do not get ready. All the other stories He tells along the same lines, such as the marriage feast parable, and that a husband should love his wife as Christ loves the church, all dovetail with God's representation of a woman and His church.

Well, guess what? A woman representing God's church does not stop there! I want to ask you a question that will demonstrate to you — with some study on your part, an honest seeking for truth, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit — that God loves you just as much as He ever loved any pastor (and I am one), and that His revealed word is for you just as much as for the rest of us. If you can ask the Lord,

who loves you enough to give His life for you, to help you to believe He wants you to understand His revealed word, then get ready to answer a very important question. Remember, we are still talking about a woman representing a church.

Through the prophet Isaiah (in chapter fourteen, verses twelve through fourteen), God reveals what plans Lucifer has made. We are told that he wants to build a kingdom of his own and raise it higher than God's and his goal is to have every human being bow down to him and pay him homage. As a matter of fact the continued implementation of this plan is further revealed in the New Testament and shows how far Satan would really go if possible.

Just after Jesus was baptized by His cousin John and the beginning of His ministry, He was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to remain there forty days and be tempted by Satan. In this contest between the Son of God and Lucifer where your salvation and mine hung in the balance, Satan is unmasked and the magnitude of his plans laid bare.

The second temptation in my opinion makes the point most clearly. Satan takes Jesus to a high mountain and shows Him the glories of the earth. Then he tells Jesus "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9). Satan, if possible, would not stop with the worship of human beings, he wants God to pay him homage as well! The whole battle over the souls of men has to do with worship.

Whom do you worship? God has a specific way of acceptable worship which is His proscribed SIGN of allegiance or SEAL of approval between God and His people. (Remember the story of Cain and Abel?) Satan has a counterfeit system that is his sign or MARK of allegiance. This is exactly what Revelation is speaking of when it refers to the people of God being sealed in their foreheads. They have made their decision, once and for eternity, to stand under the sign or banner of God's seal of approval, the only thing written by their Creator, Lord, Master and Saviour, by His own finger.

Like Cain, the majority who claim to be a part of God's family and even come to the altar of worship, insist on doing it their way and, knowingly or unknowingly, they are worshiping the same god that Cain worshiped. ONLY those who realize, respect, and

reverence the truth that GOD makes the standards of how, when, why and where our worship to Him is acceptable — NOT MAN — can be or will be safe to be trusted with the awesome privilege and responsibility of eternal life. So back to our question.

If the entire controversy between Christ and Satan revolves around worship and God has chosen to use a pure woman, a chaste virgin to represent his true church, then what would be represented as just the opposite of this virtuous woman that would appropriately represent a system of worship that, like Cain, makes “family” claims but in fact worships Satan? Do we find any such counterfeit in God’s word?

The answer is YES! And what is the express opposite of a virgin? Of course, a whore! In the book of Revelation (I told you the name of that book means just what it says), just where you found God’s true church, His virgin, and the sign of allegiance, the seal of God’s approval, you also find the counterfeit religious system, the great whore, the place where people, like Cain, come to the altar of worship, but not the altar of their Creator, but a place of Lucifer’s MARK, the counterfeit, where he has signed his name, has the number 666, and where most will receive the mark of the beast.

As a matter of fact this whore has many daughters which represent churches who, like the mother, are prostituting the truth of God’s word. (See Revelation 17:4-5.)

I hope that you will check me out by following along in Revelation to find out these truths for yourself. I believe in the very short time we have left in the history of this present world, the Bible reveals that our very lives are at stake and our eternal destiny one way or another hangs in the balance. That is why the Bible commands us to study for ourselves and why God’s champions such as Paul, commended those who checked his messages against God’s holy word. Although it is almost unbelievable even as I write it, most “Christians” will never gain eternal life or heaven for the simple and pitiful reason that they were just too lazy to take the time to make the truths of God’s word their own. Many of you reading this book are probably in this condition. Now before you consign the rest of the forthcoming pages to flames, please allow me to quickly say that

overwhelmingly, most of us either are or have been under this self imposed curse at one time or another. The sweet news of turning the hope of better things into a reality is to give God's word the priority it deserves. The fact that you are searching is proof positive that the Lord loves you, He wants you to know His will for you and He still very much wants you with Him forever. But we must be willing to set our jaw and face some of truth's harsh realities, work through them with a sanctified motive of "whatever it takes with God's help" and then steadfastly move forward!! For without resolve that brings decisive action, hope is mere fantasy —without meaning. That may work wonders at Disney World but it will only work ruin in the very real realm of God's Kingdom!

What makes the present day ignorance of whom the whore of Revelation represents, the number 666, the beast power, and the image of the beast and his mark so deplorable is the fact that ALL Protestant churches both in Europe and America preached the truth right out of Daniel and Revelation during the last century.

Just as the name Revelation means just that, so does the name Protestant. To the fearful credit of Satan's power to deceive and to the discredit and shame of those in the Protestant family the question is raised:

Why do you call yourself a Protestant? What does the name signify? Where did it come from? What is its history? What are you protesting?

The horrible truth is that most Protestants don't have a clue to any of the answers (at least not to any significant measure) to the above questions. And if there is anything more horrible it is this: all the answers in essence are the very things that determine whether or not we will be saved!

Revelation chapter three tells us about the most deplorable condition those claiming to be God's church could find themselves in, and it says the last church **WOULD BE IN THAT CONDITION**. It is a condition of thinking itself to be all right when in fact it is all wrong. Then Jesus says what He would do to all those who do not take His counsel that follows. Please read about this in Revelation 3:14 - 22.

If you would like further study on all these issues, just write us

and we will gladly send you one of our most precious and powerful books that deals with and gives the biblical answers to all the questions I have just raised. I have nothing to gain or lose if you chose not to pursue, but you may have everything to gain or lose based on your choice. Our motives do not include compulsion but they do include invitation and so we offer an open one with no strings attached.

Today, right at the very time when many are witnessing what they believe to be a great revival of Christianity, are actually in one of the greatest perils of this earth's history. I know that is a pretty strong claim and it may seem that I'm really going out on a limb here but I am really not. God has been so good to us in giving us His word which contains all of this information. That is why He wants us to study it. He is not just giving us some arbitrary assignment because He is bigger than us. Far too many people think that way. Our God is the Heavenly Father who loves His children so much that He wants to make sure we are protected from the deceptions of His and our arch enemy — Satan. This is the reason He has taken all the time to write, compile and protect His word to us and why He yearns for us to study it. Those who come to this understanding and take full advantage of our Father's gracious generosity and loving protection will survive the deceptions and horrors of the last days we have already entered.

In the first part of this chapter we discovered who and what is God's church. God's church is people who follow God's plan — not man made plans with God's name attached!

We discovered that Saul, a conference preacher who became Paul an independent preacher, really didn't belong to God's church at all (although he really thought he did) until he was willing to follow what God said even when (and it did!) it went directly contrary to how he was raised, what he thought, and what was "politically correct" with leaders calling themselves God's true church.

Because Paul made the right choice and continued to do so, God made Paul one of the greatest examples of living faith expressed in flesh and blood that this world has ever seen.

Because Paul gave himself totally to Jesus, he was entrusted

with many valuable treasures from God's storehouse of knowledge. Did you know that Paul knew about the deceptions and counterfeits of our day? Do you realize that although Paul lived during the days of Jesus and the disciples, 2000 years ago, he speaks of what we've been discovering in Revelation? Did you know that if Paul were alive today, he would say exactly what you have been reading about the beast and that the number belongs to a man? Paul could (and would) tell you who that man is! I can (and will if you asked for the book) tell you who the man is!

Let us read what Paul says about the times in which we are living. Please take a few moments and read all the verses in Second Thessalonians, chapter two. Paul is speaking here about the time of Christ's second coming.

Okay, I hope you took the time to look carefully and prayerfully at the entire chapter. But now let us take another look at verses three and four. Please study them carefully! If you do, you will see that Paul knew just what we have been discovering, that the controversy between Christ and Satan is over worship. Paul knew Satan's plan and agrees exactly with what Isaiah said Satan's plan is.

Paul warned that just before Christ's second coming many claiming to be Christians would leave the true faith — there would be a "falling away." Paul warned about men who would deceive many about this, and he would tell you just as we have shown you that the number 666 does belong to a man who Satan is using in a mighty way — a man who claims to have the powers of God.

Paul says that all these things would happen just before Jesus came back. Paul also said that before Jesus comes back "...that MAN of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;" and he continues on to say in verse three that this religious man would be worshiped by other men, and that people would actually bow down to him!! (Revelation 13:3,4)

If we are living in the time of the end; if we are living in the time just before Jesus is to come back and the destiny of every man, woman and child will be fixed for eternity, then such a man should exist and he should be gaining power as Revelation 13 says he would and many should be worshiping him as Revelation 13:8 says they will.

Does such a man exist on earth? Are all the things

concerning this man existent today which were spoken of by Isaiah, Daniel, Matthew, Paul, and Jesus, through John the Revelator, among the many other Bible writers?

Brothers and sisters, the somber answer to these questions is definitely yes! And the only two reasons that most people do not know all about this is, first of all, people do not study God's word for themselves. Secondly, almost every Protestant church in the world has quit preaching this lifesaving, vital message. The Trojan Horse came among us decades ago and we did not even know it! But by God's grace, we can know it now and like Noah save those in our spiritual families who wish to climb aboard God's ark of safety before the flood of destruction that is just upon us, hits!

Share this book with many others. Get copies and plead with them to read it, then be praying privately that they will. Give a copy to your pastor. Most will reject it, and it may even get you into trouble but SOME will study and accept its messages, diving deeper into God's word. And for the faithful who have their loved ones with them in God's Kingdom, I can assure you it will then be worth any "trouble" anyone has had to suffer. If you write for and read the book I told you was much more important than this one, the one which deals with last day events and the book of Revelation in much greater detail you will certainly want to share that one with others as well.

I hope you have found this chapter as exciting and provocative as I did as I wrote it. I pray that if you have, through it the Holy Spirit will stimulate you spiritually to dig deeper and continue to discover God's vast treasure chest of truth. Now on to Chapter Four in our study of prophetic parallels in Christ's Church Then and Christ's Church Now.

## Chapter 4

### “No Respector of Persons . . . ”

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth  
I perceive that God is no respector of persons...”  
(Acts 10:34).

“And there were certain Greeks among them that came up  
to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip,  
which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying,  
Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew:  
and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.”  
(John 12:20-22).

**A**t this time Christ's work bore the appearance of cruel defeat. He had been victor in the controversy with the priests and Pharisees, but it was evident that He would never be received by them as Messiah. The final separation had come. To His disciples the case seemed hopeless. But Christ was approaching the culmination of His work. The great event which concerned not only the Jewish nation, but the whole world, was about to take place.

When Christ heard the eager request, “We would see Jesus,” echoing the hungry cry of the world, He was encouraged and said, “The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.” In the request of the Greeks He saw the result of His great sacrifice.

Jesus had labored faithfully and yet it certainly appeared as if His work had been in vain. The church He had come to—the same church He had raised, protected, honored with His presence—had rejected Him. After years in the service of salvation, He stood almost alone. Even His closest friends had little encouragement to offer. But in the words “we would see Jesus,” Christ caught the glimmer of hope that in future days would shine more brightly. These few words Jesus understood.

Jesus was willing to sacrifice Himself so that others might be saved. This is the type of service that is acceptable to the Father. Our work must be of the same nature for it to receive heaven's

blessing. As with Jesus, we must be willing to lay it all on the line for the cause of truth. We must willingly place even our reputation into the hands of God and labor for His glory rather than for our own. We must say the words, "We would see Jesus." This is what constitutes true service to God and for others.

The grain of wheat that preserves its own life can produce no fruit. It abides alone. Christ could, if He chose, keep Himself from death. But should He do this, He must abide alone. He could bring no sons and daughters to God. Only by yielding up His life could He impart life to humanity. Only by falling into the ground to die could He become the seed of that vast harvest—the great multitude that are redeemed to God out of every nation, kindred, and tongue, and people (Revelation 7:9).

With this truth Christ connects the lesson of self-sacrifice that all should learn: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25). All who would bring forth fruit as workers together with Christ must first fall into the ground and die. The life must be cast into the furrow of the world's need. Self-love, self-interest must perish. The law of self-sacrifice is the true law of self-preservation.

We can choose to keep to ourselves, but heaven requires more. Jesus did not have to elect to die for us. Having made that choice He would have saved Himself tremendous trouble, pain, suffering, and rejection. But Christ loved us with a love that is very difficult for us to grasp. After all, we are not that great a prize except in the eyes of heaven, and then only because of what Jesus did. We may think we are remarkable, we may think we are of great importance, but when it boils right down to it, we are moles on the otherwise perfect body of the heavenly universe.

It is only in Christ that we have any value. We have hope only because Jesus cast His own life into the furrow of the world's field and died that there might be a harvest of souls. By giving up His own life Jesus demonstrated the true Spirit of Christianity.

We aren't merely speaking of giving one's life at the end of the road but rather on a daily basis. "Not my will, but thine" must be the

watch words of our daily experience. Many have died a martyr's death. We have some kind of romantic or heroic attachment to this kind of end and I think to some degree this is understandable. But what Jesus wants more than anything else is that "daily death" which is so elusive to many of us. The miracle to be demonstrated is not so much the martyr's dramatic sacrifice, but it is the sacrifice in the kitchen—giving up what we WANT to eat for what is healthier for us; at work, in our conversations, in our treatment of others. In other words, in our everyday life. It is by dying daily that the life and death of Christ is honored in its highest expression. To make manifest to the Lord our greatest appreciation, He would have us, as He did, cast ourselves to the ground and die. To do this is placing ourselves as fruits unto salvation. Then the words "We would see Jesus" will change. They will become, "We have seen Jesus!"

Among the CHIEF RULERS many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, LEST THEY SHOULD BE PUT OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE. THEY LOVED THE PRAISE OF MEN RATHER THAN THE APPROVAL OF GOD. To save themselves from reproach and shame, they denied Christ, and rejected the offer of eternal life. (See John 9:22; 7:13; 12:42-43.)

Alas for those who knew not the time of their visitation! Slowly and regretfully Christ left forever the precincts of the Temple.

Take heed to these words! You who are in the pews, in the pulpits, in high denominational positions. If you love the praise of men over the approval of God; if you are denying the truth from fear of the leadership or of being put out of the "synagogue," you are in danger of making decisions that will cause you to be lost—eternally lost! I do believe that there are those who firmly stand for truth. I do believe that some are holding the lines behind the scenes. But I also know that if these do not get their priorities in order very soon, they will understand too late!

God means just what He says. Please do not trade this opportunity that Christ extends for some temporary praise you might receive from men who cannot save you. If God has called you to lead,

then lead, but do so only by following Jesus down the blood-stained path. This is where the true glory lies. Do not trade the glory of heaven for the glitter of this world. It is far past time that those who are going to stand for the cause of Christ stand together! Now is the time of our salvation! Our visitation is today! Do not make the mistake our forefathers made and send Jesus out of the sanctuary of your heart in order to maintain some kind of political status in your church. It's not worth it!

Christ's words to the priests and rulers, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:38), struck terror to their hearts. They affected indifference, but the question kept rising in their minds as to the import of these words. An unseen danger seemed to threaten them. Could it be that the magnificent temple, which was the nation's glory, was soon to be a heap of ruins? They pointed to those walls as apparently indestructible, but listen to Jesus' words: "Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2).

Many churches are shouting "The church is going through, the church is going through" (meaning the conference or corporate body is going through), but the Bible is clear on the issue. Two thousand years ago the "church" was telling the laity that nothing could destroy it, no matter what—that it was the only place to find Bible truth. Jesus expressed the complete opposite. The question is, who are you going to believe? The majority of the church in Jesus' day went along with their leaders and were lost! How long is it going to take for us to learn that God is no respecter of persons? Any person, any nation, and, yes, any church organization that rejects God, God will reject.

"And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (Matthew 24:6). Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, men wrestled for dominance. Emperors were murdered. Those supposed to be standing next to the throne were slain. There were wars and rumors of wars. "All these things must come to pass," said Christ, "but the end [of the Jewish nation as a nation] is not yet. For nation shall

rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes; in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:6-8).

Christ was telling His disciples that as the rabbis see these signs, they would declare them to be God's judgments upon the nations for holding in bondage His chosen people. They would say the signs pointed to the Messiah they were still looking for. Jesus warned them not to be deceived, because these signs were the beginning of God's judgments on the Jewish nation. The people had looked to themselves. They had not repented and been converted that they should be healed. THE SIGNS THAT THEY WOULD SEE AS TOKENS OF THEIR RELEASE FROM BONDAGE WERE SIGNS OF THEIR DESTRUCTION.

Jesus, speaking to His disciples, was trying to give them a glimpse into their future as it pertained to what the corporate church would be saying. He knew that the church would have their eyes on the events, but because they rejected His truth, they would not see the personal danger the events would point to (the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.).

Those of us who care to look are also staring prophecy right in the face, although most will reject it, as in days of old. Please don't be surprised or naive as to how this works. Jesus spoke plainly in the common vernacular of His day. He warned them openly and they refused to see it. So why should we be shocked as we witness the exact repeat of this? It is commonly accepted that Matthew 24 has a dual application and this is right and true. Are we willing to take the truth at face value or will we reject it?

Can you not see what is about to take place? I know that this seems impossible but maybe it will give you a better understanding of what the disciples endured. This is no trick, but the truth! As Jesus was warning those who would listen in His day, He is now warning all who will listen in our day. If you will read Matthew 24, you will discover that the very first thing that Jesus says concerns the destruction of the apostate church system.

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His

disciples came to Him for to shew Him the building [structure] of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:1-2).

Jesus was saying, “Brothers, I want you to know for certain that the 'church' is not going through to the end!” The word “verily” in the above passage means “for certain” or “for a truth” or “You don’t have to doubt what I’m saying. It WILL happen!”

Then Jesus told them, “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matthew 24:4). Why did He tell them this? Jesus knew that their church had a firm hold on them and He purposely was bringing these men to a point of decision. By what Christ was revealing, He knew He was placing them in a position of having to choose between Him or the recognized corporate church.

He went on to disclose to them that the conference church would try to convince them of the opposite of what He had just said and that many would claim to be working for God by using this falsehood.

The things that Christ shared with His disciples in Matthew 24 were to warn them of two things. There is indeed a dual application to this passage, but maybe not until these last days have we understood what it is, because Jesus is even now trying to warn you and me of the very same dangers. Jesus said that they should beware of certain things as they viewed events in the world. BUT THE INSIGHT WE HAVE MISSED UNTIL NOW IS THAT JESUS ALSO WANTED HIS DISCIPLES TO BEWARE OF THE ACTIONS THE APOSTATE CHURCH WOULD TAKE. Here was their larger danger! The next passage will make this warning even clearer:

“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake, And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another” (Matthew 24:9-10).

Christians have suffered all this. Fathers and mothers have betrayed their children. Children have betrayed their parents.

FRIENDS DELIVERED THEIR FRIENDS UP TO THE SANHEDRIN—THE PERSECUTORS WROUGHT OUT THEIR PURPOSE BY KILLING STEPHEN, JAMES, AND OTHER CHRISTIANS. Brothers and sisters, I hope you can see the plain truth in the above statement. Matthew 24 reveals what happens to Christians and these things were done by the recognized corporate (conference) church!

"Oh, I don't think so!" some poor soul may still be saying. Then answer this simple question, What was the religion of these fathers and mothers who were betraying their children? What was the religion of these children who were betraying their parents? What was the religion of the "friends" who delivered their friends? And if you still haven't arrived at the truth yet, who were the Sanhedrin? And if you're still confused, who killed Stephen?

Through His servants, the disciples, and those who would accept Christ through their witness, God gave the Jewish people a last opportunity to repent. He manifested Himself through them in their arrest, in their trial, and in their imprisonment. Yet their judges pronounced on them the DEATH SENTENCE. They were men and women of whom the world was not worthy, and by killing them the JEWS crucified afresh the Son of God. SO IT WILL BE AGAIN.

Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, please allow this to sink in deeply. History is indeed repeating itself almost to the letter. Today God has raised up faithful servants to warn the professed leaders and laity alike of the impending doom that is sure to come. Most, instead of repenting and reforming, will end up persecuting these true messengers and will ultimately, at some point in time, be guilty of murder, as were their ancient counterparts.

On every occasion when persecution takes place, those who witness it make decisions either for Christ or against Him. Those who manifest sympathy for the ones wrongly condemned, show their attachment for Christ. Others are OFFENDED BECAUSE THE PRINCIPLES OF TRUTH CUT DIRECTLY ACROSS THEIR PRACTICE. Many stumble and fall, apostatizing from the faith (you notice I'm not saying from the "church") they once advocated. Those

who apostatize in time of trial will, to secure their own safety, bear false witness, AND BETRAY THEIR BRETHREN. CHRIST HAS WARNED US OF THIS, SO THAT WE ARE NOT SURPRISED AT THE UNNATURAL, CRUEL COURSE OF THOSE WHO REJECT THE LIGHT.

Christ has left clear instruction and warning of how things will be in the last great struggle—that struggle which we have, even now, entered. There is a shaking taking place in all the churches. A polarization is taking place of those who stand for Christ and Bible truth, and those who just want to treat the church as though it is a country club. There are those who seriously want to know what their responsibility before God is, and those who want to have a good time. There is also a class who appear to be very scholarly. They make a great show of their intellectual knowledge. But what they are doing is merely building on false theories and incorrect assumptions made by other men before them. Thus they perpetuate their misinterpretation of Scripture and compound error.

All the players, to a large extent, are in place. Do you believe the words Jesus speaks, or are you in the group that will be deceived? Your own destiny will be determined by which group you choose to be in.

In the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction Christ said, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:12-14). The abounding iniquity of that day finds its counterpart in our generation. So with the prediction in regard to the preaching of the gospel. Before the fall of Jerusalem, Paul, writing in the Spirit, declared that the Gospel was "preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Colossians 1:23). So now, before the coming of the Son of man, the everlasting Gospel is to be preached "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6).

God has always given men warning of coming judgments. Those who had faith in His message FOR THEIR TIME, AND WHO

ACTED OUT THEIR FAITH, in obedience to His commandments, escaped the judgments that fell upon the disobedient and unbelieving. So Christ's disciples were given warning of the DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM. Those who watched for signs of the coming ruin, fled from the city and escaped the destruction. So now we are given the same warning of Christ's return and of the destruction to fall upon the world. Those who heed the warning will be saved.

"So, you see, Terry, Jesus is speaking about the destruction of the world, not of the conference." Yes, that would be right as far as it goes, but Jesus has clearly pointed out that in the final phase of this planet's history is also involved the destruction of the apostate structure. Jesus is plainly telling His disciples that the "church" will be preaching the destruction of the world and not realize that its doom comes first!

Those who watch for the Lord's coming are not waiting in idle expectancy. The expectation of Christ's coming makes men concerned and they will respect God's judgments upon transgression. This expectation is to awaken them to the great sin of rejecting His offers of mercy. Those who are watching for the Lord are purifying their souls by obedience to what the Bible says, with vigilant watching combined with earnest toil. Because they know that the Lord is at the door, their zeal is quickened to cooperate with the Lord in working for the salvation of souls.

While expecting the Lord's return, we are not to sit back in the pews and be bench-warmers. Those who are in tune with God's last day program will be busy for souls. They will have a realization of the coming judgment and they will be in preparation for the coming event. They will be actively engaged in the sanctification process by allowing God to purify their souls through obedience to the truths as presented in God's word. They will possess a faith that is not passive, but energetic and at work. They will understand the truth for their present day and will be acting upon that truth.

But Christ brings to view another class: The evil servant says in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming" (Matthew 24:48). The evil servant does not say that Christ will not come. He does not scoff

at the idea of His second coming. But in his heart and BY HIS ACTIONS AND WORDS HE DECLARES THAT THE LORD'S COMING IS DELAYED. HE BANISHES FROM THE MINDS OF OTHERS the conviction that the Lord is coming quickly. His influence leads men to presumptuous, careless delay. They are confirmed in their worldliness and stupor. Earthly passions and corrupt thoughts take possession of the mind. The evil servant eats and drinks with the drunken, unites with the world in pleasure-seeking. He derides his fellow-servants, accusing and condemning those who are faithful to their Master. He mingles with the world. Like grows with like in transgression.

Many of these people are in the church claiming to love Jesus. They know deep down that something is not right—they can “feel” that the needed preparation in their own lives is being delayed; they are anxious that the day of the Lord's visitation may come unexpectedly and their chance will pass them by. These ones will change “tomorrow.” But when the scorner, the rejecter of truth, has become presumptuous, and when the lifestyle is carried on without regard to principle, and when the student is eagerly seeking knowledge of everything but his Bible, Christ comes unexpectedly, “as a thief” (2 Peter 3:10).

Now is the time to engage in the preparation needed! The time is far spent and the tomorrows are running out! Most will delay one day too long! Deep down you know, dear friend. Right now as the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart, won't you give it to Him? What do you have to lose except your sins and a trip to the fiery abyss? The Lord loves you so much that He gave His life for you. If this were not true, why then is He speaking to your heart right now? He wants you to live with Him, forever.

Everything in the world is in agitation. The signs of the times are ominous. Coming events cast their shadows everywhere. The Spirit of God is withdrawing from the earth, and calamity follows calamity by sea and by land. There are tempests, earthquakes, fires, floods, murders of every kind. Who can read the future? Where is security? There is no assurance in anything that is human or earthly.

Rapidly are men arranging themselves under the banner they have chosen. Restlessly are they waiting and watching the movements of their leaders. There are those who are waiting and watching and working for the Lord's appearing. Another class are falling into line under the leadership of the first great apostate, Lucifer. FEW BELIEVE HEART AND SOUL THAT WE HAVE A HELL TO SHUN AND A HEAVEN TO WIN. The crisis is stealing rapidly upon us.

Oh, how I would like to say that this is a description of the world only, but it only too accurately describes the makeup of the "church." The polarization is taking place and we are living in the days of the shaking and all that can be shaken will be shaken. God means that the tares will be shaken out of His true church. Many poor souls are being willingly deceived. Let me ask you this question: When the Jews killed Jesus, how many of them were in the "church?"

Many people are waiting for this mass exodus of tares leaving the church to be some kind of sign that they are all right with God because they're still with the organization. But in the days of Christ when the "church" killed Him, the only exodus was that of those who followed Christ! Most of the members stayed with the conference church—the church that killed Christ! So, those who are waiting for the shaking to shake out the "dissidents" from the church may find themselves in the EXACT SAME POSITION the people who stayed with their leaders in Christ's day found themselves.

The majority of Christians don't realize that when people leave the faith—if they are not living by the principles the Bible teaches—they leave God's true church! It matters not, as graphically demonstrated by the destruction of Jerusalem, where people are physically; what matters is where they are spiritually. Our ancient counterparts who followed popular opinion and followed their leaders ALL LEFT THE TRUE CHURCH BECAUSE THEY HAD ALL LEFT THE FAITH.

The same crisis that stole a march on the people two thousand years ago is with us again. It is no longer gradually coming our way, we are IN it! I have one more question to ask. Are you sure you are in

the church—God's true church? God's true church knows no denominational boundaries; it is made up of those who are studying their Bible and who have a living, breathing relationship with Him. God's people are described very well in these two verses:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).

Are you in God's church? I pray that you are.

Terry and Cathy:

Please send me a copy of the free book that explains Revelation and end time events!!!

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