

THE HISTORY OF CHURCHIANITY

**THE RISE AND *PRE-DESTINED* FALL
OF THE CHURCH RELIGIOUS SYSTEM**

by
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PREFACE

The author realizes that because the subject matter being addressed in this work is so ponderous and far-reaching, as well as *extremely spiritual*, it is in the best interest of both the author and the reader for this book to be divided and relayed in seven “digestible” parts. As a result, some of the concepts and themes discussed in this work may overlap and seem redundant. However, as the Bible itself clearly reveals, spiritual knowledge is imparted through “precept [being built] upon precept; line [being built] upon line; and here a little, there a little” (Isa. 28:13). God reveals His Word and His ways to us in this manner because, being limited, we feeble human beings can’t “receive” (spiritually digest) very much at one time. Therefore, in keeping with this heavenly directive, this work has been broken-up into seven sections and/or parts.

To our finite human minds, God’s infinite truths and ways are “so far above us”, that they are way beyond our human concoction, comprehension, and understanding (Psa. 139:6; Job 42:3). In one sense, the reality of God successfully revealing Himself and His wisdom to us is like trying to undertake the impossible task of fitting a huge ocean into a small drinking glass. It will never happen. And yet, we know that it is truly God’s desire and will to reveal Himself and His glory to us. Therefore, in trying to discover and realize some of God’s incredible greatness and wisdom, and trying to understand and digest just a smidgen of some of His awesome and magnificent knowledge and ways, we must be patient with ourselves and with others, while also remaining deliberate and resolute. Comprehending and “visualizing” a deep spiritual truth is the equivalent of trying to eat an elephant or trying to ascend a very large mountain. In order to successfully do so, we have to eat and digest one bite of the elephant at a time and ascend the large mountain one step at a time. It is like the Apostle Paul once stated: “We seek the Lord in the hope that we might *grope for Him and find Him*, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:27).

As a fellow fallible human being, who is also likewise groping to find Him, and who is also striving to realize and perceive just a small fraction of God’s infinite wisdom and majesty, and understand just a few of His hidden marvelous mysteries that God Himself has kept hidden since the world began (Eph. 3:3-9; Col. 1:26), the author of this work readily admits that there is much more that can (and probably should) be written concerning this profoundly humbling, yet enlightening, subject. “Eating from the Lord’s table” always requires a great deal of spiritual processing and “digestive time”, as well as demands significant amounts of personal soul-searching, introspection, prayer, and earnest study. True spiritual understanding is never acquired speedily, carelessly and/or frivolously. Therefore, as the reader of this work, please take the necessary time that is required both in prayer and in Bible study to:

- 1) Receive its challenging messages with a ready and open mind.
- 2) Faithfully research the Scriptural and historical references that are given to see “whether or not these things are so” (Acts 17:11).
- 3) Ask God for guidance in and through His Holy Spirit as you reflect and ponder the spiritual principles that are given and revealed.
- 4) Make the necessary corrections and adjustments in your own walk and life in Christ Jesus our Lord as you grow in the grace and knowledge of Him.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps you, as my reader, cringed when you read the title of this book. Perhaps, you rejoiced. Either way, the concept of there existing “Churchianity” instead of true biblical Christianity must have intrigued you enough to start reading this book. It is my hope and prayer that you will be witnessed to and enlightened by what you read, and that you will discover the profound simplicity and completeness that exists in Christ alone. For it is written that “as you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, *according to the tradition of men*, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” (Col. 2:6-10).

It was never the will of God the Father for men and women to know Him through anyone else, other than through Christ Jesus alone. For Jesus said: “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” (Matt. 11:27). And again, Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. He who has seen Me has seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? I and My Father are One” (John 14:6-10; 10:30).

Centuries ago, God in His infinite wisdom intended to reveal Himself to His people the Israelites soon after He called them out of Egypt. He began by stating to them through the mouth of Moses: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One!” (Deut. 6:4). He instructed Moses to tell the people of Israel to sanctify themselves because He was going to speak to all of them directly and reveal Himself to them. But they wouldn’t have it! They didn’t want to hear God clearly for themselves! They didn’t want to have an intimate abiding personal relationship with God as individuals. They wanted a mediator – a fallible human being who could stand in the gap between them and God and tell them what God had said and what He demanded. Oh, how God and Moses lamented this evil request by the people! But sadly, God told Moses that the people had indeed spoken the truth. For they did not want to hear from God in their hearts and commune with Him; they did not want to serve Him in spirit and in truth; they did not want to know God intimately, and become “one” with Him. They could care less about God, and about His desires and profound wisdom and love for them. In their hearts, they only wanted to do their own wills, and satisfy their own lusts, and live according to their own minds; not wanting to serve or please God at all, or live according to His standards, or His will, or in His purposes for them. They wanted to serve God in form only – that is, with their lips; vainly taking His name upon them, appearing righteous, and comfortably enjoying His blessings; while yet, all the while placing their individual hearts and vulnerable nakedness far from Him. Like Adam and Eve, they shamefully fled from His Presence, not wanting God to discover their nakedness of soul – their true covetousness and idolatries of heart. God knew this – their true heart’s desires and choices – and so He therefore commanded Moses to give the wicked and rebellious people what they really wanted. Yet, God lamented: “Oh, that there was such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever! Go and say to them, ‘Return to your tents.’”

But as for you [Moses], *stand here by Me, and I will speak to you* all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I am giving them to possess.” (Deut. 5:29-31).

Just like Samuel the prophet would also have to do centuries later, Moses sadly and humbly followed the Lord’s command to give-in to the people’s wicked request and give them a “religious leader” of sorts – a spiritual ruler – to religiously rule over them and to lead them instead of God. As was foretold by God at the burning bush, Moses became like “God” to the people; and Aaron, his brother, became High Priest, thus becoming Moses’ mouthpiece speaking to the people for him like a prophet speaks for God (Exod. 4:16). God also gave them a Levitical priesthood: a ruling class of priests that would continually make intercession for them; presenting sacrifices and offerings on their behalf, and telling the people what to spiritually do in order to “appease” God. Notice, that it wasn’t to *please* God; but rather to *appease* Him. For it is written that God is not pleased with the inane and ritualistic sacrifices and offerings of men; but rather, only with an obedient and contrite submissive heart (I Sam. 15:22; Psa. 51:16-17).

Just like the pagan idolatrous nations around them who served their heathen gods with bloody sacrifices and vain offerings and rituals; and held great religious ceremonies and feasts in order to appease their gods and keep them from destroying them in anger and from withholding precious rains, and from sending cataclysmic earthquakes, famines, and pestilences upon them; the carnal Israelites too demanded to know from Moses what they needed to do in order to *appease* the God of Israel – as if the holy Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was just another capricious god that needed to be placated, serviced, and appeased! God gave them therefore what they wanted; yet, all the while, secretly foreshadowing what His real plan and intent was – to reveal Christ (that is, Himself) in and through the true and faithful sons of Abraham.

Sadly, from the Israelites’ wicked, and yet, heart-revealing request would arise a *religious system of bondage* that would ultimately come to define a nation; create and embody an entire culture; and eventually enslave and corrupt the only hope of mankind – Christianity. It is my intention to relay in the pages of this book what I have come to see and realize through the divine leading and revelation of the Holy Spirit and through searching the annals of ecclesiastical history, that what many think of as Christianity today is not really true biblical Christianity at all – but rather an insidious counterfeit – which is rightly called “Churchianity”! Churchianity is the craftily-composed resurrection of the ancient and spiritually-dead religious system of the Israelites that Jesus Christ first indicted and condemned with His First Coming; and one in which He will undoubtedly consume and completely destroy with His Second!

PART 1

A NEW COVENANT

On the very night that God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt under Moses, the Lord had them put blood on their doorposts and over the doorways of their houses. God instructed them to use the blood of a first-year male lamb that was without blemish in order to symbolize the holy blood of Jesus Christ that was going to be shed for them some fourteen-hundred years later. Immediately following this deliverance through the lamb's blood, God had them all baptized in the Red Sea as they were coming out of bondage (I Cor. 10:1-2). He then instructed Moses to lead them to the foot of Mt. Sinai – His holy mountain – where God Himself was going to address them as His own special people. He said to them: “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exod. 19:5-6). Notice that *all* of the people were to be priests of God and holy! Each of them was called by God to serve Him directly and individually, making intercession for all of the people that were on earth! That is why they were called out of Egypt in the first place! As it was originally spoken to Abraham regarding his descendants: “I will make you a great nation... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Gen. 12:2-3).

Did you get that? *All* of Abraham's descendants through Isaac and Jacob were meant to be a blessing – a kingdom of priests and a holy nation – serving the world in holiness and in the fear (respect and awe) of God. However, the Apostle Paul later reveals the truth of the matter, clarifying that “only those who are *of faith* are the true sons of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7). Most of the people, who heard God's proposal and His offered covenant that day at Mt. Sinai, didn't have any faith. That is, they didn't know God intimately *from their hearts*, nor did they want to! Therefore God said of them: “For indeed the gospel was preached to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith* in those who heard it...For it is impossible to please God [or serve Him] without faith” (Heb. 4:2; 11:6).

Only a few people in those early days of Israel had true faith in God. The rest were placed in a system of religious bondage that would ultimately lead them all to death. For it is written that the end result of the law is death to everyone who tries to live by it; for no one can keep it perfectly. For even Moses forewarned those Israelites that didn't keep it perfectly that those who *lived* by the law and transgressed it would surely die by it (Lev. 18:5; Deut. 17:2-6; 27:26; Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:10; Heb. 10:28). There is only One who was able to keep it perfectly, and that One was Jesus Christ – the true High Priest – who is now able to make true intercession for all of us because He, and He alone, was able to attain that righteousness that is in the law (Rom. 10:5; Heb. 5:1-10).

The Apostle Paul talks about this truth at length in the book of Romans. He said that there is a righteousness that comes by the law – that is, if you are able to keep it perfectly! However, we fallible human beings can't attain it; because if we keep the majority of the law perfectly, yet stumble in one point of the law, we are guilty of breaking the whole law – and have therefore become lawbreakers – and are consequently guilty and deserving of death (Jam. 2:10; Gal. 3:10).

For sin is the transgression of the law and the punishment for sin is death (I John 3:4; Rom. 6:23). And Scripture affirms that every human being has sinned and is sinful, and that we humans, by nature, cannot keep the law of God perfectly (Rom. 3:9-18; Gal. 3:22; I John 1:8-10; Rom. 8:7). Therefore, to us human beings the whole Mosaic covenant and system is deeply flawed. It doesn't bring us life, but rather death! Just as the apostle Paul said: "The commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death!" (Rom. 7:10).

God knowing this beforehand set up the whole Mosaic Law and covenant to point us to Christ, and to illustrate the need for Christ to come – in order to save us (Rom. 10:1-4). He instructed Moses to physically pattern everything that he was instituting on earth after the heavenly things that he had been shown in the spiritual realm. As it is written: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes [has faith]" (Rom. 10:4). God foretold by the mouth of the prophets: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – *not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt...* For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:8-10). Regarding this first covenant that God made with Israel, the Lord said: "I also gave them up to statutes that were not good, and judgments *by which they could not live.*" (Ezek. 20:25). As Jesus would also confirm many years later, by saying: "Moses did not give you that true Bread that comes down from heaven which if a man eats he will not die. All who ate of Moses' bread died in the wilderness." (John 6:32-58).

God gave the people what *they* wanted – *a system of religion* that kept them busy, made them feel spiritual, kept God's name on their lips, gave them a feeling of religious security, but never led them to holiness or eternal life! Only through personally *knowing* God and His Son Jesus Christ comes eternal life (John 17:3). Moses (who spiritually personified the law) could never deliver the children of Israel into the Promised Land. That is why Hoshea (the man who Moses spiritually re-named "Joshua" – meaning *savior*) was prophetically raised-up in order to deliver the children of Israel into the Promised Land (Num. 13:16). He was a spiritual type pointing to Jesus (whose name also means *Savior*) – thus signifying that the law (and/or law-keeping) couldn't, and would never, deliver the people of God into the promises of God or into His glorious Kingdom! The Holy Spirit thereby testifying beforehand, and revealing, that all those who live by the law, or by rules of law, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God – but rather will die in the Sinai desert because faith is required in order to successfully cross the Sinai desert! And all those who try to live by the law, do not live by faith. For it is written: "The law is not of faith." (Gal. 3:12).

THE SINAI DESERT: LAND OF UNCERTAINTY

Many don't realize it, but the Hebrew name *Sinai* means "uncertainty". It is in this "Sinai desert of uncertainty" – meaning, this world – that those who are "called-out of Egypt" will be tested – that is, it will be revealed what is really in their hearts – whether or not they will really trust God. For

God said: “You shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these *forty years* [representing a complete lifetime of trials and testing] in the wilderness to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.” (Deut. 8:2-3). In other words, God led His people – those who claimed that they wanted to follow Him – to a desert wilderness in order to see if they really trusted God! In the desert wilderness two things will happen: Either like Jesus – people will become physically weak, but spiritually stronger in the desert (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-14); or they will constantly grumble and complain about the physical discomforts of the place, and will not seek and devour the spiritual Bread (revelation and enlightenment) that is being offered. The person who focuses on the physical, and not on the spiritual, will die. But the person who endures the physical, all the while focusing on and striving for the spiritual truths that are being given, will surely live and be delivered by God.

Joshua and Caleb are perfect examples of this. As two of the twelve spies who were sent out to spy out the land of Canaan (the Promised Land), Joshua and Caleb certainly saw the same giants that the other spies saw. They too knew that they were but “grasshoppers” compared to the Canaanite inhabitants of the land. However, they did not “live by sight, but by faith” – that is, faith in every word that God had said to them – for God had promised them that land! And they believed Him. For they said: “The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them.” (Num. 14:7-9). God said that only Joshua and Caleb therefore would enter His Promised Land because they had a “different spirit” in them and because they “follow Me fully” (Num. 14:24, 30). All of the other ten spies died, and so did all of the other people who came out of Egypt who were twenty-years old and older, because they did not believe God or have a “different spirit” in them!

This “different spirit” is undoubtedly referring to the Holy Spirit which is only given to those who obey God (Acts 5:32) and who don’t rebel, complain, or resist Him. Notice that I did not write that it is given to those who prophesy (preach), exercise spiritual gifts, do miraculous signs, or who “reside in the camp of Israel” (go to church). Being in the camp of Israel or going to church does not necessarily mean that you are of (and have) the Holy Spirit! There were many in Israel and in the Church today who are prophesying, doing miraculous signs, exercising supernatural gifts, and appearing righteous who are not of the Holy Spirit, neither do they know Him! Christ Himself said so: “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never *knew* you; depart from Me, you evildoers!’” (Matt. 7:22-23).

Knowing God entails having a close abiding intimate relationship with Him – being “one with Him”. In the Bible the phrase to “know someone” implies that you know them sexually – that you have been “one” with them. (“Adam *knew* his wife Eve and she conceived”; the evil men of Sodom wanted “to know” the two angelic men who came to Lot, etc.). It also implies “discovering

someone's nakedness" (see Leviticus chapter 18) and knowing them intimately and in a very unique and special way. It implies an openness and a vulnerability that has been built on an abiding, exclusive, and special communion between two people that no one else shares with them. It is an intimacy that is sacred and is based solely on trust, abiding love and free will. It is what God designed marriage between a husband and wife to be. The Bible says that the marriage covenant and union is a physical manifestation and representation of the spiritual relationship between God and His people – that is, two separate entities being united together in love and in trust – becoming one body, mind, purpose, and spirit – in order to bear and bring forth fruit (children) – thus ever-expanding and increasing the Family and Kingdom of God.

True intimacy (that is, "knowing" Him) is the foundation and meaning of true biblical Christianity. Our earthly marriages were designed and given to us by God in order to illustrate and reveal this divine truth to us (Eph. 5:30-32). However, like everything else in this world, Satan has polluted and corrupted this truth, so that it has become a great mystery to us – so much so that we even now have "Christian churches" recognizing and sanctifying same sex relationships and "marriages"! This is an absolute perversion and abomination of what God is trying to teach us. Let me explain.

In heterosexual marriages, God Himself is taking two seemingly opposite ("opposing") natures – male and female – and making them "one" – a revelatory miracle! This is to illustrate and reveal to us the marvelous truth that He is taking two opposing natures – our carnal human nature and His divine Godly nature – and melding them together and making them "one" – that is, a "new creation" in and through His Son Jesus Christ. Homosexuality and lesbianism pervert and distort this truth and portray to humanity a false image of what God is doing and what He is trying to reveal – that God is making us "one with Him". That is, we are no longer two opposing natures striving against each other, but now we are made "one" in Christ Jesus. The male and female natures (two inherently opposing natures) represent God taking His divine Holy Spirit and the carnal human spirit and making them one in Christ Jesus. Heterosexual marriage is supposed to be a physical reflection and illustration of this spiritual mystery and profound truth. When these two opposing natures become "one", they produce fruit – "offspring" – children. That is why once our human spirit is united with God's Spirit we are then called "children of God" and brothers and sisters of Jesus – that is, "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16-17).

This is why the Apostle Paul mentions the sins of homosexuality and lesbianism in the very same context wherein he describes that the whole world is waiting earnestly for the "children of God to be revealed". He said that homosexuality and lesbianism are the direct result of men and women "not wanting to retain the knowledge of God" or wanting to recognize His supreme sovereignty over their lives (Rom. 1:21-28). But instead, they would rather "exchange the truth of God for a lie" (Rom. 1:18-32), so as not to have to submit to Him. Therefore, because some people willingly and willfully reject the knowledge of God and His truth, God has turned them over to blind ignorance and reprobate minds to do that which is not fitting and is reprehensible (i.e.: homosexuality, fornication, prostitution, bestiality, and other sexual perversions). In doing so, He also gave them the just recompense of their choice – to live apart from Him without any spiritual knowledge and to live a life void of any real spiritual truth (Rom. 1:24-32). (This is not to say that homosexuals and lesbians are greater sinners than anyone else; but they too, like all of us, need to repent of their evil rebellious ways and return back to the knowledge of God and seek His ways.)

In a sense, this is the same thing that He did to the Israelites who really didn't want to know Him in their hearts. In their case, He gave them a *form* of religion that didn't bring them any *intimacy* with Him or spiritual deliverance because that is what *they* wanted – that is what *they* chose when He called them together to speak to them at Mt. Sinai. They wanted to keep God at “arms length” not close to their hearts or in their minds. They didn't want any true intimacy with Him. They only wanted to “go through the motions” and pretend to be His true loving wife. Therefore God “gave them up to statutes that were not good and judgments by which they could not live” (Ezek. 20:25). That is not to say that the “entire package” of the Old Covenant wasn't good – indeed it was! However, if you read closely what is written in the Bible, God reveals a number of times in various passages that human beings (being inherently fallible and sinful by nature) can't fulfill the righteousness of the law – which comes only by being able to keep the law *perfectly* without one single offense! For us carnal fallible human beings, this is impossible! Only Jesus Christ, being actually conceived and born of the Holy Spirit of God, and not by the will and sinful nature of man, is able to do that (Luke 1:35; I John 3:5; 3:9). That is why God sent Him, in the likeness of sinful human flesh, in order that He might become our High Priest and Mediator, truly able to stand between us and God, and to make true intercession and peace for us on our behalf, so that the two opposing natures might be able to have true union (co-union) and oneness (communion and intimacy) in Him.

In a number of places in the Bible, God says that He gave Israel His righteous judgments and statutes – called the law – that truly has the power to give life to its adherents *as long as they can keep it perfectly*. In other words, the person who lives perfectly in them will live forever and shall not die. He reveals this truth in a number of places – it is mentioned almost every time that He gave Israel His laws, by saying: “I made them go out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments, *which if a man does, he shall live by them*” (Ezek. 20:10-11, 13, 21; Lev. 18:5). But God knows that for human beings this is an impossibility! The carnal human mind and nature are at odds with the divine nature – that is, they are at odds with the Holy Spirit. The carnal human mind is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be (Rom. 8:7). It is like trying to get a male mind to think like a female's mind and vice versa! Two opposing natures or minds can't think alike. An animal can't think or act like a human; neither can a human think and act like God. That is, unless a miracle happens – a changing of natures and/or minds. This then is the new covenant that God has given to us in Christ Jesus! A changing of natures – a changing of minds within us – that is, God's nature within us. Literally, God Himself *in us*!

MOSES' DESIRE

Many people don't realize it, but Moses knew and desired the same thing that God desired. He knew that the whole religious system that God had set up for the Israelites according to their desire was only a futile temporary physical type of what God was really doing and what He really wanted. He knew that God really desired a close, intimate, personal, and abiding relationship with each member of His Body. He knew that God wanted to be able to communicate (commune) with every one of His sons and daughters – much the same way that a father desires to have a personal, special, and intimate relationship with each one of his children. God doesn't want to have to send one of His

other children that He is close to, to give a message to His children from Him and for Him. He wants to be able to speak to that son or daughter directly Himself because that child personally recognizes His voice and loves Him. The Father desires to speak to every one of His children directly – and not through some human mediator. But most people don't believe the Father, and they don't want to know Him directly for themselves – and so they put others in front of them to shield them and to serve as mediators for them! Moses knew that it was God's desire to speak to all of His children directly, and to have a deep, personal, abiding relationship with each one of them – apart from a human mediator. Moses knew this truth – and so he too lamented this request by the Israelites to serve as their mediator. Moses declared to his assistant Joshua: “Are you jealous for my sake, Joshua? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” (Num. 11:29). Moses wasn't jealous of himself or his close position with God. Moses wanted every member of the congregation of Israel to be able to hear from God directly and to be able to commune with Him themselves. He didn't want to serve as a mediator between them and God. That was *their* choice, not his. They desired this out of the hardness of their hearts and because of their unbelief.

Moses was not jealous of himself or of the position that the people had placed him in. He didn't want to be the people's mediator between them and God. He didn't want a religious system and hierarchy in place that would stand between God and His people – even though he was the one at the top, and his brother Aaron with him. True servants of God don't wish to be between God and His people – otherwise people will begin looking to them to be “their god” instead of looking unto God Himself! I hate when people start looking to me instead of to God. They are just as enslaved if they look to me as if they were still sitting in the dead pews of a church looking to the pastor and elders to lead them instead of God! I wish to God that all of the Lord's people were prophets and that His Spirit was upon them! I don't wish to have anybody follow me. I have enough to answer for with my own sins and my own shortcomings before God; I don't want to have to answer for anybody else's (Jam. 3:1; Heb. 13:17). I have a job to only proclaim the truth – what somebody does with it or does not do with it, is not my concern or my responsibility – it's theirs! I am not interested in building a church or creating a following. I am only interested in speaking the truth and declaring the right and true judgments and statutes of God as revealed in Christ Jesus. There is no other name under heaven whereby men can be saved (Acts 4:12).

Remember, it was the disbelieving people in Israel that wanted Moses to be a mediator for them. *He* didn't want it! Yet, Moses set the religious system up because God told him to give the people what they wanted. Yet, he himself looked forward to another day – a better time in which the people of God would have a true Savior – a Deliverer – who would truly deliver the people of God into (eternal) life, and not into more bondage, such as the religious bondage that Moses was now being required to place them within – *by their own doing*. Moses looked forward to the coming of that True Prophet of God who indeed would show the people of God that truly loved Him and wanted to serve Him, apart from a religious system, the way to eternal life, and enable them to truly worship God in spirit and in truth from their hearts. Moses spoke of this better day: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb [Mt. Sinai] in the day of the assembly, saying ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.’ And the Lord said to me: ‘What they have spoken is correct. I will raise up for them a

Prophet [Mediator] like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.” (Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-23).

Scripture says that this temporal covenant and religious institution and system of Moses with its long-list of laws, hierarchies, and mandates was in force until John the Baptist came on the scene some fourteen-hundred years later. As it is written: “The law and the prophets were [in force] until John [the Baptist]; since then the Kingdom of God is preached” (Luke 16:16). In other words, that old Israelite system of religion with all of its mandates, ordinances and ceremonies, sacrifices and offerings, tithing systems, priesthoods, hierarchies, and religious buildings (the Temple and its subsequent synagogues) has all been done away with. As fourteen-hundred years of Israel’s tragic history has clearly demonstrated, its religious system will not deliver anyone into the Promised Land of God – that is, into eternal life – His Kingdom. It will not save anybody; nor convert them, change them, or deliver them! All who ate of Moses’ bread in the wilderness died. They did not pass from death to life. This whole world that we currently live in now is the barren wilderness. It is the Sinai desert – the land of uncertainty and sin. It is not the Paradise of God. All who eat of Moses’ bread – that is, all who partake of his religious package, and who believe that it will save them, will die.

Adam and Eve are clear examples of this truth as well. Their example was given to us by God to help reveal and demonstrate this same truth many millennia before. Being found in a state of disbelief before God, they were subsequently kicked out of Paradise and banished to this wilderness world in order to eat of its “bread by the sweat of their own brow and human toil” – uselessly working and striving, trying to *sustain themselves* only to die instead (Gen. 3:17-23). This useless toiling that only leads to death is the epitome of futility. That is why the Apostle Paul wrote that all of creation has now been subjected to futility (Rom. 8:20). We all go about clamoring and earnestly laboring in order to survive, each of us working forty-plus hours a week, trying to sustain ourselves and our families, only to ultimately die. Even our best efforts and most earnest desires and hard work, striving to preserve ourselves, only leads us to one place – the grave. It is sad; but it is true. Religion can’t deliver us; money won’t save us; philosophy doesn’t help us; and heaven knows – bureaucracy and government can’t enlighten us. Where are we to turn then? The answer is to Christ – and to Him alone. He was sent to save us – from ourselves, from sin, from death, from our enemies, and from a dead religious church system that can’t, and won’t, deliver us.

THE CHURCH SYSTEM IS NOT CHRIST

Jesus said that the scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses’ seat (Matt. 23:1). This statement clearly implies that those Jewish religious leaders who were in power during Jesus’ time were the legitimate heirs of Moses’ ecclesiastical authority that he had received from God. In other words, they had God-given authority to be ruling in the “church” (the congregation of Israel). They had inherited that right by way of the religious system that Moses had set-up under the Old Covenant (the Old Testament). However, as was declared by the law and the prophets, a New Covenant was coming and was going to be established by “that Prophet” (Jesus) that Moses had spoken about and that all of the prophets of old had foretold (Acts 3:18-26). Jesus came to abolish the Old and to usher in the New.

Jesus began His ministry by telling the people of God to repent and to believe the gospel (the good news) that He had been sent by God to preach to the spiritually poor. He announced to the people who were sitting in “church” (the synagogue) that He was there “to heal the brokenhearted; to preach deliverance to the captives; and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4:18-19). He then went on to further state to those who were sitting in church listening to Him: “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in *your* hearing!” (Luke 4:21). In other words, He wasn’t calling the Gentiles (the unbelievers and non-churchgoers) blind, brokenhearted, captive, and oppressed! He was calling *His own people* – God’s people – blind, brokenhearted, captive, and oppressed! They were unknowingly caught-up in and enslaved in a dead religious system that had no spiritual life or benefit – so much so that the Holy Spirit actually described them as “sitting in darkness and in the shadow of [spiritual] death” (Luke 1:79).

When Jesus came announcing that He was there to preach true deliverance to them and to show them the Way to eternal life, they laughed Him to scorn, spit on Him, mocked Him, beat Him, and eventually crucified Him. They were more in love with “their system”, than they were in love with the Truth. They wanted to serve the Temple of the Lord, instead of the Lord of the Temple. Like their forefathers before them, they weren’t interested in hearing from God and following Him; instead, they wanted to follow man and a list of “do’s and don’ts” in order to attain righteousness on their own apart from God (Rom. 10:1-3). And in their own blind self-righteousness and hardness of heart, they refused to admit their spiritual poverty and sinfulness, thereby deceiving themselves, and convincing themselves that they were already righteous because of their “religious works”. Therefore, they refused to submit to the righteousness of God by professing their need to be saved by Him! It is the epitome of self-righteousness to believe that one doesn’t need to be saved and cleaned-up by God. By not acknowledging one’s own shortcomings and sinful heart, a person is willfully blinding themselves to the truth and rather choosing to live a lie – denying the truth that they themselves know to be true about themselves – that they are a sinner. It is a blatant defiant stubbornness and poisonous pride dwelling within them that keeps them from coming to the knowledge of the truth – the truth being that they need to repent and give it up (confess their sins)! They need to surrender their own will and quit denying the truth – that they are going to die – and therefore need to be saved! They need to realize and admit the truth – that their best efforts and scrambling to live is still going to lead them to one place – death. They therefore need a Savior to save them from their own sin which is quickly dragging them to their grave. To those who were humble (and are humble) enough to see this truth in themselves and confess it – God has made a way for them. That Way is Jesus. That is why it is promised: “Blessed are the poor in spirit [those who recognize that they are spiritually poor and needy]; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3).

When Jesus’ disciples came to Him privately and said, “Master, don’t you know that you are upsetting and offending the Pharisees?” He answered by saying, “*Leave them!* For they are blind guides of the blind. If a blind man leads a blind man, they both will fall into a ditch.” (Matt. 15:12-14). That is quite a statement! Jesus said to not worry about what the religious leaders think and to actually *leave them!* In fact, He said that many of them were children of hell who are not entering the kingdom of heaven themselves, and who are actually denying access to it to others (Matt. 23:13-15). He clearly said that many of them are not only misled themselves, but are actually misleading

others – that is, they are actually leading others *away from* the Kingdom of God!

Now that is not to say that all church leaders are corrupt and contaminated. That is simply not true. Even the Scriptures themselves show that some priests and rulers of synagogues were believers (Mark 5:22; John 3:1; 12:42; Acts 18:8). But sadly, in comparison to the large numbers of religious leaders and teachers in Asia Minor at the time, theirs was a very small number. I shudder to think that this may still be the case in Christendom today! How many church leaders and Christian rulers will recognize Christ coming to them today? It yet remains to be seen. For Jesus said, “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Not many Christians realize it, but Jesus never told anybody to “go to church” or to “go to synagogue” or to the Temple – except as a witness sent to testify to those sitting there! Instead, He always said, “Follow Me.” Approximately forty years later after He first pronounced these things, Jesus destroyed the old Temple church system completely – thoroughly dismantling it stone by stone. First He “visited” it and came against it with the “sword of His mouth” – testifying against it and indicting it. And then, later He completely destroyed it and all of those Jewish inhabitants who refused to come out of her with it; those who were still clinging to her old ways – who refused to grow up and accept grace and truth which only come through Jesus Christ. For it was written: “For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17). And “Whoever doesn’t hear that Prophet [Jesus Christ] shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.” (Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-23).

Jesus came informing the people that He was greater than Moses, Solomon, Jonah, and Abraham. He was the Son of God – God in their midst – Immanuel – that is, “God with us and among us”, and yet many religious people of the day completely missed Him, and found themselves instead resisting and fighting Him. Their own self-righteousness and monotonous ritualistic church-attendance had blinded them to the truth of their own dismal spiritual condition and loathsome state. They quit following God, and instead “trusted in themselves that *they* were righteous” (Luke 18:9). Therefore, in due time when God stopped sending them prophets to guide them and to warn them, and instead sent them His Son, they murdered Him and seized His inheritance (Matt. 21:38-39). It is the same today. Generally-speaking, religious leaders and ecclesiastical hierarchies unilaterally have stopped the mouths of His prophets down through the ages once again and have “killed the Son” (stopped the Word of God from being preached and from speaking) and have set-up their own religious temple church system with themselves (or their oversight boards) as being the head.

God is not interested in forms of religion. Isn’t this the point of God not having any respect for, and not accepting, Cain’s offering? Cain was only “going through the religious motions” in his worship toward God. In his heart, he was not truly trying to worship or draw close to God. He was only going through the motions; he was only doing those things which he felt that God required of him; those things which only “appease” God – not necessarily *please* Him. In fact, when he saw that his own worship and offering wasn’t pleasing and acceptable to God, but that his righteous brother Abel’s was, Cain wickedly rose up and slew his brother in jealousy and envy. As Jesus later affirmed, Abel’s righteous offering and Cain’s subsequent evil reaction and behavior were a spiritual type of the Lord’s prophets speaking to the Church and calling for the true worship of God to be done in “Israel” (among the people of God) instead of the vain empty worship and religious traditions that have long permeated her. He said that the religious people of His own day were

rejecting the servants of God and their clarion calls for true repentance and godly worship in the same manner in which Cain did by shedding the righteous blood of his brother Abel, and in the same evil way that their forefathers did in shedding the prophet Zechariah's (Matt. 23:35). He told the Pharisees and the scribes – the leaders of the churches in Israel – that they were doing the very same thing by resisting and persecuting the true worshipers and prophets of God in order to continue on with their own wicked vain empty worship. But as Jesus affirmed to the woman at the well, God is not interested in vain forms of religion. But rather, He seeks those true worshippers who want to worship Him from their hearts – that is, in spirit and in truth (John 4:23).

God is not interested in forms of religion or ceremonial worship! He stopped that Old Covenant temple worship system in the first century with the coming of Christ. That is why Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well who wanted to know how to properly worship God to not worry about whether or not she should go to the Temple at Jerusalem to worship or to Mt. Gerizim according to the traditions of her Samaritan fathers. In essence, Jesus told her: "Don't worry about it. For the times are coming, and now are, when you will neither need to go to Jerusalem or to the Temple or to any other place in order to properly worship God. For God is Spirit. And those who want to truly worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth – not according to customs, mandates, commandments and traditions of men!" (John 4:1-26).

During Jesus' day, the Temple at Jerusalem was considered the "headquarters" and chief synagogue of all the synagogues located throughout the empire. It served as the capital of the synagogues ("churches"), and the high priest and chief priests ruled over all of the surrounding subordinate synagogues from Jerusalem. This is why Saul (who later became the Apostle Paul) when he was an unbeliever, went to Jerusalem to obtain "letters of permission" from the high priest at the Temple, so that he could arrest anyone who was a follower of Jesus in the synagogues at Damascus (Acts 9:1-2; 22:4-5). The high priest and the chief priests at the Temple had authority over all of the local synagogues throughout the empire. They represented and embodied the entire religious church system that Moses had set up and authorized because of the rebellious and disbelieving will of the people; the vain religious church system which was becoming obsolete and that was being done away with by the coming of the Lord Jesus who was ushering in a new and better covenant through the shedding of His own blood (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 8:6; 9:9-26). The author of Hebrews later stating: "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." (Heb. 8:13).

It is believed that the book of Hebrews was written around 65 AD, approximately four to five years before the complete destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. Truly, God was indeed showing by Jerusalem's destruction that He was completely destroying the entire temple system of worship that had been the mainstay of the Old Covenant for centuries. For the same author of Hebrews then further says: "*Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods [sacrifices made at a religious altar] which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. We have an altar from which those who serve at the tabernacle [Temple] have no right to eat. For the bodies of those [sacrificial] beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate [of Jerusalem and the Temple – the church building]. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the*

camp, bearing His reproach. For here [in Jerusalem] we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come [the heavenly Jerusalem].” (Heb. 13:9-14).

The author of Hebrews is clearly telling us that we don't have to “go to a church” or to a specific place in order to worship God – because that whole system of worship that Moses set up is now done away with in Christ Jesus. We now worship Him in spirit and in truth from our hearts. In fact, this Scripture in Hebrews makes it quite clear that we should “go outside the camp” in order to find Christ and to “bear His reproach”. The point is that we don't have to *go* to church now in order to *be* the Church!

PART 2

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Jesus said that the law and the prophets were until John the Baptist; but that after John the Baptist, the Kingdom of God is preached (Luke 16:16). In other words, the whole Mosaic package and Old Covenant that God gave to the Israelites – as a consequence for their unbelief and hardness of heart – didn't bring them any nearer to the Kingdom of God than any other religion existing during that day. A list of physical “dos and don'ts” – that pertain only to the “outward man” and don't necessarily change the “inward man” – can't, in any way, deliver a person into the Kingdom of God; which in itself is spiritual in nature. For it is written: “God is spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24). And again, it says, “Flesh and blood [the physical] cannot inherit the Kingdom of God” (I Cor. 15:50). And again, “the letter [of the law] kills, but the Spirit gives life” (II Cor. 3:6). It is impossible to enter into the Kingdom of God without the Spirit of God. As Jesus clearly told Nicodemus: “Unless you are born of water *and of the Spirit*, you will never enter the Kingdom of God.” (John 3:5).

That is not to say that the law and the Old Covenant aren't spiritual in nature, and that they didn't have inherent righteousness within them or that they didn't grant any spiritual advantage to their adherents; indeed they mostly certainly did (see Rom. 3:1-20; 7:7-14). For the law itself is even called “the law of righteousness” (Rom. 9:31). And the Bible tells us that “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Rom. 3:20). And again, speaking of the law, it says, “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified [made right] by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:21-26).

The problem was not with the law (the Old Covenant) itself. The problem was with the Israelites! For the law “did not profit them, not being mixed with faith” (Heb. 4:2). And Scripture reminds us that it is impossible to please God without faith (Heb. 11:6). The Israelites didn't have any faith; therefore, they didn't please God. And as a consequence, they were “kept under guard” by the law for almost fifteen-hundred years in a form of religious captivity and bondage until “that Prophet” (Jesus, the Messiah) that Moses had written about would come into the world; bringing them a “new and better covenant” which would set them free religiously and give them the “true bread from heaven” and the words of eternal life. That is why Jesus commended Peter and the other Jewish disciples for recognizing this sacred truth when He came into the world clothed as the Son of Man. Although, He looked like a mere man, Peter and the others knew Him to be the Christ – the Son of God – that is, God incarnate. And they said to Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (John 6:68-69). And Jesus answered and said, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.” (Matt. 16:17).

The truth is that only those who sought God with their hearts in the first century – that is, with the “inner man”, and not with their lips and through religious form – the “outer man”, did God reveal this hidden truth to. That is, they were able to recognize “God” coming in the form of Jesus. Everyone else, during that day and age in the first century, did not know Him or recognize Him when He came. They were too caught-up in their “church system” (the physical) to recognize “Christ” (that which is spiritual or that which is born of the Spirit) coming to them in the form and person of Jesus. That is why Jesus said, “The law and the prophets were until John the Baptist; after John, the Kingdom of God is preached.” (Luke 16:16). In other words, “Something greater is coming after John the Baptist; something better than what you have had these many long years since the days of Moses!” This is also why John the Baptist said, “After me comes One whose sandals I am not even worthy to stoop down and loose.” (Mark 1:7).

Jesus said that there was never a person born of women (that is, born of the flesh) greater than John the Baptist; but in terms of the Kingdom of God, John was still less than the least of those of the Kingdom of heaven (that which is born of the Spirit) (Matt. 11:11). In other words, now that the Spirit of God has come, that which is born of the flesh is nothing compared to that which is born of the Spirit (Kingdom of God). John was the “transitional” character sent by God to close out the Old Covenant and to help announce and usher in the New. He was appointed by God during a specific time in human history (in what we now refer to as the beginning of the first century) to announce to the people of God the transition from the Old physical Covenant to the New spiritual One. He was sent ahead of Jesus to prepare God’s people to receive their King by telling them to get ready through repentance and becoming humbled (broken). He was sent to warn the people of Israel of Christ’s Coming and to give them knowledge of salvation by pointing them to Jesus who was going to deliver them from their dead and oppressive religious covenant; one that had only brought them death and religious bondage to a New Covenant that was now going to bring them freedom, joy, understanding, and eternal life. The Old Covenant system with all of its rules and regulations couldn’t give them this – for it was physical, not spiritual. For as Jesus announced publicly when He first began His ministry: “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees [who subscribe to the Old Covenant], you will by no means enter into the Kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:20).

JOHN THE BAPTIST’S ARRIVAL

When it was time for the Messiah to be introduced into the world for His First Coming, God sent the Archangel Gabriel to visit Zacharias, a priest who served in the Temple. Gabriel told Zacharias that his wife, Elizabeth, would soon give birth to a baby boy which he was to name John (meaning, “grace”). It was told Zacharias that John would be great in the sight of the Lord, and that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. The Holy Scriptures say that “many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:16-17).

Later on after John was born, Zacharias, his father, was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied the following: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed His people. And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David. And as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from

our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He swore to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest; for you shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:67-79).

Many years later when John was a grown man, “the word of God came unto him in the wilderness. And so he went into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. As it is written in the Book of Isaiah the prophet, saying, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Prepare you the way of the Lord; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low. And the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God’” (Luke 3:2-6).

Many people came forth to be baptized of John. Luke 3:7 calls it “a multitude”. There were Jews and Israelites, Pharisees, Sadducees, lawyers, publicans, prostitutes, soldiers, priests, Levites, and many others that went out to hear John and to be baptized of him. It is interesting to note, that the people came unto John to hear him speak and to be baptized of him. He did not go out to them. They were led to him. “And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem . . .” (Mark 1:5). The Holy Spirit showed me something remarkable about this a while back in a vision. It pointed out that many different people from many different cultures and denominations of men came unto John and were drawn there by the Holy Spirit to hear John’s preaching and become convicted. The Holy Spirit also described those diverse people who were led to John, by saying, “Behold those who hear the voice of the Lamb.” While I was still in the same vision, I heard the Holy Spirit say, “Just as I called those chosen animals which were to be saved unto Noah and the Ark, so do I cause out of every people those which should be saved to hear My voice.” That voice being referred to in this vision was John the Baptist’s – “the voice crying in the wilderness” –which was really the voice of God.

At another time, I heard the Holy Spirit say, “Lift up the light, and the children of light will come unto the light, but the children of darkness will turn away.” I didn’t understand that saying until a few weeks ago. Jesus said that John was “a burning and a shining light” and that the self-righteous Jews (people of God) were willing for a season to rejoice in his light (John 5:35). However, John “came for a witness, to bear witness of the true Light that all men through him might believe. He [John] was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That [Light] was the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world” (John 1:6-9). And Jesus said, “As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world” (John 9:5). “While you have Light, believe in the Light, that you may be the children of light” (John 12:36). However, “this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (John 3:19-21).

Jesus told us that John the Baptist was the “Elijah” that was prophesied to come before His First

Coming. And Jesus said that “Elijah” will also come again and restore all things before His Second Coming (Matt.17:11). John the Baptist fulfilled this office the first time. But, Jesus’ Second Coming will be more glorious than the First. Therefore, the work of the “Elijah to come” will also be more glorious and far-reaching. I believe that the Holy Spirit has shown me a little of what is ahead. I was shown that just as the Work of God was being done by John the Baptist under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit in the “wilderness”, apart from the Temple or its organized membership, the same will be true in the future. I do not see one worldwide organization or church heading up the Work of God or serving as the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit. But rather, individuals ordained by the Spirit of God, and not ordained by men, will serve as witnesses and messengers. God is going to speak to His people everywhere through them – “to prepare a people for their God”. These people will be called out of every nation, church, organization, race, and background. They will be “a people which were not a people”. And God Himself will teach them, as was begun with the preaching of John the Baptist and culminated into the ministry of Christ and His Disciples.

Before the First Coming, it had been approximately 430 years since the word of God had come down from heaven upon the heads of men and women –that is, that we have record of in the Bible. After the books of Daniel and Malachi (known as the Inter-Testament period), it appears that there was a “famine of the word” as was prophesied in Amos 8:11. Then, at the time appointed, God sent Gabriel to tell Zacharias that the time had come that God would once again visit His people. God would give Zacharias a son, which he was to name John, who would “go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people . . . and to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:76-79).

It is interesting to note here that the people of God were described as “sitting in darkness”. It brings to mind the words of Jesus when He described the future state of His people in His Church during the last days: “Because you say, ‘I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you might see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent!’” (Rev. 3:17-19). When the word of God came down upon John the Baptist in the wilderness, he began to preach to the people of God the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Luke 3:2-3). When Jesus came down from heaven as the Word of God, He too, began His ministry by telling the people of God to “Repent, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). And when the Holy Spirit came upon Peter and he began to preach to the people of God, he told them to “Repent, and be baptized everyone of you . . . For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:38-39). Notice, in every case, that when the word of God came down, it was telling the people of God to repent! In other words, those people who should have been right with God, thought they were right with God, but weren’t! And as Jesus said, they are those “which trusted in themselves that they were righteous” (Luke 18:9). Paul warned the Church, “Let him that thinks he stands take heed” (1 Cor. 10:12).

Here is the meaning to the above statement that the Holy Spirit spoke saying: “Lift up the light, and the children of light will come unto it, but the children of darkness will turn from it.” Right now we are at the beginning of the Second Coming of Christ, and once again, the Holy Spirit has begun

coming down from heaven as it was prophesied, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit . . . And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they will prophesy [speak with the voice of God]” (Acts 2:17-18). In other words, just as it was the first time, at Jesus’ First Coming, God poured out His Spirit upon John the Baptist first, and then later the disciples, and they began to preach as witnesses. Even so, now at the beginning of His Second Coming, which shall be more glorious than the First Coming, God has once again sent witnesses to bear witness of the Light, telling us to lift up the Light – to be a burning and a shining light – just as John was. It is written, that the self-righteous people rejoiced in his [John’s] light for a season (John 5:35). But later they rejected the true Light that John bore record of. “He [the True Light - Jesus] came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name”(John 1:11-12). Likewise, the self-righteous people today, who trust in themselves that they are righteous, will come face to face with the Spirit of God in these witnesses, and either be revealed as children of light or children of darkness. Notice, that they are called “children” and not “adults”! That is, they have not yet matured, and it has not yet been made known what they will grow up to be! But the Spirit of God knows the future and the Word of God “is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb.4:12).

At the First Coming of Christ, nobody except John the Baptist, a prophetic elderly man named Simeon, and Jesus knew the hypocrisy and the self-righteousness that would be revealed in the religious leaders and their converts! “But when he [John the Baptist] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, ‘O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits suitable for repentance!’” (Matt.3:7-8). And Jesus likewise rebuked them saying, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one convert, and when he is won, you make him twice as much the son of hell as yourselves . . . Even so you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. . . You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?!” (Matt.23:15-33).

Jesus told them that they were willing to put up with John the Baptist for a little while, but they ultimately refused to do what he said. And later, when Jesus preached to them, they as children of darkness endured Him for a little season trying to discredit Him, and then later their hate grew into conspiring against Him to destroy Him, and then finally when God allowed it, they killed Him! Thus, they as children became adults of darkness as they matured in their wickedness – refusing to repent! It started out as pride, envy, and self-righteousness. Jesus was beginning to take away their numbers, threatening their positions, rebuking them for their hypocrisy! He spoke the truth, not caring about what men thought or who or what men esteemed. He didn’t rise up through their organizations or receive His education from their seminaries! Where was His degree or master of divinity?! Who gave Him a title or ordained Him to preach?! Why doesn’t He hold to the same traditions and sacraments?! Who does He think He is?! And by what authority does He teach these things?! These are the thoughts that went through the religious leaders’ minds early on, until finally, as Jesus said, “When I was daily with you in the temple, you stretched forth no hands against me, but this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). And they took Him and killed Him!

PART 3

THE TIME OF VISITATION

Jesus said that Jerusalem, along with its Temple, was condemned because it “did not recognize the time of its visitation” (Luke 19:44). Sadly, many people don’t realize what this Scripture is truly saying. Many people don’t realize that Jerusalem is a prophetic type of Christianity and its entire religious system. Regarding this church system, Jesus said that “not one stone will be left upon another”, but rather every stone that man’s hands have incorrectly placed in God’s Temple as a monument to his own glory will be cast down (Matt. 24:1-2). Have we never read this in the Scriptures? For it says, “*Take heed how you build on this foundation [Jesus Christ] ... For if any man builds on this foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be exposed for what it is... It will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each man’s work, of what sort it is*” (I Cor. 3:10-13). And again, it says, “*In building the Temple, only stones that were finished at the quarry were used, so that no hammer, or chisel, or any iron tool of man was heard being used at the Temple site while it was being built.*” (I Kings 6:7). Do we not understand what these things mean? For God has already shown us by destroying the physical Temple twice (once in 586 BC, and again in 70 AD) that temples and churches mean nothing to Him. He has made it clear from the Scriptures that He does not dwell in temples and churches made “by human hands”, that is, by human efforts (Acts 7:48).

God is going to tear down every church building, every pew, every organization, every religious hierarchy, every ministry, and every pulpit that man has deceitfully and falsely established in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! Have we never read in the Scriptures: “*The Stone which the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone*” (Matt. 21:42)? “*And whoever falls on this Stone will be broken; but on whoever it falls, it will grind him to powder*” (Matt. 21:44)? The Scriptures say that the chief priests and Pharisees heard Jesus say this and knew that He was speaking about them (Matt. 21:45). So why is it that the religious leaders in the Christian churches today don’t realize that these words in the Bible are actually prophecies against them as well? It is because Jesus said, “*If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes... [There will not be] in you one stone left upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation [the time of God’s coming to you].*” (Luke 19:41-44).

The people of Jerusalem did not recognize God coming to them in the form of Jesus when He “suddenly came to His Temple” during the first century (Mal. 3:1). Just as the prophets had foretold, His people weren’t spiritually ready to receive Him, and so they didn’t recognize Him when He came, and therefore, they esteemed Him lightly (Isa. 53:2-3; Mal. 3:2; John 1:10-11; Acts 3:17-18). These things will happen again very shortly. Jesus will come again unto His Temple [Christendom] in the form and shape of a man (that is, as “a son of man”) and again they will not listen to Him. He will come to them again in Spirit in and through His earthly servants (I Peter 1:11). For Jesus said: “*Behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will persecute from city to city. That on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood*

of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the Temple and the altar.” (Matt. 23:34-35). In preparation for this persecution and rejection, He instructed and warned His servants: “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves...Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues [churches] ...Whosoever receives you, receives Me. And whosoever rejects you, rejects Me” (Matt. 10:16-17, 40; Luke 10:16; John 13:20).

Since the beginning, God has been sending “prophets, wise men, and teachers” to His people, yet they have not been receiving them. Instead, they have been mistreating them, rejecting them, mocking them, beating them, and in some cases, murdering them. They have been hiring impostors in their place, and gathering to themselves their own appointed teachers to satisfy their itching ears because they would rather hear nice fluffy stories and fables, like the stories of Christmas and Easter, instead of the piercing and convicting truths of God’s Word (II Tim. 4:3-4).

Please don’t get me wrong. I am not against church leadership. In fact, I myself am charged by God with being a servant among His flock. The Scriptures themselves show that God Himself appointed leaders among His people *“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12)*. But what I am saying is that these same leaders, as well as the people, must be aware and mindful of the whole counsel of God. For it was Jesus who said that the scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses’ seat (Matt. 23:1-2). In stating this, Jesus declared that the scribes and Pharisees had been given spiritual authority by God, and therefore the people should obey them (Matt. 23:3). But He also warned the people to not follow their evil examples or false doctrines (Matt. 23:3; Matt. 16:11-12). He told the people that they were full of hypocrisy, deceit, pride, envy and pretentiousness. They were spiritually blind, self-righteous, ambitious, and greedy. Jesus said that these leaders were headed for hell and that they were even hindering the people from entering the Kingdom of God (Matt. 23:13, 15, 33).

The point is that Jesus said that some of these same leaders that God had put in charge of His House have betrayed Him! Notice these words of Jesus: *“There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son’. But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.” (Matt. 21:33-39).*

Did you notice that? Jesus said that the vinedressers that God had put in charge of His vineyard have turned on Him! Notice further. Jesus said, *“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will He do to those vinedressers?” (Matt. 21:40)*. Notice that it is yet speaking of a future event! Jesus hasn’t returned yet. Just like their spiritual counterparts - the Pharisees and Sadducees - some of the religious leaders today are going to be ground to powder and completely dismantled for not “recognizing the time of their visitation” (Matt. 21:43-44; Luke 19:44). For Jesus warned, *“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. For I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard. Hold fast and repent. For if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what*

hour I will come upon you.” (Rev. 3:2-3). And again, He warned the Church leaders to be faithful to Him and to “be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately... Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing [being vigilant and faithful] when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat [lord over] the menservants and maidservants, and to eat and drink and be drunk [satisfying and serving himself], the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.” (Luke 12:36-46).

Many people don’t know it, but the Bible says that only to those who are *looking for Him to come* will Christ appear a second time (Heb. 9:28). The Bible never uses the phrase “the Second Coming of Christ”. It is never mentioned anywhere! The only reference to Christ coming a “second time” is mentioned in Heb. 9:28 where it says that He “will appear a second time for salvation *to those who look for Him*”. He is not going to appear to those a second time who don’t look for Him. They didn’t recognize Him the first time, so why should He appear to them a second? Even Jesus said that: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! *Behold, your house is left to you desolate. For I say to you, you will see Me no more until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Matt. 23:37-39).* In other words, “Until you stop rejecting those whom I send to you, *you will not see Me anymore!*”

It takes humility and spiritual vigilance to recognize a true servant and messenger of the Lord. Notice what Jesus said to the Pharisees and Sadducees: “If any man desires to do His will (God’s pleasure), *he will know – have the needed illumination to recognize, and can tell for himself – whether the teaching is from God, or whether I am speaking from Myself and of My own accord and on My own authority.* He who speaks on his own authority seeks to win honor for himself – he whose teaching originates with himself seeks his own glory. But he who seeks the glory and is eager for the honor of him who sent him, he is true; and there is no unrighteousness or falsehood or deception in him.” (John 7:17-18 Amplified Version). The Pharisees and Sadducees were proud, self-righteous, and power-hungry. Because their hearts were not humble and right before God, they were not able to recognize or receive God’s coming to them in the form of Jesus Christ. They not only mistreated and rejected everyone that God had sent to them, but even killed the very Heir Himself, in order to seize and steal His inheritance (Matt. 21:38). The entire church temple system is still doing that today. They have taken over Christendom and cast out the Chief Cornerstone – Jesus Christ – all over again! I tell you the truth, God is going to do the same thing to “Jerusalem and the Temple” today that He did to it two-thousand years ago in 70 A.D. He is going to utterly judge and destroy it because it didn’t discern the time of His visitation!

HEROD’S TEMPLE DESTROYED

It is interesting to note that the Temple that Jesus was addressing during His day was “Herod’s Temple” which King Herod had built upon the “Second Temple” site. Herod’s Temple was actually the “newly-renovated and enlarged” Second Temple that God had originally commanded the Jews to build after they returned from their exile in Babylon around 516 B.C. They had built the Second Temple on the same site that the First Temple, called “Solomon’s Temple”, had originally stood

some seventy years earlier. The Babylonians had destroyed the First Temple in 586 B.C. just as God had prophesied through His prophet Jeremiah. Seventy years later the Jews returned from their Babylonian captivity and began to rebuild the Temple (now referred to as the “Second Temple”) under the leadership of Zerubbabel according to God’s command (Ezra 5:1 – 6:22). In comparison to the First Temple, the Second Temple was much smaller, more humble and unimpressive (Hag. 2:3). Some of the Jews despised that fact. So in order to gain their favor, King Herod, some six-hundred years later, beginning in 20 B.C., partially tore down their Second Temple in order to rebuild it and enlarge it. Using his political power and prestige, Roman building methods, and worldly money and resources, King Herod embellished and adorned the Temple, making it much bigger and more beautiful and appealing. However, the Second Temple, now called “Herod’s Temple”, never had the Ark of the Covenant or the Presence of God (“Shekinah”) dwelling within it. It was built by “human hands” – meaning, it was built using man’s tools, man’s efforts, man’s resources, and man’s ingenuity. It was built for man’s glory – and not God’s. It was built to impress men, to appease the people, to reveal Herod’s power and fame, and to appear righteous and holy unto men. It was considered the “Pride of Jerusalem”, and clearly the Jews – the people of God – put their trust in it. They put their trust in an institution instead of in God alone. And God was going to soon “visit” that institution in and through the personage of Jesus Christ!

Herod’s Temple was built upon the very foundation that God had originally chosen and laid – on the very site that the First and Second Temple of God had been built. In an attempt to please men, and to make a holy institution of God more attractive and appealing to not only the Jews, but to the whole world, the wicked King Herod came in and “built upon” the very foundation that God had laid. By using man’s methods and carnal adornments, he made it very impressive indeed! Even the disciples of Jesus were impressed by its stately décor and royal splendor (Mark 13:1-2; Luke 21:5-6). But Jesus warned them to not be deceived by it because “the days will come in which not one stone will be left upon another that shall not be thrown down” (Luke 21:6). Upon hearing this shocking statement by Jesus as they were touring the Temple buildings, the disciples asked Him, saying, “Teacher, when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?” Jesus then answered them, saying, “Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying that I am indeed the Christ. But do not follow after them! For they will deceive many.” (Matt. 24:1-5; Luke 21:5-8). Notice that all of these end-time prophecies of Jesus were given in direct relationship to and in direct reference to the Temple – that is, Herod’s Temple – that was built upon the original foundation that God had laid!

WHO WAS HEROD?

King Herod, also known as Herod the Great, was the wicked vassal king of the Roman Empire who ruled over Judea and Galilee beginning in 40 B.C. He was brutal, politically-minded, greedy, and ambitious, and as such, was able to persuade the Roman authorities to appoint him “King of the Jews”. With Rome’s backing, he conquered Jerusalem in 37 B.C., executed the Jewish leaders, and imposed Roman rule on the Jewish people using brute military force. Because of his cruelty, his Jewish subjects hated him. But to appease them and gain their favor, Herod rebuilt their Temple, enlarged it, and had one-thousand of their priests trained as masons to build the inner part of the Temple which only the Jewish priests were allowed to enter. Herod began construction on the Temple in 20 B.C., but the massive building project was not officially completed until many years later in 64 A.D. However, the main part of the Temple construction was finished by Jesus’ day

some forty-six years after its commencement (John 2:20). Just six years after its completion though, the Temple was completely destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Roman armies just as Jesus had predicted that it would be. Before its destruction, the Temple was the pride of the Jews, and was considered a fitting tribute to the remarkable architectural skills of King Herod. It was so impressive and dear to the Jews, that the Bible records that some of them even took solemn oaths by it (Matt. 23:16).

This was the same building structure that Jesus had prophetically stated would be completely dismantled “stone by stone”. Remember that it was originally an institution that had been ordained and commissioned by God (II Sam. 7:13; I Kings 5:5; 6:11-13; 8:17-19). It was the holy place that Jesus had called His Father’s House (John 2:16). It was referred to and described by the prophets as the House of God (Jer. 7:2-4; Ezek. 8:14-16; Hag. 1:7-15). And it was the original location where the very Presence and Glory of God (“Shekinah”) had dwelt among men. Herod’s Temple was the very same place where Jesus was now lamenting in tears saying that it was about to be completely cast down – stone by stone! But why? Because it had become thoroughly polluted by men, and as such, didn’t recognize “the time of its visitation” by God *through the person of Jesus Christ!* Remember, Jesus came to Jerusalem and the Temple in a human body (flesh and blood) – as a “son of man”, and they didn’t recognize God in Him. Therefore, God destroyed them forty years later. Notice Jesus’ own words: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate. For I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’... Do you not see all these things [the Temple buildings]? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down.” (Matt. 23:37-39 – 24:2). And again, it says, “Now as Jesus drew near, He saw the city [Jerusalem] and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, *because you did not know the time of your visitation.*’ Then He went into the Temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, saying to them, ‘It is written, “My House shall be a house of prayer”, but you have made it a “den of thieves”’. (Luke 19:41-46).

Notice that! Not only had the people of Jerusalem not discerned the very Presence of God in their midst in the form and person of Jesus (that is, they did not recognize their “day of visitation”), but they had also made the very Temple of God – the Church – a place of business – “a house of merchandise” (John 2:16)!

These are the very same reasons that Scripture tells us that God destroyed the First Temple (Solomon’s Temple) in 586 B.C.! Many people don’t realize it, but Jesus was actually quoting the prophet Jeremiah when He used the phrase “den of thieves” in referring to what the people had turned the Temple into. Notice what Jeremiah had said some six-hundred years earlier in regards to the First Temple – the House of God:

“The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, ‘Stand in the gate of the Lord’s House, and proclaim there this word, and say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the Lord!’ Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Amend your ways and

*your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Lord's Temple is this [therefore God would never destroy it!]' ... Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, **and then come and stand before Me in this House which is called by My name**, and say, 'We are delivered [safe] to do all these abominations'? **Has this House, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes?** Behold, I, even I, have seen it, says the Lord. But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have done all these works, says the Lord, **and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer, therefore I will do to the House which is called by My name, in which you trust**, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren - the whole posterity of Ephraim. ... Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? ... They pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. ... Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Behold, My anger and My fury will be poured out on this place - on man and on beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground. And it will burn and not be quenched." Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: **'Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them.** Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you. ... For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight," says the Lord. **"They have set their abominations in the House which is called by My name, to pollute it.** ... Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room. The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one will frighten them away. Then I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. **For the land shall be desolate.**" (Jer. 7:1-34).*

Notice that these are the very same themes and sentiments that Jesus expressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and its Temple during His day (approximately 615 years later) as well. He said that their House would be left "desolate" (Matt. 23:38). According to the prophet Jeremiah, God destroyed the First Temple and Jerusalem because it had become polluted and corrupt through false teaching, idolatry, and sin, and because the people had turned His House into a place of business—"a den of thieves". They had clearly disregarded and rejected God's continual warnings and "visits" to them through His prophets, and had become callous towards God, not discerning the "time of His judgment" upon them. They didn't fear God, nor honor Him, or even regard the fact that His very Presence and Glory [the Shekinah] had been in their midst. Therefore, the Presence and Glory of God left the place altogether. The prophet Ezekiel, a contemporary of Jeremiah, described the departure of the Glory of God from the First Temple and from Jerusalem just prior to its destruction and judgment in 586 B.C. (see Ezek. 10:1-22; 11:22-25). Similarly, the "Presence and Glory of God" (in the form and person of Jesus Christ) left the Second Temple just prior to its destruction as well, when Jesus declared to the inhabitants of first-century Jerusalem and to its Temple, "You will see My face no more until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Matt.

23:39).

Before its destruction in 586 B.C., Jerusalem and its First Temple were given a number of ominous prophetic signs and wonders by the prophet Ezekiel warning them of the impending doom that had been determined upon them. This is in accordance with what God had promised: *“Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7)*. But the people didn’t listen to Ezekiel, and like Jeremiah, he too, was mocked and laughed at, cast out, and scorned. The false priests and teachers (the religious leaders) had deceived the people and persuaded them that everything was spiritually fine within Jerusalem and its Temple, and convinced the people that they were safe and were physically and spiritually alright.

Along these same lines, it is interesting to note that similar supernatural “signs and warnings” were also given to the inhabitants of first-century Jerusalem just prior to its destruction as well, and that false preachers and teachers were also deceiving the people then into believing that they were physically and spiritually okay too. Josephus, who was a first-century Jewish historian who recorded first-hand the capture and destruction of Jerusalem and Herod’s Temple, described in shocking detail the supernatural warnings and events that took place in Jerusalem just prior to its destruction in 70 A.D. In reading Josephus’ narrative, notice that he mentions that the people were spiritually blind to their impending doom because of their false teachers and ministers. Josephus writes:

“Impostors and false prophets deluded the pitiable people, who, as if moonstruck, blind, and senseless, paid no attention to God’s clear portents and warnings of the approaching desolation. A star stood over the city like a sword, and a comet that lasted for a year. Then, prior to the war, when the people had gathered for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the eighth of Xanthicus (probably April 8, 65 or 66 A.D.) at 3 a.m., a light shined on the Temple and the altar so brightly that it seemed to be midday, and this lasted for a half hour. To the inexperienced this seemed a good omen, but the sacred scribes gave the true interpretation. During the same Feast a cow brought for sacrifice by the high priest gave birth to a lamb in the middle of the Temple, and at midnight the eastern gate of the inner sanctuary opened itself – a gate of bronze fastened by iron bars and secured by long bolts so massive that twenty men were required to shut it each evening.

Not long after the Feast, on the twenty-first of Artemisius (approximately May 21), a demonic apparition of incredible size was seen. It would have seemed a fairy tale had it not been attested by eyewitnesses and followed by disasters that corresponded to the omens. Before sunset there appeared in the sky over the whole land chariots and armed forces speeding through the clouds and surrounding the cities. And at the Feast of Pentecost, when the priests entered the Temple at night for their usual ceremonies, they heard a disturbance, a loud crash, and then a thunderous cry, ‘Let us leave this place!’

Something even more alarming took place four years before the war, during a time of peace and prosperity. A common peasant, Jesus son of Ananias, came to the Feast of Tabernacles, stood in the Temple courts, and suddenly shouted: ‘A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the Temple, a voice against the bridegrooms and brides, a voice against all the people!’ Night and day he went through the narrow streets with this cry. Some of the prominent townspeople, enraged at these ominous words, seized the fellow and lashed him savagely. However, he uttered not a word in his own defense but persisted in shouting the same thing. The authorities, assuming correctly that the man’s conduct was inspired by something supernatural, brought him before the Roman governor (Albinus). There, though he was scourged to the bone, he uttered no plea for mercy and shed no tear, but straining his voice to the utmost, he wailed with each blow, ‘Woe! Woe to Jerusalem!’” [Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.288-304].

JUDGMENT ON THE HOUSE OF GOD

The Apostle Peter wrote that the time has come for judgment to begin at the House of God (I Peter 4:17). But what does that mean? And how will He judge us? It is evident from the Scriptures that God will judge His House – the Church – the Temple of God (I Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:19-22), in the same manner and way in which He judged His people and His House (the Temple) previously. The Scripture says that He “is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8). God does not change (Mal. 3:6). Therefore, His standards of righteousness and His expectations of us don’t either. Sadly though, we see the Church today – His Holy Temple – has fallen into the same polluted apostasy that has gone on before us. The Church has become a business again. It has become “a house of merchandise”. Christendom has become a wealthy corporation, with managers, board rooms, marketing departments, and sales staff. Each church fellowship “competes” with its neighboring church fellowships in order to attract more potential visitors and “tithe-paying clients” to its locale. Every church building dresses-up its store-front marquee with catch-phrases designed to advertise why its “spiritual wares” are more necessary and superior to the next guy’s. Just like commercial malls, many churches decorate their “stores” with religious trappings and wrappings (like Nativity scenes, cute monikers, attractive lights, coffee houses, choirs, and bands) designed to arouse the attentions and affections of “spiritual children” who are ever looking to satisfy their continual lusts and sensual desires for materialism, pleasure, and the next fulfilling “high”.

The “Temple peddlers” are all peddling their wares in the Temple again; their “Christian” books, CDs, and DVDs, all clearly lining the lobbies and coffee tables of our hallowed church halls; many of them convincing themselves that it is “acceptable” since they are considered “worship materials” that are specifically used to help others in their worship toward God. Don’t we know that this is the same lie that those who sold doves in the Temple said, along with the money changers, right before Jesus overturned their tables? They justified their evil consciences by convincing themselves that they were only helping and aiding others in their worship of God! They claimed that they were only providing a service to the people because the people needed to buy doves in order to sacrifice them

in their worship toward God in accordance with the Law of Moses. But Jesus clearly saw through their hypocrisy and called them all “thieves and robbers” who were wickedly merchandising His Father’s House!

So-called ministers and pastors (business managers) cowardly edit the true and only pure Word of God to remove its inherent sting and delete its pertinent call for repentance. Just as the servants of God had long foretold, the people of God have again “heaped to themselves teachers that satisfy their own itching ears”, and pastors who fill their insatiable bellies with lies, smooth words, and comfortable messages. Prosperity sermons are bountiful and plenteous. The people are complacent and fat. They have become dull of hearing, and their eyes have been dimmed. The false preachers again proclaim, “Peace, peace” to the people (Ezek. 13:1-16; I Thes. 5:2-3) while the Sword of the Lord draws near and the judgment of the Almighty hovers very closely over our heads and over our church buildings.

“The pastors have been bought and paid for”, says the Lord. “Whoever a man looks to, to put food on his table, owns him – whether that be man, or whether that be God! The ministry has defiled themselves. They have sold themselves to corporate boards and oversight committees, and have sold out to one another. Am I not the Lord?” says God. “Where is your fear toward Me? Can I not save? Can I not provide for My own? Do you not rather answer to Me?” says the Holy One of Israel. “Why do you place yourselves under man? You are therefore afraid to speak the truth, for you fear man and are owned by him! Did I, Jesus, fear any man while I was on earth? Is it not written about Me, ‘Teacher, we know that You are true, and that You teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men’ (Matt. 22:16)? Why then do you ministers fear men? Why do you not rather fear Me?” says the Lord. “You speak lies, and not My truth. You teach men to honor other men and not Me! You speak words that flatter and mislead, and smooth things of comfort which deceive. You have not spoken right things – things which pierce the heart and convict My people of their sins. You have not taught My people to fear Me; to humble themselves and to seek My face. Instead you tell them meaningless stories about Me, and things which have no life! I am God,” says the Lord, “and I Am holy. You have profaned My name and defiled My House! The people have become dull of hearing, and have polluted My sanctuary with their idolatry and fornication. They have sought after money, and numbers, and recognition, and not brokenness and truth. They have desired fame and position, and not humility. They do not know Me,” says the Lord, “but have followed after vanity and falsehood. Learn of Me,” says God, “for My ways are not your ways, and My thoughts are not your thoughts. Put your trust in Me, and I will deliver you as a father delivers his own son whom he loves and who serves him” (Mal. 3:17). “Call on Me and repent while I yet can be found,” says the Lord God.

JESUS’ FIRST VISIT

Before Jesus “suddenly” appeared on the scene and “visited” His Temple during the first century, John the Baptist went before Him preaching the message of repentance to the people of God (the Church) – just as the prophet Malachi had predicted: “Behold I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, *will suddenly come to His Temple*, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, says the Lord of Hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?” (Mal. 3:1-2).

When John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness, he turned to the religious leaders that had come to see him and said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who has warned *you* to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruit that is consistent with repentance!” (Matt. 3:7-8). Notice that John the Baptist knew by the Spirit of God that the church leaders weren’t right with God. He called them a bunch of snakes! Curiously, Jesus also called them the same thing when He arrived (Matt. 23:33). John told them that they had better repent because God was coming very soon to them – to visit His Temple – which they had been put in charge of (Matt. 3:7-12; Matt. 23:1-3). And notice, God *did* “visit” them soon after that – but not in the way that they were expecting Him to come! He came to them in the form of a “son of man” – that is, in human flesh – as Jesus – but they didn’t recognize Him as God. He didn’t come to them as the powerful, conquering, supernatural king that they were expecting; but rather, as a lowly, humble, human carpenter. They rejected Him because of His “human packaging” (John 1:11-14). I tell you the truth – this is how God is going to come unto His Church – His people (Christendom) – again. He is going to visit His Temple in the flesh and blood human form of someone that they will not expect nor accept. And Jesus warned that when you reject those that He sends – you are really rejecting Him (Luke 10:16).

Remember how God “visited” Sodom and Gomorrah before their divine judgment and complete destruction? God came to them as “men” clothed in human flesh! Notice this in the Scriptures: Abraham “looked up from his tent and saw three *men*”, and he immediately ran to them and bowed himself down (Gen. 18:1-3). He knew who they were! And likewise, Abraham’s nephew, Lot, did the exact same thing when he saw the two angels approaching the city of Sodom later that evening coming towards him in the form of two men (Gen. 19:1). Like Abraham, Lot knew who they were! Both Abraham and Lot spiritually recognized these men as being more than just “mere men”. Isn’t it interesting though how the evil inhabitants of the city didn’t spiritually recognize them or know who they were? For they wickedly said to Lot, “Bring the men out to us that we may *know them* [carnally – after the flesh]!” (Gen. 19:5). Obviously, they didn’t spiritually recognize them or know them in the Spirit! They only wanted to know them according to the flesh – that is, carnally. Consequently, they all died! Jesus said the same thing to the Jews of His day: “*He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him...But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me...You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also...You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins...If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this... If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word... He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God...If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad...I know My sheep, and am known by My own...But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*” (John 5:23, 42-43; 8:19, 23-24, 39-40, 42-43, 47, 54-56; 10:14, 26-27). The point is that those who truly know God will spiritually know and recognize those that

He sends – just like Abraham and Lot did!

Although the Temple was still standing in John the Baptist’s day, and there were certainly high priests in place during the days of his preaching, why then does the Scripture say that “the word of God came to John [the Baptist] the son of Zacharias *in the wilderness*” instead of to the high priests who were serving at the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 3:2)? Why was it necessary for the word of God to be given out in the wilderness instead of at the Temple, where one might think that it should have been given and received? The obvious answer is that the Temple and the temple priests weren’t right with God, and weren’t spiritually in the right heart condition to receive Him! They weren’t humble and teachable, and they trusted in themselves that they were righteous (Luke 18:9; 16:14-15). They trusted in the fact that they were “sons of Abraham” and therefore didn’t need to repent or be corrected (Matt. 3:8-10). They simply didn’t need to be “saved” or need a “Savior” – that is, they didn’t need Jesus – the incarnate Word of God to save them. And so, forty years later, they all perished, along with their Temple!

Unfortunately, spiritually-speaking, things haven’t changed much in two-thousand years. Still today, when messengers are sent by God to tell the modern-day church leaders to repent, they immediately reject them, and cast them out, claiming that they have a demon or are mentally-ill. That is exactly what they did and said about John the Baptist and Jesus too (Matt. 11:18; 21:32; Mark 3:21-22). This is the problem with modern-day Christendom! For the most part, the religious leaders, the clergymen, the pastors and elders, and ministers and teachers, serving in the Temple of God (the Church) think that they are genuinely right with God, and as such, feel that they are correctly teaching the things of God and rightly serving in His Temple. Meanwhile, they have no idea that God is actually speaking to a number of “nobodies” out in the surrounding “wildernesses” apart from their beautiful church buildings. The “word of God” (who is really Christ Himself) is actually coming down upon these relatively obscure individuals out in the wilderness once again, apart from the Temple system, and preparing them for the coming of the Messiah – just as it was done before in the days of John the Baptist. All the while, the modern-day Pharisees and Sadducees and priests are busy serving in the Temple totally oblivious to the fact that Jesus is growing-up in obscurity right under their noses. But in due time, when He comes of age, He will enter into their “Temple courts” and begin preaching and teaching, and turning over the money-changers’ tables, and freeing the people with the truth of God once again. After all, isn’t this exactly what happened the first time? Jesus lived in relative obscurity until He was thirty-years old, and then He returned to Galilee *from the wilderness* “in the power of the Spirit and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues [churches] being glorified by all” (Luke 4:14-15). And soon after His manifestation from the wilderness of obscurity, He boldly informed the people who were sitting in the pews of His hometown church of Nazareth that *they were the ones* who were spiritually “poor, blind, captive, and oppressed”, and that “a prophet is without honor only among His own people”. Upon hearing these indicting words, the Bible says that the church people became angry with Him, rushed Him, and cast Him out of their church and city (Luke 4:16-29)! These things will be done again. For it is written: “Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled.” (Matt. 24:34). And again, it is written: “These things I have spoken to you that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues [churches]; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father or Me.” (John

16:1-3).

THERE ARE NICODEMUSES AMONG THEM

A while back, when God was showing me these things, He spoke to me about Nicodemus. According to the Bible, Nicodemus was a leading Pharisee, “a ruler of the Jews” and a member of the Sanhedrin which was the highest-ruling Jewish tribunal and religious council at the time. As Scripture reveals, Nicodemus “came to Jesus by night” (John 3:1-2). In other words, he came to Jesus in secret and not openly for fear of his fellow Jews. Obviously, Nicodemus was led to Jesus by a certain level of genuine personal conviction, albeit coupled with a big amount of fear of what others might think. He approached Jesus with convicting apprehension as well as with curious respect: “Rabbi [Teacher],” he said, “We know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” (John 3:2). In saying this, Nicodemus was admitting that the Jewish religious leaders couldn’t quite figure out how Jesus came on the scene apart from their establishment (that is, apart from their Temple system), and yet, do the miraculous things that He was doing. Furthermore, how was He going to fit in with them? What was His purpose for coming? Obviously He was sent to them by God, but why, and for what purpose? These were some of Nicodemus’ thoughts as well as the thoughts of some of the Jewish leadership. That is why Nicodemus came to Jesus in the first place – to find out whom He really was and why He had arrived on the spiritual scene.

To Nicodemus’ surprise, Jesus immediately informed him that he needed to be re-born (John 3:3). In other words, Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to be completely re-created, torn-down, changed, converted and rebuilt! Everything that had made him into who and what he was – his Jewish upbringing and education, rabbinic school training, Temple worship, Law-keeping, Sanhedrin membership, etc (i.e., his whole life) needed to be renounced and completely *buried* in water (through baptism). In addition to doing this, he then needed to be re-born in and through the Spirit of God by believing in Christ Jesus. Of himself, Nicodemus had only earned death – not eternal life! All of his church attendance, Temple worship, scholarly training, personal sacrifices, tithes and offerings, and Law-keeping, had only earned him one thing – that is, death! “For by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified, but by faith in Jesus Christ.” (Gal. 2:16). This is what Nicodemus and all of the Jews didn’t realize and had to learn. But unfortunately, Nicodemus was caught in “the system” – the system of worship that had become an institution in his life. He had become enslaved, and was now in bondage to a religious system that was spiritually suppressing and oppressing him. This system, called “the Temple”, had subtly, and unknowingly, become “God” to him. As a consequence, he began to blindly follow and serve it, instead of the true living God. It had deceived him into thinking that he was right with God, and that he was headed for the Kingdom of heaven. This system’s leaders had unintentionally placed a strangle-hold on him through their wrong teachings and false doctrines. He was made a captive through religious deception and fear. He was controlled and oppressed by superstition and spiritual ignorance. In his heart he was made to feel that he couldn’t question anything or explore “new truth” lest he consider himself, or be considered by others, as rebellious and insubordinate. He was trapped and unable to listen to that “still small voice” that often called out to him. Since his earliest recollections and childhood, the rabbis’ traditions, teachings and interpretations were considered “infallible” and

needed to be strictly enforced and obeyed without question. To his conscience, all interpretations and teachings, and all divine revelations, needed to be accompanied by religious credentials and/or have rabbinic approval. Unbeknownst to him, he had become a prisoner to a religious system that had permeated his mind and captivated his faith. To him, free speech and free thought needed to be quickly squelched and reigned-in. Anything outside of the Temple belief system and its ordination and promotion were considered heresy and rebellion towards God, as well as a denial of the pure and only faith of the Hebrew fathers. This was Nicodemus' life – and his spiritual position. And such was the life and belief of every sincere, God-fearing, Jew of the first century! But now that Jesus had come on the scene, Nicodemus, along with many others, was finding himself trapped between two conflicting worlds.

When Jesus entered Nicodemus' world with His miracles and His divine words of truth, it must have threatened Nicodemus' faith and shattered his religious paradigm completely. Nicodemus must have quietly thought to himself, 'How can this man do such miracles and say such things? Who gave Him this spiritual authority? Where did He receive His anointing to teach and to preach? Surely not from the High Priest at the Temple – for I've never seen this man in church (Temple) before. Who is He really?' This is why Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. He couldn't reconcile Jesus' miraculous ministry in his mind with his Jewish religious world – his "Temple system". This is the "Temple system" that I have been writing about throughout this book. It is the "system" that permeates all of Christianity today. It is going to be dealt with and destroyed in the coming months and years in the lives of millions. God is going to call many people out of it. And like the Scriptures foretell, many people are going to completely leave the "Temple" and its synagogues (churches) and begin to follow Jesus instead!

Why did the Jewish religious leaders of the first century hate Jesus? It is clear. It is because He was taking away their numbers by freeing the people from their religious captivity by preaching the truth. He was exposing the religious leaders for what they were. He was de-posturing and de-powering the influence that the Temple had over their spiritual lives, thereby hurting the institution and its leaders financially and politically. And most of all, He was demanding that everybody repent and humble themselves before God, especially those who were in charge. No wonder they killed Him! And if we were really honest with ourselves, we would have to acknowledge that any true minister and servant of God living today would be found doing and saying the same things that Jesus was doing and saying during His days on earth. For Jesus said: "The servant is not greater than his Master; but it is enough that the servant be like his Master." (Matt. 10:24-25). And again, He said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher." (Luke 6:40).

At first, Nicodemus came to Jesus privately, but as he grew in faith, he overcame his fear of the Temple system and its agents (the religious leaders and authorities). Notice at the end of the book of John that it states that Nicodemus came openly with Joseph of Arimathea to take down the body of Jesus from the cross, prepare it for burial, and put it into a tomb (John 19:39-42). Notice that Nicodemus was no longer afraid, ashamed, or intimidated to openly live out his faith in Christ! Curiously though, Joseph of Arimathea was, for it says that "Joseph of Arimathea, *being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews* asked Pontius Pilate for the body of Jesus" (John 19:38). Nicodemus had obviously grown in faith since first meeting Jesus privately, and this spiritual growth

and maturity had completely eradicated the importance of the “Temple” in his life. He was no longer afraid of what others thought. He had overcome the “fear of man” in his life. He could now let his “light” shine. That is, Jesus, who is “the Light that gives light to every man” (John 1:4-9) could now shine brightly in and through him. Instead of *going* to the Temple, Nicodemus had now *become* the Temple. For it is written: “Do you not know that you are the Temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (I Cor. 3:16). Likewise today, instead of *going* to church, we Christians need to *become* the Church!

About a year and a half ago, the Lord woke me up one night and spoke to me, saying, “I will send you [My servants] into the middle of the Temple courts again.” I was puzzled by this statement, and so I sat up, and said, “What, Lord?” He immediately showed me in my mind’s eye the following verses in the Bible: “Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ‘Go, stand in the Temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.’ And when they heard that, they entered the Temple early in the morning and taught... Then one came and told the high priest, the captain of the Temple, and the chief priests, saying, ‘Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the Temple and teaching the people!’... When they heard this, they were furious and took counsel to kill them” (Acts 5:17-33). As I began to realize what the Lord was actually telling me – that He is intending to send His servants and messengers into Christendom – directly into the Christian churches with this message, I began to protest, saying, “But no, Lord! They will beat us and hit us.” The Lord replied, “Yes, they will.” As I sat there pondering this fateful persecution, I immediately (and foolishly) thought about my nose, and how I had just paid a lot of money to have it fixed. (I broke it in a basketball game a couple of years ago). Concerned, I asked God about it, saying, “Lord, are they going to hit my nose?” He said, “Yes, but they will not be allowed to break it or any of your bones for that matter – for it is written: ‘Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken.’” (Psa. 34:19-20). I then asked, “Oh Lord, why are You going to do this? Why are You going to send Your servants into the middle of the fire, the hotbed of persecution – right smack dab into the middle of Christianity and its churches?” He said, “Because there are many Nicodemuses among them.” At the time that He said this to me I did not understand what He meant, and so I completely kept this word to myself. I didn’t tell anyone about it.

About a week later though, I met a man who was hired to found and pastor a new “start-up church” in the area. Apparently, he was entrusted with this task by a large corporate church that wanted to expand its membership into the surrounding areas. I had never met this man before, but out-of-the-blue he called me on the phone and we agreed to meet. Apparently, he had gotten my phone number from a neighbor who for some reason “felt” that we needed to talk. I did not know why I had to meet him, but the Spirit assured me that I “had to”, so I agreed to meet him for lunch at a nearby restaurant. After explaining his situation to me regarding his church employer, I noticed some uneasiness in his demeanor. I asked him about it. He immediately explained to me, in an exasperated tone with tears, that he “felt like Nicodemus in the Bible!” I was astounded at his choice of words because I hadn’t said anything to him about my earlier discussion with the Lord. He said that he felt “caught between two worlds” and “stuck between two allegiances”. He went on to explain that the “parent church” that had hired him expected him to preach and teach the things

that they had instructed him and hired him to do. He said that they were only interested in “building numbers” and increasing their membership. He didn’t feel that they wanted him to particularly focus on brokenness, judgment, sin, and repentance, but rather on “lighter, more appealing subjects”. In his conscience, he felt that he was supposed to preach what God had been giving him which obviously was going to offend most people and turn them away, instead of drawing them to their fellowship. He wept as he confessed this to me, asking me what to do. I then told him what the Lord gave me to tell him: *“No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon [riches].”* (Matt. 6:24). I continued: *“The Lord says that ‘Whosoever you rely on to put food on your table owns you – whether that be God or whether that be man.’ God expects you to serve Him and to put your trust in Him only. You are not to point the people to an institution of man, but rather, you are to point them to God! Do this, and God will bless you. Depart from this word and everything that you build-up in man and for man will come to nothing and be destroyed. For it is written, ‘Blessed is the man who built his house upon the Rock [upon the words of Jesus]; for when the rains descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat down on that house, it did not fall, for it was founded upon the Rock. But to the man that hears these sayings of Mine’ says God, ‘and doesn’t do them, I will liken him unto a foolish man who built his house on the sand; and when the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, it fell. And great was its fall!’”* (Matt. 7:24-27). Upon hearing this, the man lowered his head, wept, and quietly walked away. I never saw him again. I did hear recently though, through a mutual friend, that the “start-up church” completely disintegrated a year later and that it all came to nothing. This little church no longer exists, and apparently, its parent church is now “falling apart at the seams” as well. It is being rocked by scandal, division, dissention, charges of sexual misconduct among the ministry, and financial misdealing. Seemingly, its days are numbered too. God truly means what He says.

THE HERODIANS

During the time of the Herods, the ruling family of Palestine, there existed a group of Jews who became known as the Herodians. These were Jews who supported the dynasty of Herod, and therefore the rule of Rome. They are mentioned twice in the New Testament as joining forces with the Pharisees in plotting to discredit and destroy Jesus (Mark 3:6; 12:13). Because their true allegiance was to Rome, and not to God, their faith was really in vain therefore. They were more about religious pretense than true worship. Sadly, there are many “Herodians” among us today. As time goes on and things become more spiritually clear and visible, these “Herodians” will begin to vehemently oppose Christ and try to discredit and destroy Him again.

A Herodian is anyone who calls himself a believer – a Christian – and yet is “in bed” politically with this world. As we have seen before, no man can serve two masters; either he will love [adhere to] the one, and hate the other, or he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. A person cannot have divided loyalties – otherwise there really is no loyalty to either side! This is the problem with Christians and churches who get involved with this world’s politics. A person cannot truly have “dual citizenship” and “dual allegiance” especially when you have two opposing nations (or kingdoms) involved. The Bible clearly states this: *“Do you not know that friendship with the world*

is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (Jam. 4:4). “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (I John 2:15).

Jesus clearly stated that He was not a citizen of any earthly nation, but rather a citizen of the heavenly Kingdom only. He boldly declared to the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate: *“My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My Kingdom is not from here...And you would have no power over Me if it were not given to you from above.” (John 18:36; 19:11).* If Jesus stated that He wasn’t a member or citizen of any earthly nation or kingdom, then why do some of His bondservants claim to be? The reason is that some of His people haven’t really left this world in their hearts and truly become “pilgrims and sojourners” on this earth! They have become content and entangled with the “cares, riches, and pleasures of this life” (Luke 8:14), and consequently, have taken up permanent residency in a strange land. This is the exact definition of a Herodian. According to *The New Strong’s Concordance of the Bible*, a Herodian is “a Hellenizing Jew”! That is, he (or she) is a Jew who has become acclimated to his non-Jewish surroundings and is content living like a pagan Greek (a non-Jew) in a land that is not his own. His daily affections and attentions are focused on the country and world in which he now lives, and he no longer desires to return to his homeland. In his heart, he has decided to become a citizen of his host nation, and no longer considers himself a foreigner living in a strange land. In his goal to “not stand out” or be considered “an outsider and stranger”, he becomes involved in the politics of his host country, aligning himself with the political party which best supports his views and agenda. In order to take advantage of all the benefits made available to him, the Herodian politically plays “both sides”. He professes his Christianity in order to take advantage of government tax-breaks, appear righteous to others, and appease his own conscience; while at the same time, proclaiming his patriotism in order to befriend society, be accepted, have political voice, and wield temporal power. Like the Herodians of Jesus’ day, the modern-day Herodians swear allegiance to both God and country (“Rome”). Obviously, they believe that there is no inherent conflict between these two opposing kingdoms.

As Christians, do we really think that if Jesus were here today He would be interested in whether or not Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton won the Democratic nomination? Would He really care whether or not a Republican or a Democrat was in the White House? Do we really believe that while Jesus was on earth He was concerned with whether or not Tiberius or Caligula was the emperor in Rome? Did Jesus make sure to cast His vote for the particular senator which best supported and represented His moral ideas and convictions? To Jesus, was Pontius Pilate the “better candidate” for governor because he supported capital punishment, than King Herod was who obviously supported killing babies? As Christians, these questions and observations should seem ridiculous to us! So why then do so many Christians today – supposedly being the “followers of Christ” – make similar statements and political observations? It is because they have not truly separated themselves from this world and its politics! Notice what the Scripture says about those who truly follow after God – they don’t have any earthly citizenship or national allegiance: *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly, if they had been mindful of the country from which they had come out of, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their*

God, for He has prepared a city for them.” (Heb. 11:13-16). This is how Jesus lived! He desired the “heavenly country and city” which was prepared for Him by God. He yearned for it and looked for it constantly (Matt. 6:10), not any earthly government or kingdom. *He was not about reforming this world or its governments.* He didn’t threaten to boycott or vote out of office any ruler who didn’t agree with Him or keep His commandments. While He was here He knew that this world is destined to end and its kingdoms to be broken into pieces (Dan. 2:44). Therefore His heart was not entangled with the affairs and concerns of this world or its politics. He knew that God was in charge, and that His Father would put into power those that He wanted in power and would remove from power those that He wanted removed according to His purposes and according to His divine plan (Dan. 2:21; 4:17, 25, 32).

Make no mistake - the Herodians were, and are, enemies of God. They represent all the church denominations, and pastors, and church councils and boards, and individuals that have one foot in the Church and one foot in this world’s politics. Jesus said that if you truly belonged to Him, then the world would hate you, for the world loves its own. But it hates outsiders and foreigners – that is, it hates true Christians (John 15:18-19; 17:14; I John 3:13)! If you are a Christian, then you need to completely come out of this world and put your citizenship and allegiance in the Kingdom of heaven only (II Cor. 6:17). For even the Apostle Paul lamented in his day that some of the so-called “Christians” were not truly putting their allegiance in the Kingdom of heaven, but rather in the things of this world. He wrote to the Church: *“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. **For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame – who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” (Phil. 3:17-21).***

HIERARCHIES IN THE CHURCH: **THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANS**

One of the main tenets of the Temple system that is condemned and is going to be destroyed is “church hierarchies” and “church government”. The practice of having and exercising authority over one another, like the unbelieving Gentiles do, within the Church is forbidden in Scripture. Speaking to His disciples, Jesus said, *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles [the unbelievers] lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you. But whoever desires to become great among you, must be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:25-28).* In this way, Jesus advocated “rulership” from bottom-up, instead of from top-down. He said that anybody who wanted to be in a rulership-type position within His Church (or Kingdom) must be on the “bottom” lifting others up by serving them, like He does us, instead of being the ones “on top” being served! Within the kingdoms of men (the earthly realm), the “lesser” serves the “greater”. But in the Kingdom of God (in the Godly realm), the “greater” serves the “lesser”. Jesus showed us this godly principle. He, being greater than all of us, emptied Himself of His royal God-head and came down to earth taking on the form of a servant, in order to serve us and lift us up (exalt us), so that we too might sit in

heavenly places together with Him (Phil. 2:5-8; Eph. 2:6). He said that He came to set us an example that we likewise should follow – serving one another (John 13:13-17). The Apostle Paul said the same thing. He wrote: *“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all.”* (I Cor. 9:19). This is true leadership. This is godly authority.

Take as an example, fathers and mothers. God gave fathers and mothers authority over their children. But is this authority given to parents in order for the children to serve the parents, or for the parents to serve the children? Obviously, it is given for the parents to serve (look after, guide, protect, provide for, and teach) their children – to bring them to maturity and adulthood. The same is true for the leadership that God instituted in the Church. Notice: *“It was God who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be **built up** [lifted-up, exalted, edified] until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, so that we will no longer be children.”* (Eph. 4:11-14). Church leaders and elders are given authority by God to serve in the same manner that parents serve their children. They aren’t to lord over them, abuse them, provoke them unto wrath, or take from them. But instead, they are to lead, encourage, help, inspire, admonish, disciple, enable, comfort, and teach them.

With this in mind, the Bible gives us a principle that I think many church leaders don’t understand or aren’t willing to apply. The Apostle Paul, being careful not to become a burden or a stumbling block in any way to the Church members, said that *“children ought not to lay up for the parents, but rather, the parents for the children”* (II Cor. 12:14). Even though he clearly had the right by the Word of God to live off of the people that he ministered to (I Cor. 9:7-14), Paul chose not to exercise this right in order not to cause offense or to become a burden to them (I Cor. 9:15-18; II Thess. 3:7-9). He also didn’t want to give an occasion to the enemies of God to speak evil by imputing wicked motives to him implying that he was in the ministry for financial gain (I Pet. 5:2-3; I Thes. 5:22). Out of his great love for the people and his faithfulness to God, Paul took nothing from the people that he served; he only continually freely gave of himself to them. Isn’t this the same example that Jesus gave us as well? He took nothing from us, but gave us all things. He trusted God to provide everything for Him that He needed – and God faithfully did so (Matt. 10:9-10; 14:16-21; 17:27). Why then do ministers today not trust God to provide for them, and therefore, freely give to others as it has been freely given to them, expecting nothing in return (Matt. 10:8; Luke 6:35; 22:35)? Instead, a lot of professing Christian leaders today, not only live-off of the people they minister to, but financially “devour” them as well just as Jesus said (Matt. 23:14). They extort the people by using spiritual manipulation, twisting of Scriptures, fear, and guilt. They cause the people to serve them, and to work for them and their “spiritual” agendas, and lay heavy financial burdens and expectations upon them while they themselves are exempt from these burdens (Matt. 23:4). I tell you the truth, God is going to visit them in their wickedness, and expose them for what they are – “robbers and thieves” who have come to steal, kill, and destroy the Lord’s flock (John 10:8-10). Likewise, these modern-day Pharisees and Sadducees and “priests” all have their “building funds” that they require the people to support. I tell you the truth, the “Temple tax” in Jesus’ day was the exact same thing – and in due time, the Temple with its taxes and priests were all completely destroyed!

If the idea of “church hierarchies” and “church government” isn’t biblical, then where did it come from and how did it assimilate itself into the New Testament Church? As many historical books and sources will easily confirm, the idea of church government and ecclesiastical hierarchies began to slowly creep into the church shortly after the deaths of the original apostles. Just as the Apostle Paul had predicted, evil men began to arise from within the Church to draw men away after themselves, thus making themselves rulers over them in order to live-off of them and to take from them. Paul prophesied to the leadership of the Church these very words: *“For I know this that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves, men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves... I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands [of mine] have provided for my [own] necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”* (Acts 20:29-35).

Shortly after Paul’s death, the Apostle John, who was the last surviving apostle, was given a final revelation from God. It is recorded in prophetic detail in the Book of Revelation. In it, God revealed to John (and to the whole Church) that soon after the original Apostles’ demise the evil “doctrine of the Nicolaitans” was going to try and infiltrate the Church (Rev. 2:6); and that after a few centuries, sadly, it was going to successfully establish itself within the Church (Rev. 2:15). This “doctrine of the Nicolaitans” is the “clergy/laity” system that now permeates Christianity. Let me explain: The word “Nicolaitans” comes from two Greek words: *Niko* which means “to rule over” or “to conquer”; and *laos* which means “the people” or “the laity”. In other words, it means “ruling over the laity” or putting a class of people (clergy) in place to govern and rule over the common people – that is, the laity (the lay people). God says that He hates this wicked doctrine and practice (Rev. 2:15)! The Bible says that all of God’s people in the Church are priests (I Peter 2:9; Rev. 5:10), not just a select few. As was mentioned before, Jesus never intended for His people to “rule over each other” in this life (Matt. 20:25-26). He said that He alone was our Leader and our Teacher, and that we all are equal brethren (Matt. 23:8-10). We are all simply servants who are called to serve one another, and to lay down ourselves for one another, just as Jesus did for us setting us an example that we should follow (Gal. 5:13; Phil. 2:3-5; I John 3:16). This is what it means to be a Christian – a “follower of Jesus Christ”.

The idea of having a “clergy/laity” system (a caste system) within the Church is unbiblical and against Christ. It is therefore antichrist. We are called to serve one another and to lay ourselves down for each other just like Jesus did. We are not to rule over one another and have or seek religious preeminence over each other (Matt. 23:8-12). The Scriptures teach that in the last days the actual Antichrist himself will emerge out of a spirit and attitude of religious superiority. He will exalt himself above everyone else in the Church to the point that he will even feel that he himself is God. The Apostle Paul warned us that this “man of sin” and “son of perdition” – the Antichrist – will arise from within the church system and that he *“opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God”* (II Thes. 2:3-4). The Bible clearly teaches that anything that exalts itself (or himself) above God or His Word is the spirit of antichrist. It is written in the Scriptures that God’s people shall have no other gods but Him, and Him only! To put any individual or group of individuals between God and His people is blasphemous and against Christ. Christ alone is the head

of the Church (Eph. 5:23). There is no other mediator between God and men but Jesus Christ (I Tim. 2:5). Therefore, to have any other “mediators” or intermediates between God and His people is heretical and against the very work of Jesus Christ. It is therefore antichrist! It is Christ alone who makes intercession for us, not anyone else (Heb. 7:25). The self-appointed clergy members among us today need to get off of their “high-horses” and humble themselves before they get “lowered” by God. For Jesus Himself warned the religious leaders of His day that “The Stone which you builders have rejected has become the Head of the corner...and whoever falls on this Stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.” (Matt. 21:42-44; Acts 4:11).

CHRIST IS GOING TO VISIT HIS TEMPLE AGAIN!

The Bible says that in the last days, the Lord Jesus will expose the “lawless one” who is in the Temple of God, and that He will “*overthrow him with the spirit of His mouth* and destroy him with the brightness of His coming” (II Thes. 2:8). This verse clearly indicates that Jesus is going to again speak and preach to His people who are caught in the church system before judgment comes upon them. The Bible also tells us that “Elijah” will come again and “restore all things” in the Church before that “great and dreadful Day of the Lord” comes (Matt. 17:11; Mal. 4:5). We have seen how God “visited His Temple” the first time before it was destroyed. Through His preaching and teaching, Jesus exposed the “lawless ones” within the Church (His Temple) during the first century. He preached against the hypocrisy, the sin, the lies, the false doctrines and teachings, and the religious pretenses that permeated and enslaved His people. He called on all of them to repent and to change, and to receive the gift of His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Some of them hated Him for it, and cast Him out of their Temple, and killed Him. They also persecuted and murdered His servants and followers that He sent to them afterwards. And so forty years later, God swiftly destroyed His House (Jerusalem and the Temple) because they “didn’t recognize the time of their visitation” (Luke 19:44). As Jesus said – the very things that “made for their peace were hidden from their eyes” because their hearts were not right with God and they refused to repent or to be broken by Him (Luke 19:42-44; Matt. 21:32, 43-44). They didn’t recognize God among them in the person and flesh of Jesus or His followers. They didn’t realize the significance of Jesus’ prophetic name, Emmanuel – which literally meant “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). They didn’t discern the presence of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Christ) in His apostles or His servants. They didn’t understand what was happening in their very midst (Luke 23:34). They couldn’t spiritually see or discern. They didn’t know God, and therefore couldn’t recognize His Spirit when He came near to them. They only knew Him according to “the flesh” – according to what their human eyes could see and their human ears could hear (Matt. 13:14-15). They didn’t seek to know Him with their hearts. And consequently, like the people of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, God blinded them all and destroyed them because of it. Seeking to know God in the flesh (carnally), and not in the Spirit, only brings death. As Jesus said, “*It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing*” (John 6:63).

Sadly, the Bible predicts that many in these last days are going to be allowed to believe a lie because they really don’t love the truth (II Thes. 2:9-12). Like the many that perished in the Temple at Jerusalem during the first century, unfortunately, there will be many more who will face the same judgment in the Church Temple system today. These are the ones that Paul described as “*ever-learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (II Tim. 3:7). They are pretenders

and schemers who serve God with their lips, but whose hearts are far from Him; people who seek to know Jesus according to the flesh, but not after the Spirit. These are the very ones that Jesus prophesied about, saying, *“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you evildoers!’”* (Matt. 7:22-23).

This brings me to a true story that I must share that clearly and sadly demonstrates the current spiritual state of His Temple (the Church): About nine years ago, a former neighbor of mine invited me and my family to attend a church service with his wife and kids at their local church. My wife and I agreed to go with them. Their non-denominational Christian church had a big beautiful building that seated around one-thousand people. This church building had very high ceilings, white stately walls, a gorgeous lobby, comfortable pews, and a very large pulpit area with big speakers and projection screens. The church’s “praise and worship band” had all of the latest sound and lighting equipment; the choir was decked-out in the best robes; and the ministry teams all wore their finest suits and Sunday dresses. The parishioner’s were all upper-middle class, professional-looking people who had the nicest smiles and prettiest clothes. Truly, this church had the best of everything that money could buy. Everybody seemed happy, very relaxed and comfortable. As I sat there in one of the beautifully-decorated padded pews, listening to the joyous message and announcements that the Senior Pastor was giving, I suddenly fell into a vision. I didn’t realize it at first, until the vision was over, that I had actually had a vision. As I was experiencing it, I actually thought that it was truly happening in real life. When it was over, I was left sweating profusely with my pulse racing, as my head was flooded with all kinds of unsettling thoughts and convictions. The following is a true account of what I experienced and saw in this vision as I sat there in this beautifully-decorated Christian church:

At the close of the announcements, the pastor turned towards me and said, “Ladies and Gentlemen, we have a special guest speaker here with us today. And we are so pleased that he and his family are able to join us. Please help me in welcoming Eric Wheeler and his family. Eric will be bringing us the message from the Lord today.” As everyone enthusiastically applauded, and smiled at me and my family, I walked up to the podium and acknowledged their gracious welcome. Before I could dive into my main message though, I announced to them that we first needed to take care of some “small church business”. To me, it was more like an “off-the-cuff item of business” that quickly needed to be done, so that I could really get into the “meat” of my sermon message that I had prepared for them. I informed everybody that we just needed to quickly get this “church business” out of the way. I assured them that it was really “no big deal” and that it could be done rather quickly – or so I thought. I asked the audience members sitting in the church how many of them owned or possessed at least two or more vehicles. Almost every hand in the church went up. “Good,” I said, “because it has come to my attention that there are a few families among us that don’t have any vehicles at all or any means of transportation, and so those of us who have ‘extra’ should go ahead and part with ‘that extra’ and give to our brothers and sisters who are in need. After all, this is what John the Baptist told us that we should do – remember? He said that ‘he who has two coats, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.’ (Luke 3:11). So if you don’t mind, I am going to ask the ushers to come forward and take this brown paper bag that I have here, and to go through the aisles and collect the set of keys that you have to the extra vehicle or vehicles, and we will see to it that they get properly distributed to those brethren among

us that have need. By the way, if you have the title to the vehicle with you, please also drop it into the bag as well. If not, don't worry, you can just mail it into the church offices, or bring it by later. We will see to it that it gets to its rightful new owner. Thank you so much for your help and generosity. I'm sure that these needy families are going to be very grateful for your help."

As I finished saying this the place got very quiet and no one moved. They all looked at me as if they were waiting for me to deliver the punch line. When I realized that they thought I was kidding, I said with a little laugh, "I'm not joking. Seriously, there are poorer and less fortunate families among us who don't have any cars at all. And most of us have at least two or three vehicles that we own. Therefore, we should be willing to help them out with our extra. Let's go. Move it. We need to get on with the main message!" Nobody moved. All of the previous smiles that had greeted me had now turned to puzzlement and bewilderment, and then slowly into anger. People began to glare at me, as they began to realize that I was serious. The ushers and deacons were stunned. They didn't know whether or not I wanted them to truly go in and out of the plush aisles of this beautiful church building collecting the extra car keys from these "wealthy" Christians who clearly by their own admission had excess to give.

By this time, the people were becoming angry with me as I pleaded with them that this was not a joke, and that this should be no "big deal" to them – after all, I was only asking them to give out of their abundance. I wasn't requiring them to sacrifice anything! They clearly had excess – and there definitely were brothers and sisters among us that didn't have anything. Why then was this so spiritually hard for them? The longer I stood there looking at them, with not one of them offering up their extra car keys in help or in charitable donation, the angrier I got. The anger of the Lord came upon me and began to move His Spirit that dwells deep within me, causing me to burn with righteous indignation, and I exclaimed, "You hypocrites! How can you say that the love of God is in you, when you aren't even willing to give out of your excess to your brother whom you clearly see has need? Is it not written that *'whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and yet shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how can the love of God dwell in him?'* (I John 3:17) You hypocrites and white-washed sepulchers! You sit here pretending to be Christians – playing church, serving God with your lips, and yet your hearts are removed far from Him. How dare you come before Him, and convince yourselves that you love Him! How can you claim to *"love Him whom you have not seen, when you don't even love your own flesh and blood that you can see?"* (I John 4:20-21). You liars and snakes! God knows your wicked hearts! And He will come upon you in swift judgment for your hypocrisy and wickedness!"

At that moment, the deacons and elders rushed the stage gnashing their teeth in anger and disdain. The people pounded their fists in the air yelling threats and obscenities at me and my family – calling for our blood. They pushed us out the door and violently carried us into the parking lot.... It was at this moment that I woke up – the vision ended. I can't tell you how troubled my soul was by what I had seen. I was truly humbled and deeply saddened by the Lord's revelation. I knew at that moment that we are all so far from God and where we should be as His people and as His Church. God help us all to repent and to truly recognize our "time of visitation"! For God has warned us that if we aren't spiritually vigilant and watching, and looking for Him, then He will "come upon us" in a way, and at a time, in which we don't think or even realize (Rev. 3:3). Sadly, we know from the Bible that just like in the days of our forefathers, there will be many who will be

spiritually blind to His visits. Ask yourself then, ‘Do I really love the Truth or am I really in love with a “Temple system” that claims to be true?’ As we can see from the Scriptures and from history – there is a big difference between the two!

PART 4

THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” (I Cor. 2:10)

THE NEW TESTAMENT WILL BE REPEATED

A number of years ago, the Holy Spirit revealed to me in a series of visions, dreams, and revelations that just as the Old Testament was fulfilled and played out in the New Testament, the New Testament will be fulfilled and played out in the present day and immediate future. Let me explain. The Old Testament happenings and events, Paul says, were given to us as physical examples of a spiritual reality (I Cor. 10:6-11). Take, for example, baptism. Paul says that when the Israelites passed through the Red Sea, it was a form of baptism (I Cor. 10:1-2). He said that when they ate the manna and drank water from the Rock, that it spiritually symbolized them eating and drinking Jesus Christ (I Cor. 10:3-4). In other places, Paul explains that the physical Temple, the sacrificial system, the priesthood, the holy days and Sabbaths, the ceremonial meat and drink offerings, and many other things prescribed in the Old Testament, were actually fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ as described in the New Testament.

Jesus testified to this fact also, by saying to His followers after His resurrection, “These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me.’ Then He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures [the Old Testament]” (Luke 24:44-45).

Generally speaking, most Christians believe and understand this. That is why they call themselves “Christians” or “followers of Christ.” They believe that Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the law and the prophets. They believe that He is the culmination and fulfillment of the entire Old Testament and its promises. Being a Christian myself, I too believe that this is by all means true! However, what many Christians don’t realize is that Jesus and the apostles both said and did many things in the New Testament which were prophetic, and given as “physical types” or examples for us today.

Many of the things which Christ and the apostles did physically in the New Testament have their spiritual counterpart in these modern times. Just as many of the events described in the Old Testament physically pointed to a spiritual reality that was to be fulfilled in the New Testament, so likewise, many physical occurrences and details in the New Testament have their spiritual fulfillment and prophetic meaning today. The Bible itself reveals this truth by saying first comes the physical, then comes the spiritual (I Cor. 15:46).

Like most Christians, I too believed in the past that the New Testament Scriptures were linear, and more or less, chronological. That is to say, like history, the New Testament's message flowed consecutively in one direction beginning with the birth of Jesus Christ and continuing forward to the writings of the last surviving apostle, John. I believed that the present-day Church, to one degree or another, was but the direct continuation of the original apostolic Church established in the New Testament. However, the Holy Spirit has since shown me that this belief is inaccurate and incomplete. Yes, it is true that we are "built upon the apostles and the prophets". Yes, it is true that we are the spiritual descendants of the apostles. But the New Testament Scriptures are not linear. They are dual. They are prophetic.

Just as the New Testament was not just a physical continuation of the Old Testament, but rather, its spiritual fulfillment; neither is our modern-day era of the Church just a physical continuation of the apostolic era of the Church, but rather, its spiritual fulfillment. Just as the New Testament fulfilled the writings of the Old Testament, so our modern-day Church will fulfill the writings of the first century Church! We will spiritually replay the New Testament. It has been said that history repeats itself. Well, this is exactly what the Holy Spirit has been showing me – that the New Testament is going to be repeated and fulfilled in us in this present day!

SPIRITUAL PARALLELS

In the few years before the birth of Jesus Christ, we find "the Church" or people of God in the following condition:

- 1) They were ruled over by the Sadducees, Pharisees and the Sanhedrin.
 - a) The church leaders had formal theological training and education, and were appointed by the religious, and sometimes, secular authorities.
 - b) The church leaders each had positions and titles, and dressed religiously to insure that they were recognized for their authority.
 - c) Many of the religious leaders were politically-aligned with the civil government.
- 2) They were in bondage.
 - a) to sin.
 - b) to the religious authorities.
 - c) to the Roman government.
- 3) They were spiritually blind and "sitting in darkness".
 - a) They didn't believe that they needed to change.
 - b) They believed that they were righteous because they went to synagogue, paid their tithes, and submitted to the religious hierarchy.
- 4) They had a general expectation that the Messiah's Coming was near, but clearly didn't understand its spiritual significance and the signs of the times.
- 5) They regularly met in buildings of worship, heard prepared messages, and attended formal services.

- a) The laity wasn't permitted to speak regularly.
- b) They were financially burdened and expected to financially support the synagogue or Temple.
- c) They could be put out of the synagogue or "disfellowshipped".

Jesus described the leaders of the Church this way: They were blind guides of the blind. They were hypocrites. They taught traditions of men instead of the commandments of God. They loved to be seen of men and recognized for their positions and titles. They put heavy burdens on the people, and instead of helping the elderly and needy, they consumed them. They were greedy and covetous. And although outwardly they appeared righteous, inwardly they were filthy and unclean.

When Jesus came, He told them that He was there to "preach the good news to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and to release the oppressed" (Luke 4:18). Notice that He was not talking to the Gentiles (unbelievers) here, but to those in the Church! It says that the eyes of all of them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him and that He said to them, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears!" (Luke 4:21). In other words, *they* were the poor, the dejected, and broken-hearted! *They* were the ones held captive, spiritually blind, and oppressed! Here, Scripture gives us a clear description of the state of the Church during Jesus' day!

Notice in the next verse how the people in the Church responded to Jesus' description of them (Luke 4:22). At first, they wondered and marveled at His gracious words. They didn't realize that they were in that condition. They didn't consider themselves to be spiritually poor, oppressed, or blind! After all, they were God's people! 'How could this be?' they thought. But knowing their thoughts, Jesus went on to explain from the Old Testament that even a prophet's own people wouldn't receive the prophet's message. And just as He had predicted, they became angry with Him, and threw Him out of their church (Luke 4:28-29).

The Church is no different today! We don't realize how spiritually poor we are. We are blind to our current spiritual state. We think that we are rich and increased with goods, yet we are wretched, miserable and naked (Rev. 3:17)! As the prophets foretold long ago, "The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple [His Church]... but who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears?!" (Mal. 3:1-2). The Church of the first century was caught off-guard and rejected His First Coming. Why do we today therefore self-righteously think that we will be ready and recognize His Second Coming?! The truth is, just as the first Church [Judaism] rejected the First Coming of the Messiah, so shall Christianity as a whole reject the Second Coming of the Messiah. Even as it is written, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same has become the head of the corner" (Luke 20:17). And again, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not!" (John 1:11).

Thankfully though, just as the New Testament Scriptures foretell, not all of the Jews rejected Jesus. For the Scriptures say that God left Himself a remnant of believers in disbelieving Israel. "Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, to them He gave the right to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). The Scriptures say that initially only about one-hundred and twenty people believed in the living Jesus after His ascension (Acts 1:14). But that soon after the Day of Pentecost, many more believed and were added to the Church daily (Acts 2:41-47). This same Church-wide repentance and re-birth will happen once again in the Church in the not-so-distant

future, only this time it will happen on a much larger scale!

HOW WILL JESUS COME?

Many people would say that Jesus will come in the same manner as He left –He will come in the clouds, just as He left in the clouds. This is true. Acts 1:9-11 says that while the disciples were looking at Jesus, He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they looked up, two angels announced to them that this same Jesus would also come again in like manner as they had seen Him go. Matthew also confirms this by saying, “And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:30). But many people don’t realize that by the time that Jesus comes in the fullness of His glory, it will be too late for the Church. Let me explain.

When Jesus returns to the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, in the fullness of His glory, the nations of the earth will see it and mourn and tremble (Matt. 24:30; Psalm 114:7). The whole world will see it. Jesus said that it will be as visible as the sunshine rising in the east is visible even unto the west (Matt. 24:27). This is how the whole world will see His coming! However, He describes His coming to the Church as a “thief in the night” (II Peter 3:10). He warns His own people to watch, and to be vigilant, because we don’t know in what hour (or how) the Master will be coming to us (Matt. 24:42, 44). He warns us, “But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you” (Rev. 3:3).

Notice in the Scriptures that He came unto His own people in ways that they didn’t recognize Him or expect Him to come. Instead of coming as a “conquering Messiah”, He came to His people as a helpless baby in a manger born in a stable unto a virgin (Luke 2:7-16). He appeared to His friend, Mary Magdalene, after He was resurrected, but she did not recognize Him (John 20:14). He spoke to two of His followers on the road to Emmaus, but they didn’t realize that it was Him (Luke 24:16). He appeared unto His own disciples a number of times after His resurrection, and yet, even they didn’t recognize Him at first in the form in which He chose to reveal Himself (John 21:1-4; Luke 24:36-39).

Consider the Parable of the Ten Virgins that Jesus gave. The ten virgins collectively picture the Church – the people of God. Notice that it says in Matthew 25:10 that *only the wise virgins who were ready went in with Him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut*. The remaining five virgins who were foolish and not ready to meet Him got left out. In other words, they missed their opportunity to be with the Bridegroom, that is, Christ. Now notice something else. It says that at midnight (in the middle of the night or in the midst of darkness) the cry went out - “the Bridegroom is coming! *Go you out to meet Him!*” (Matt. 25:6). Notice that it doesn’t say that Jesus was coming in the clouds as the whole world was witnessing it and the Church then made herself ready to join Him! It says that those “five wise virgins” (representing half of the Church) who were spiritually ready went out to *meet* Him as He was coming.

Remember in Matthew 24:27-30 it says that when Jesus actually returns to the earth in the greatness of His glory, His coming will actually be visible in the skies from the east even unto the west. And

that all of the nations and the peoples of the earth are going to mourn in anguish as they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Notice that the wise virgins are already *with Jesus when He comes* because it says, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints” (Jude 14). And in another place, it says that those saints who are prepared and still alive at His coming will be caught up together with those saints who have previously died, and together they will meet the Lord in the clouds of the air as He returns to the earth (I Thes. 4:14-18). Some Christians erroneously think that they are going to be able to wait until they actually see Jesus coming in the clouds before they get themselves spiritually ready to meet Him. But God says that they are foolish and are sadly mistaken. Their opportunity to have been with Christ would have long passed by the time that the world actually sees His physical coming. The Scriptures are clear! The Bride must make herself ready to meet the Bridegroom *now*, or else she is going to miss her opportunity to be with Him ruling in His Kingdom.

HOW WILL JESUS COME TO HIS PEOPLE?

As was mentioned earlier, after His resurrection and ascension, Jesus appeared to His followers in many ways and forms that they weren’t expecting. Many of the parables and messages recorded in the Bible seem to indicate that Jesus intends to come again to His people in the same manner. Notice what He warns His people in the Church in the last days: “I know your deeds. You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of My God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard. Obey it, and repent. *But if you do not wake up [spiritually], I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you*” (Rev. 3:1-3). If God’s people are not spiritually vigilant and living in a deep abiding relationship with Him, then He is going to come upon them *in a way* and *at a time* in which they don’t expect. Let me explain.

First of all, Jesus said to be careful how we treat people because it could be Him that we are really mistreating (see Matt. 25:31-46). He also said, “Whoever receives someone that I send, receives Me” (John 13:20). In another place, Jesus said that whoever welcomes even a little child that comes in His name, welcomes Him (Luke 9:48). The point is that Jesus can come to us in any form that He chooses. Sometimes, He may come to us in the form of a beggar, sometimes as a prisoner, sometimes as a stranger, and other times as a little child (Matt. 25:34-46). But the question is, are we humble and spiritual enough, and in a close enough relationship with Him, to recognize Him when He comes to us in the Spirit – that is, when He comes to us in another form that we are not expecting? Notice when the Apostle Paul was persecuting the Christians and having them arrested before his conversion, that the Lord Jesus appeared unto him and said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting *Me*?” Saul (Paul) answered, “Who are you, Lord?” And the Lord answered, “I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting!” (Acts 9:4-5). Notice that Saul (Paul) didn’t recognize Jesus. And furthermore, notice how Jesus said that Saul was actually persecuting *Him*, by persecuting His followers and servants!

We have to remember that Jesus’ servants and followers have His Holy Spirit in them. That is, *they have the Spirit of Christ living in them!* For it is written, “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). And again, “Because you are sons, God sent the

Spirit of His Son into your hearts...” (Gal. 4:6). And again, it says, “You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Rom. 8:9-10). It is clear then from the Scriptures, that those who persecute Jesus’ followers persecute Him! And those who reject His servants reject Him (Exod. 16:2-8; Luke 10:16; John 13:20).

Jesus told the religious leaders of His day, “Behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues [churches] and pursue from town to town” (Matt. 23:34). He then went on to tell the religious leaders that they will indeed see Him no more, until they would say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (Matt. 23:39). This is a very interesting statement for Jesus to make here. It is made right smack dab in the middle of His chastening of them for rejecting and murdering His servants the prophets which He had been sending to them since the days of Abel at Creation (Matt. 23:29-39). He said that they had the same self-righteous murderous attitude as their forefathers. And that they were indeed the very spiritual sons of them who murdered the prophets, and yet, all the while trying to appear righteous unto men.

Jesus then, as God, laments the fact that even though it was His long-time desire to hold Jerusalem in His arms and gather them together as His people under His wings, His people were not willing. Therefore, He said to them, “You shall see Me no more until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Matt. 23:39). In other words, His rebellious people will not see Him anymore until they humble themselves, and stop self-righteously rejecting those that He sends to them. He is not the one “who is coming in the name of the Lord”. For He is the Lord! He is referring here to His messengers that He sends – those that “come in His name”. But just as their spiritual forefathers did before them, His people still today (collectively being referred to as “Jerusalem”) are not spiritually discerning the fact that when they reject those who “come in His name” they are, in actuality, really rejecting Him!

JESUS WILL COME IN SPIRIT FIRST!

God declared through the Apostle Peter that before He comes to judge the world, He is going to judge His household first (I Peter 4:17). But how is He going to do that, one might ask? By His Spirit and through His Word is the answer! Let me explain.

The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). In other words, the Word of God is the tool through which the Spirit of God does His work in our lives. For it is written, “The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Heb. 4:12-13). And we know that Jesus is the One to whom we must all give account (Rom. 14:10-12; John 5:22).

Jesus, as the literal Word of God, emptied Himself of His divine nature, and became flesh like us taking on the form of a human being (John 1:14; Phil 2:5-8; Heb. 3:14-17). In other words, Jesus was the incarnate (or embodied) literal Word of God here on earth. While Jesus was here in the flesh, He said, “If anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world [at this time], but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the Word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:47). What does that mean? Very simply put – God sent forth His Word in the form of His Son to be the embodiment of Truth for us. But if anyone doesn’t believe Him to be the Truth, then God does not hold that person accountable now because they are blind to the Truth. However, in the last day, when that person is resurrected and finds himself standing before the judgment seat of Christ, he will then realize that Jesus as the Word was indeed the Truth, and he will then become convicted in his heart that His Word was indeed true. In other words, God is not judging the “unbelievers” (the world) now. He is only judging His own people (“the believers”) now!

The “believers” category includes any and all people who claim to be Christian or “followers of Christ”. This includes anyone who knows Him; anyone who recognizes and acknowledges Him; anyone who has been instructed and felt called by Him; and anyone who believes that they have been enlightened by Him. In other words, anyone who claims that they have had their “spiritual eyes opened” and therefore know and see Him. He is coming to them to see if they really do know Him and recognize Him. The Pharisees and Sadducees thought that they knew Him (God). But Jesus told them that they didn’t (John 8:55). They collectively called themselves “the people of God”, but they did not recognize Him when He came to them. In fact, just like their forefathers had done to the prophets that God had sent to them, they opposed the Son of God, and murdered Him also. Yet through it all, they professed to be enlightened and claimed they could spiritually see. That is why Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see [spiritually] may see, and that those who see [claim to see spiritually] may be made blind.’ Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, ‘Are we blind also?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no sin. But now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.” (John 9:39-41). Because we Christians say that we see and we know Him, we will therefore be tried and tested to see whether or not we are true.

That is why the Apostle Peter said, “If you are reviled for the name of Christ [because you are a Christian – a believer], blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their [the unbeliever’s] part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer [being a believer] as a murderer, a thief, and evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters ... For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God” (I Pet. 4:14-17). Only those who claim that they are followers of Christ (Christians) are being judged at this time! Not the unbelievers. For God is beginning to come to each of us who call ourselves “Christians” in the power of the Spirit to see whether or not we are truly abiding in Christ [His Word]. For it is written, “Man does not live by bread alone, but *by every Word that proceeds out of My mouth* does man live” (Matt. 4:4). He is coming to us through His Word (Jesus) in various forms to see whether or not we are hot or lukewarm (see Rev. 3:15-16). He is coming to us in Spirit! Notice that this is what Jesus warns His people, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev.3:20).

He is not coming to the Church, His people, *physically*. That is, He is not coming in a visible way where they can see Him coming in the clouds, and then make themselves ready to meet Him. That is how He is coming to the world, not His Church! His people better be ready to receive Him in an unexpected manner in which He chooses to reveal Himself. He wants to find out if we are indeed staying vigilant and spiritually awake, and always prepared as He warned us to be (Luke 12:35-40). Or have we fallen asleep spiritually, become complacent, and weighed-down with “carousing, drunkenness, and the cares of this life” (Luke 21:34)? As is clear from the Scriptures, He may come to us unexpectedly in the form of another person – through a prophet or a messenger. He may come to us in the form of a child or as a beggar on the street. He may speak to us through His written Word – the Bible, or through dreams, visions and personal revelations, or even an audible voice as He did with Peter and Paul and some of the other apostles and disciples. One thing is for certain though – His Word shows that He will come unto His own people in a way in which they aren’t expecting! He did this to His own people in the first century during His First Coming. For it is written, “He came unto His own [people], but His own did not receive Him. But as many as did receive Him, to *them* He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:11-12). No matter what form or body He chooses to visit us in, we need to be vigilant and spiritually awake because it could be Jesus in the Spirit speaking to us. For it is written, “God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days *spoken to us by His Son*, whom He has appointed heir of all things” (Heb. 1:1-2).

THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

As was mentioned earlier, parts of the New Testament are going to be replayed again. This is especially true in terms of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days. Notice how the Apostle Peter referred to these prophecies when he witnessed the first public outpouring of the Holy Spirit in his day: “Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you. Listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’” (Acts 2:14-21).

Obviously, these prophecies were not yet fulfilled in their fullest sense. The sun didn’t turn dark and the moon didn’t turn blood red during the days of the Apostles’ ministry. This first public outpouring of the Holy Spirit was only a small prophetic type of what was to come. It was “the former rain” prophesied to come by the prophet Joel. “Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God. For He has given you the former rain *moderately* [in measure], and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month” (Joel 2:23). The final great outpouring of the Holy Spirit is yet to come. Notice that it says, “He *will* cause to come down for you the rain, [both] the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month”. The next great public outpouring of the Holy Spirit will far exceed the first one both in

terms of scope and scale. God says through His prophet Joel, that this first outpouring of the Holy Spirit as described by Peter was only the “former rain” given *moderately*, not abundantly. The next great outpouring of the Holy Spirit will encompass both of these rains. The prophet Hosea confirms this: “Come, and let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us. He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days [two millennia] He will revive us. On the third day [third millennium¹] He will raise us up [restore us], that we may live in His sight. Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning. *He will come to us like the rain; like the latter and former rain to the earth*” (Hos. 6:1-3).

Jesus said that the spirit of Elijah would truly come first, and “restore all things” before the Day of the Lord comes (Matt. 17:11). And in another place it says that “I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you” (Joel 2:25). In other words, God is going to restore to us the spiritual things that were taken away from us by spiritual “drought, famine, and pestilence”! For it was written long ago, “Behold, the days come, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing of the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11-12). But thankfully, God promises that He is going to “restore all things” to us shortly. And that in these last days He is going to “pour out His Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17), and that “all flesh will see the salvation [saving power] of God” (Luke 3:6).

Recently, God has been revealing to me by His Holy Spirit that the prophets have been “travailing” in childbirth for a long time now, and that it is time for the “children of the Kingdom” to be born. For it is written that the prophet Isaiah lamented, “As a woman with child who is about to give birth writhes and cries out in her pain, so were we [prophets] in Your presence, O Lord. We were with child, we writhed in pain, but we gave birth to wind. We have not brought salvation to the earth. We have not given birth to people of the world” (Isa. 26:17-18).

Yet God declares, “Before she goes into labor, she gives birth. Before the pains come upon her, she delivers a son. Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? Yet no sooner is Zion [the Church] in labor than she gives birth to her children. Do I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery? says the Lord. Do I close up the womb when I bring to delivery? says your God. Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her. Rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her. For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts. You will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance” (Isa. 66:7-11). God is about to call many people to Himself in these last days. The Church [the Body and Bride of Christ] is about to bring forth many children unto the Father! And the Bible says that all of creation itself waits in earnest expectation for these sons of God to be revealed (Rom. 8:19). Are we spiritually ready to meet Him and to help bring in this great harvest – the “firstfruits” of the Kingdom of God?

¹The Bible reveals that to God one day is equal to a thousand years, and a thousand years is equal to one day (II Peter 3:8).

PART 5

DO YOU RECOGNIZE CHRIST? WILL YOU RECOGNIZE HIM WHEN HE COMES?

Even though many Jews expected the Messiah's coming in the first century, most were completely caught off-guard when the man Jesus showed up "instead". Except for a very few who were specifically told by the Holy Spirit and by angels, most people in the churches (in the synagogues and Temple) did not recognize or realize *God coming to them* in the form of "sinful man". Notice this in the Scriptures: "*In all things He had to be made like unto His brethren*" (Heb. 2:17). And again, "*But made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself*" (Phil. 2:7-8). And again, it is written: "*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh*" (Rom. 8:3). Most Israelites in the first century did not realize and recognize the truth of "*Immanuel*" – that is "God with us" (Matt. 1:23) – which literally means "God is among us"!

Isn't that a curious thing, and something spiritually worthy of our notice? The very people who should have known God and should have recognized Him couldn't see Him in the form of Jesus; the very ones who had the holy Scriptures that announced His coming and described how He was going to come didn't realize or recognize His coming; the very ones who knew the biblical prophecies and who could recite them backwards and forwards didn't recognize God when He showed up! The Bible-thumping Jews of Jesus' day clearly had the prophecies of Isaiah that described the Messiah's coming to them. They knew the prophecies that read: "*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good...*" (Isa. 7:14-16). The prophecy clearly indicated that Christ would be born among them, and that He would grow-up as a human child in their midst learning right from wrong. And again, it was written of Him: "*Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*" (Isa. 53:1-3) They knew these prophecies; yet they completely missed the Lord's Christ coming to them – first as a baby, then as a child, and finally as a man. For thirty years, the people of God, had Christ in their midst – and yet, they didn't know it! And furthermore, when He was finally revealed to them, they opposed Him and murdered Him! As it is written: "*He came unto His own, and His own did not receive Him.*" (John 1:11).

Many people don't realize it, but although most of the people in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee (all of Israel) were expecting the coming of the Messiah, very few were aware of His actual coming. It was the Holy Spirit and some angels that privately spoke of His initial coming – and it was only revealed

to a select few. Below is a list of those few select individuals whom God had told:

Mary – told by the angel Gabriel. *“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”* (Luke 1:31-35).

Elizabeth – revealed to her by the Holy Spirit. *“Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’”* (Luke 1:41-43).

Zacharias – revealed to him by the angel Gabriel and the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:17, 67-79).

Joseph – an angel of the Lord revealed it to him in a dream (Matt. 1:20-23).

The wise men from the east – “saw His star” (possibly an angel or supernatural sign) (Matt. 2:2)

The shepherds – were told by numerous angels (Luke 2:8-15).

Simeon – revealed to him by the Holy Spirit when he was an old man (Luke 2:25-32).

Anna – revealed to her by the Holy Spirit when she was an old woman (Luke 2:36-38).

John the Baptist – revealed to him by God after he was at least thirty years old (John 1:32-34).

Before John the Baptist began to openly reveal Jesus some thirty years later, nobody knew that Christ had been among them (John 1:26) except for the few people listed above – all of whom had probably long since died, except for Mary the mother of Jesus. And even she didn’t realize the fullness of the Godhead that was in her Son. The point is, without God revealing Himself to a person, or to a group of people, no one can recognize Christ dwelling in their midst. That is why Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws Him.” (John 6:44).

The Greek word *Christos* from which we get the word *Christ* means “anointed one”. When you are baptized with the Holy Spirit of God, you are considered “anointed” or an “anointed one”. In the Old Testament, when a prophet or servant of God anointed someone with oil to be king, symbolizing the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon them, they were then considered the “Lord’s anointed” (I Sam. 24:6). Jesus is *the* Christ – the Lord’s Anointed One. He is also referred to in the Scriptures as the King *of* kings and the Lord *of* lords. Jesus is also the Christ *of* christs – that is, He is the Anointed of the anointed. Those therefore who have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them are also christs. Furthermore, when you have Christ in you, you are Christ. For it is written that He is one Spirit and is not divided (I Cor. 6:17; 12:11; Eph. 4:4-6). For Jesus said, “I and My Father are one.” (John 10:30). And then He prayed, “Father, I do not pray for these [disciples] alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the

glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in One, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (John 17:20-23). And again, Jesus said before He ascended, “At that day [when you receive My Holy Spirit] you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you...If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” (John 14:20, 23).

Our physical bodies are the temples of the Living God; if indeed the Spirit of God resides in us. Like Jesus was while He was walking on the earth, we too are God in the flesh – if indeed we have the Spirit of God residing in us. For it is written: “Beloved, now we are the children of God; however, it has not yet been made manifest what we shall be. But we know that we shall be like Him when He is revealed, for we shall see Him as He is” (I John 3:2). And again, it is written: “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ *who is our life appears*, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:3-4). And again, it says: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” (Gal. 2:20). Yet, at this present time, like Jesus was when He walked the earth, we too are still clothed in sinful human flesh (yet, He was perfect and without sin; and we being imperfect do still sin); but God will change all of that. For it is written, “He will blot out our sins, and will remember them no more” (Isa. 43:25; Heb. 8:12).

The “Christian” churches today are not going to accept God coming to them in the form of human flesh – by way of *Christos* – Christ clothed in human flesh – any more than the Jews accepted God revealing Himself to them in the form of Jesus – *the Christos* – clothed in sinful human flesh two-thousand years ago! They tried to stone Him for blasphemy, remember – for being a man yet identifying Himself and equating Himself with God (John 10:30-33)? Yet this is exactly how God is going to reveal Himself to the religious people of today – in and through His humble earthly servants once again!

Remember how Paul, whose original name was Saul, refused and rejected “Christ’s first coming” to him, because in his steadfast self-righteousness, he didn’t recognize Christ living and dwelling in His followers? Jesus finally spoke to him saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? I am Jesus whom you are persecuting!” Didn’t Jesus say that those who have done anything to the *least of His brethren* have personally done it unto Him (Matt. 25:40-45)? Indeed, if we can’t see Jesus in those in whom He dwells, how can we look upon Him whom no mortal eyes can truly see without perishing? Even Moses himself could not look upon God as He truly is – but rather had to be shielded by God’s Hand, through the cleft of the rock – and yet he still could only look upon His backside. Why then are we offended by the thought that God would choose to reveal Himself to us in and through the pinnacle of His creation – that is, within the form and similitude of man? We don’t have any problem with God revealing Himself as a bush or as a cloud or as a pillar of fire. We don’t even have a problem with God speaking to us through the mouth of an unclean donkey or by letting His will be declared to us through the casting of lots. But let one person come to us in the name of God, claiming that God is in him and with him, and that He has sent him with a message, and watch how fast that man is rejected and scorned by Christendom! Woe be to us! Fools and disbelieving children we are! Do we not know that God is even counting our days and reading our minds? And that He Himself has appointed a day in which all evil thoughts will be manifested, and all things that are done in secret shall be openly revealed? Humble yourselves quickly therefore,

lest you be found out of the way when He suddenly appears at His Temple (Mal. 3:1-2)! For behold, many in that day shall be offended; and there shall be both weeping and gnashing of teeth! Is it not written that the pure in heart shall literally see God? (Matt. 5:8). Who are the pure in heart therefore? Are they not those who are spiritually humble with child-like faith, and who are without self-righteous pride and religious arrogance? Even those who long to see God and to know Him intimately as He really is? Are they not those who have no guile, and yet recognize their own sins, shortcomings, and failures, and daily call upon Him for forgiveness and mercy? Are these not the pure in heart that God says will surely recognize Him and *see Him* (Matt. 5:8)?

It is written that to those – and *only those* – who eagerly look for Him, will Christ appear a second time (Heb. 9:28). Do not foolishly think that you will see Him coming in the clouds like the Gentiles will. For I tell you the truth, oh Christendom, you will not see Him any more than those who opposed His first coming saw Him after He was killed and resurrected and *privately* manifested to only His disciples (John 14:19-23)! They didn't see Him anymore at all! Just as He said to the Jews of His day who didn't accept Him: “Behold, *because you didn't recognize the day of your visitation*, and know the things that make for your peace, your house is left to you desolate! Behold, you will see Me no more, until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matt. 23:34-39; Luke 19:41-44). Jesus warned if you reject those whom He sends, you reject Him! And if you reject Him, then you reject the One who sent Him – that is, God Himself (Luke 10:16). Let us have ears to hear, and hearts to receive the truth!

Recently, I was crying out to the Lord in frustration and in discouragement that nobody knows me or recognizes me; but that they only continually persecute me. Even my own family scorns me, rejects me, and pushes me away from them – far away into a dark corner. In response to my cries, the Holy Spirit quietly whispered to me: “Eric, remember, that it is written that ‘your life is *hidden with Christ* in God’ (Col. 3:3). Do not be discouraged therefore when men don't know you/Me or recognize you/Me.” He then began to show me out of the Scriptures the very things that I am writing about here – that Christ was and is purposely and intentionally hidden from the world – especially from those who “trust in themselves that they are righteous” (Luke 18:9). He is hidden from those who refuse to repent, and from those who are going about seeking to establish their own righteousness by law-keeping, and by keeping the traditions and commandments of men, but who “have not submitted unto the righteousness of God” which is by faith in Him, and *in Him* alone! (Rom. 10:1-4).

Notice that the Bible says that the Holy Spirit revealed the coming of Jesus to all those who “*looked for the redemption and consolation of Israel*” (Luke 2:25, 38). This is a direct reference (and partial fulfillment) of some of the final words and prophecies of Isaiah: “*Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her; rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her; that you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom, that you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.*” (Isa. 66:10-11). Those who were looking for Israel's redemption and consolation by the arrival of her King were satisfied and fed by the nourishing and comforting waters of the Holy Spirit that revealed to them the hidden Christ that came in the form of baby Jesus whom the world would not “get to know” for another thirty spiritually-dry years. Jesus lived in total obscurity among the world's inhabitants and grew-up directly under the turned-up noses of the church-going religious who didn't have a clue of His existence on earth. Instead,

they were all too religiously pre-occupied and busy looking-up towards the clouds expecting a Deliverer to show up on a white horse that never came!

Don't we realize that by the time that Jesus returns to this earth in the coming of the clouds, and with a great angelic shout, that it will be too late for the Church to have made herself ready to be with Him? Is it not written, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 14)? Doesn't it say that He is coming as a thief in the night, and at a time and in an hour which the Church is not expecting (Matt. 25:13)? Is it not also written that those five virgins who were spiritually ready went to be with their Lord when they heard the midnight cry ring out that said, "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming; *go out to meet Him!*"(Matt. 25:6)? Doesn't it also say that during the time when the other five foolish virgins, who were not spiritually prepared, were off buying oil for their lamps, that the Bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with Him into the wedding; but that the door of opportunity was shut on the other five foolish virgins who were not ready (Matt. 25:10)?

Like the two angels sternly said to the Lord's disciples who were just standing there aimlessly looking up and gazing into the heavens looking for Him: "Why are you just standing there gazing up into the heavens? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you will return in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven!" (Acts 1:10-11). "But as for you," the Scriptures go on to say, "do what He commanded you to do! Go into Jerusalem and wait there just as He told you. For He is about to pour out His Spirit upon you, even as He said that He would, so that you can be His witnesses to all nations! Whoever believes, and is baptized, will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be condemned. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; and if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. Go therefore and preach to all nations, baptizing them and making disciples, and teaching them to observe everything that He has taught *you* to do." (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15-16; John 20:22-23; Acts 1:2-8). In other words, "Don't just stand there waiting for the Kingdom of God to come in the clouds! Jesus said that the Kingdom of God *does not come by observation*, but that it is already in the midst of you now (Luke 17:20). Go and be about your Father's business! Don't worry, for He will not leave you orphans. The Spirit of Christ – the Holy Spirit will be with you and in you. Don't go back to fishing; for He has made you fishers of men. Don't go on sleeping like you did when all of this was happening in the garden of Gethsemane! Wake up and be vigilant. For now is a time of redemption – and for many it will be their day of visitation!" (I Pet. 2:11-12; Acts 13:44-46; Luke 10:9-11).

Don't be one of those who misses the coming of the Messiah because you don't hunger and thirst for Him, and because your own self-righteousness and regular mundane habitual church-attendance has blinded you and lulled you to sleep and into spiritual complacency. Wake up and be vigilant – because Christ and Immanuel is nearer than you think! He is even now at the doors of your heart and in the hearing of your ears (Rom. 10:6-21; Rev. 3:20)!

Brothers and sisters, and everyone who has ears to hear, listen to what the Scriptures are saying! The same God who visited His ignorant and rebellious House many times before, will visit His House once again and will shake it to its very foundations. Oh hear these words, oh House of Christendom! I tell you the truth, not one stone shall be left upon another! God has already warned us that judgment will begin at His House (I Peter 4:17). Jesus told the disbelieving Jews of His day, "See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you; you shall see *Me* no more until *you* say,

‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Matt. 23:38-39).

PART 6

THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH VS. THE SPIRIT OF JEZEBEL

God told His people, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Mal. 4:5). The Gospels indicate that John the Baptist was a “prophetic type” or partial fulfillment of this Old Testament prophecy. Speaking of John the Baptist, Luke wrote: “He will go before Him [Jesus] in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17). When John the Baptist was still alive, Jesus told His followers, “If you are willing to receive it, he [John the Baptist] is Elijah who is to come” (Matt. 11:14). But after John the Baptist was executed by King Herod, Jesus told His disciples that there will yet be another “Elijah” who will come before His Second Coming, and that when he does come, he will “restore all things” (Matt. 17:11; Mark 9:12).

Interestingly, the book of Revelation also predicts that another Old Testament character will prophetically appear on the scene. Calling herself a prophetess, the woman Jezebel, who originally was a contemporary of the prophet Elijah, will spiritually permeate the Church and will seduce and deceive the servants of God with her false teachings. Speaking prophetically to the Church down through the ages, Jesus warned, “Nevertheless, I have this against you. You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching, she misleads My servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am He who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.” (Rev. 2:20-23).

What do these things mean prophetically? Why is God going to send “Elijah the prophet” to His people before His Second Coming? And why must Elijah first “restore all things”? And who is this “prophetess Jezebel” who teaches and beguiles the Church to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols? What do these things mean? Obviously, they are spiritually important for us to understand, because our Lord admonished us every time that He brought the subject up to “let him who has ears to hear, hear!” (Matt. 11:15; Rev. 2:29).

In order to correctly understand these prophecies, and to properly discern their spiritual significance for us today, we must first see who Elijah and Jezebel were in biblical history and understand what they did.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Elijah was a prophet of God who lived and prophesied around 870 BC. He virtually appeared out

of nowhere and was sent by God to prophesy to King Ahab, ruler of the Northern Tribes of Israel, that a severe drought was coming upon them because of their national sins. King Ahab had caused Israel to sin by leading them into gross idolatry by forsaking the commandments and word of God (I Kings 18:18). In fact, the Bible says that Ahab did more evil in the sight of the Lord than all of the kings of Israel before him, and that the pinnacle of his sins was that he married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the idolatrous Sidonians (I Kings 16:30-31). To please her, Ahab built a temple and an altar to her pagan god Baal which he set up in Samaria the capital city of Northern Israel (I Kings 16:32). He allowed his wife, Jezebel, to persecute and put to death all of the true prophets of the Lord, and to establish and appoint her own pagan prophets in their place, in order to teach and mislead the people of God. By the time that God sent Elijah to Ahab again, three and a half years later, the people of God were so spiritually confused by these false prophets and teachers that they couldn't even answer Elijah's question regarding who God really was (I Kings 18:20-22).

By marrying King Ahab, Jezebel was given a position of authority in Israel, whereby she insidiously insinuated herself into the spiritual lives of God's people controlling them and deceiving them. She managed to silence the true prophets of God by persecuting them, murdering them, and banishing them from the coasts of Israel. But unbeknownst to her and Ahab at the time, the Lord had secretly preserved a hundred of His prophets which He hid in two caves by the hand of His servant Obadiah the king's own prime minister (I Kings 18:4,13). In addition to these secluded prophets, God informed Elijah that He also had seven-thousand people in Israel who had not succumbed to Jezebel's great deception by partaking in the false worship of Baal (I Kings 19:18).

It is interesting to note that Jezebel had many more false prophets in power than the Lord had in Israel during this time. For it says that there were four-hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four-hundred prophets of Asherah (a Canaanite goddess) that ate at Jezebel's table (I Kings 18:19). Because of this, Elijah felt that he alone was left of the Lord's prophets (I Kings 18:22, 19:10, 14). All of the other prophets had either been killed or silenced. The one-hundred true prophets of God that were hidden in the caves were out in the wilderness, living in obscurity and in fear for their lives. They were not able to publicly speak the truth of God under Jezebel's administration. They were greatly hindered from fearlessly proclaiming to the people of God what the Spirit of God was giving them to speak. In other words, they were not truly able to prophesy. Instead, they were forced to keep silent and live in obscurity and fear because of Jezebel's political influence over Israel.

The seven-thousand people that God had reserved, which the Bible refers to as a "remnant" (Rom. 11:3-5) were a very small number indeed compared to the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people who were living in Israel at the time. Sadly, most of the Israelites had fallen into great apostasy because of the deceptive idolatrous teachings of Jezebel and her prophets. Very few people in Israel were not deceived. During this time, spiritual restoration and reform were greatly needed in the House of God.

As mentioned earlier, Elijah virtually came out of nowhere. The Bible doesn't mention anything about who Elijah was or give any of his personal history. It is completely silent in regards to his background, his education, his credentials, or his home life. The only thing that is stated about Elijah is that he was a Tishbite from Gilead. That's it. This is an important fact to note, because

everything that the Bible says, or does *not* say, is important to consider. We are instructed to live by *every* word that proceeds out of the mouth of God as recorded in the Bible (Matt. 4:4) and warned to not add one word to its testimony (Rev. 22:18-19). Elijah didn't go to seminary, or receive his spiritual training at a theological school. He didn't serve or "eat at Jezebel's table" with the false prophets. He wasn't trained at the Temple in Jerusalem. He wasn't an "ordained" priest, and he wasn't a professional clergyman. He was simply trained and taught and fed by God out in the wilderness, as we shall see.

ELIJAH'S WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

After Elijah prophesied to King Ahab about the coming drought in the land, God told Elijah to go and hide by the Brook Cherith where he was going to be supernaturally fed by the ravens. The Hebrew name *Cherith* means "to cut off". In other words, Elijah was being sent out into the wilderness to be "cut off" from the religious community – that is, Israel. He also was being personally "cut off" or pruned, just as Jesus said that all of His true followers and servants would be. For Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes [cuts off], that it may bear more fruit." (John 15:2). Notice that God supernaturally fed him "bread and meat" there in the wilderness (I Kings 17:4-6). This is the same thing that the Lord did to Israel when He sent them into the Sinai desert when they left Egypt in order to train and to teach them to learn to trust Him (Deut. 8:2-3; Num. 11:31-32; Psa. 78:23-29). In this wilderness, Elijah was learning to rely on God for his daily sustenance. Symbolically, he was "feasting" on Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life (John 6:48-51), and eating spiritual "meat" which God said was intended for the spiritually mature (I Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:11-14). Elijah wasn't taught by men in the tainted synagogues (churches) of Israel where Jezebel had control, but rather, he was trained by God alone out in the wilderness. As the apostle Paul stated, "The gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ... I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem" (Gal. 1:11-17). Instead, the apostle Paul says that he spent nearly seventeen years in the regions and deserts of Arabia, Syria, and Cilicia being personally taught and trained by Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12-2:1). Likewise, Elijah too was sent by God out into the wilderness to be humbled, taught, instructed, and *tested*, as we shall see next.

ZAREPHATH:

THE PLACE OF REFINEMENT AND TESTING

Notice that when the Brook Cherith dried up, the word of the Lord came to Elijah again saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." (I Kings 17:7-9). The Hebrew name *Zarephath* means "refinement" and "to try or to put to the test". In other words, both Elijah and the widow were going to have to go through a time of proving and testing – a period of spiritual refinement. It was during this time that Elijah and the widow were also going to begin to see and experience the resurrecting (reviving) power of God. When he first met the widow lady (that is, a woman living without her husband – that is, without Jesus Christ), Elijah said to her, "Please bring me a little water in a cup that I may

drink” (I Kings 17:10). As she went to get the water, he further instructed her, “Please also bring me a morsel of bread to eat.” But she answered, “As the Lord *your* God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar.” (I Kings 17:11-12). Notice that this widow woman didn’t say, “As the Lord *my* God lives...” She didn’t recognize God as *her* God, only as Elijah’s God. This is interesting to note, considering the fact that God had already told Elijah earlier that He had specifically commanded her to provide for him before he had even arrived at her house (I Kings 17:9). In other words, she had “ears to hear” and recognized God’s voice, but didn’t yet fully have a personal abiding relationship with Him! That is why she unknowingly prophetically described herself as not having any “bread” (Jesus), but only a little flour and a little oil.

In the Bible, flour and oil represent being in a poor and humble flattened state, void of any leavening or yeast. In the Old Testament, flour and oil were offered to God as grain offerings and peace offerings (Lev. 2:1-11; 7:11-12). Flour and oil were also used to consecrate new priests to God and to spiritually signify their readiness for service to Him (Exod. 29:1-2). Symbolically, flour and oil picture a prepared heart that is contrite, humble, and submissive, and one that is waiting to be lifted up and revived by God. The Bible describes leavening or yeast as an agent that is added to a mixture of flour and oil in order to “lift it up” or “puff it up”. Sometimes in the Bible, leavening or yeast is given a negative connotation, such as when it is used to describe sin or pride (see Matt. 16:6-12; I Cor. 5:2-8). At other times, it is used in a positive way to describe a quickening agent that gives life and revives. Jesus referred to leavening in this positive light when He said that the Kingdom of God is like leaven, which a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour, and it rapidly spread until the whole dough was leavened (Luke 13:20-21).

This widow from Zarephath was in a lowly contrite state waiting for the quickening and life-giving Spirit of God and Word of God to lift her up. She was obviously tired, discouraged, running low on oil (the Holy Spirit), and in great need of personal comfort and edification. She desperately needed to be lifted up and revived! She was spiritually dying. In fact, that is exactly what she unknowingly prophetically stated! She said that she and her son had lost all hope and were preparing to eat their last meal and die (I Kings 17:12). Her spiritual “lamp” was going out due to a lack of available oil and spiritual resources (Matt. 25:7-9), as a result of the prophesied drought and subsequent famine in the land – both physically and spiritually speaking (I Kings 17:1; 18:2). That is why God, in His infinite mercy, sent Elijah to her. He was sent to her to “revive” her in the name of the Lord by helping her to realize that God is more real and personal than she knew and believed. He was sent to spiritually help her by encouraging her, strengthening her, and comforting her by giving her the words of life from God - that is, by prophesying. She, in turn, was commanded by God to help him during their spiritual “refinement period” by physically sustaining him through the remainder of the drought. This is in accordance with what the Lord commands: “If we [servants of the Lord] have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? ... Do you not know that those who work in the temple eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.” (I Cor. 9:11-14).

RECEIVING A PROPHET AND DISCIPLE OF THE LORD

Elijah told the widow woman to not fear, but to put her trust in God and honor the Lord by honoring His servants by putting their needs first. He told her to make a cake for him first and then to make one for herself and her son (I Kings 17:13). In other words, the test was, did she believe and accept him as a prophet and a messenger from God? And would she honor God by honoring and obeying His servant? For Jesus said, “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones [of Mine] only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” (Matt. 10:40-42). That is why Elijah initially said to her when he first met her, “Please bring me a little water in a cup that I may drink.” (I Kings 17:10). It really was a test to see whether or not she would receive him as a disciple and as the Lord’s messenger and servant. Elijah then said to her, “For thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.’” (I Kings 17:14). Notice that she believed the Lord’s prophet, because she immediately went in faith and did what Elijah told her to do (I Kings 17:15).

Before we proceed, it is important to note that Zarephath is located in the region of Sidon *outside of Israel*. Jesus referred to this as spiritually significant because He used it to illustrate His point that “a prophet is only without honor in his own country and among his own people” (Luke 4:24-26). The widow of Zarephath was considered a gentile, that is, she was a non-Israelite woman. In other words, she was outside the house of Israel – outside the people of God – that is, outside the church system. Jesus clearly makes this point when He said that there were “many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah ...but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow” (Luke 4:25-26). With these words, Jesus was indicting the people of God. He was addressing the members of a church congregation in Israel, and told them that they were the ones who were spiritually poor, blind, captive and oppressed (Luke 4:17-21). When the proud disbelieving people in the synagogue (church) heard these words, they became angry at Him and cast Him out of their church and out of their city (Luke 4:16-30). In contrast, the gentile widow of Zarephath was humble and teachable, and readily received the Lord’s prophet and his message. Therefore she received from the prophet what the Lord had *given to the prophet* – that is, the “prophet’s reward” (Matt. 10:41). What Elijah was given, and what the widow woman received, were words of encouragement, edification, and truth directly from God! “For he who prophesies [that is, speaks by divine unction and influence] speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.” (I Cor. 14:3). But the Bible also says that “prophesying is *not for unbelievers*, but for those who believe.” (I Cor. 14:22). That is why Elijah was sent by God to the widow in Zarephath, and not to the widows in Israel. Because as Jesus said, the disbelieving people of Israel (the Church) would never have accepted Elijah or received his message (Luke 4:24; Acts 7:52). Sadly, this is still true today. Unfortunately, many people in the Church don’t believe that God sends prophets and messengers to His people. Therefore, like the Israelites of Jesus’ day, they too, never receive the prophet’s reward – that is, they never receive what God gave the prophet to share with them and give to them. Unfortunately, Jesus told us in the Bible that it was going to be like this. For He said, “Behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and others you will flog in your churches and pursue from town to town.” (Matt. 23:34). Sadly, the people of God haven’t changed.

After the widow woman received these words of encouragement (promises) from the Lord, and was personally edified (“lifted up”) by Him through her faith and obedience, she then experienced His supernatural provision. In other words, God supernaturally and miraculously provided for her and sustained her through her “desert wilderness experience” because of her faith. Israel and the surrounding areas were still experiencing drought and famine during this time. However, God promised her that “the bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, *until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth*” (I Kings 17:14). Like all true servants of God, she too, had to learn to trust and rely on God to supernaturally sustain and feed her through her “desert wilderness journey” while she patiently waited on the promises of God to be fulfilled – that is, for the rain to come (Deut. 8:1-9). Notice that it says that she endured and persevered in this way for “many days” (I Kings 17:15). But because of her faith and trust in God, she was also able to witness the miraculous signs and wonders of God and experience His awesome resurrecting power in the meantime (Mark 16:17; Phil. 3:9-11). When her son died as a result of serious illness, God brought him back to life. This prophetically illustrates the fact that God even shows His mercy to the family members of those individuals who believe and put their trust in Him. For it is written, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, *you and your household.*” (Acts 16:31). Upon receiving her son back to life, the widow woman exclaimed to Elijah, “Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is the truth.” (I Kings 17:24).

THE WORK AND MINISTRY OF ELIJAH

After three and a half years, God told Elijah to go to King Ahab again and tell him that He was going to send rain upon the earth (I Kings 18:1). But before this was going to occur, God was going to first turn the hearts of His people Israel back to Him by revealing Himself to them in a miraculous and astounding way. They had been ensnared and enslaved by Jezebel’s deceptions long enough! It was time for God to deliver His people from their spiritual ignorance and sinful ways, and to turn them back to Him, by revealing Himself through His awesome power. Jezebel and her wicked prophets were now going to be exposed for the frauds they were! God, through His prophet Elijah, had King Ahab gather *all of the people of Israel* together with the false prophets of Baal and Asherah to Mount Carmel (I Kings 18:19). The Hebrew name *Carmel* means “fruitful field”. God was now going to make His people (the Church) “a fruitful field”, instead of the barren waterless desert which they had spiritually become through their idolatrous worship and false practices which they had deceitfully learned under Jezebel’s supervision. They had become so spiritually corrupt and confused that they didn’t even know who God really was anymore. But God was now going to show them the Truth – He was going to reveal Himself to His people through His servant Elijah just as He had done to the widow lady a year or so earlier when she confessed to him, “Now I know that the Word of the Lord in your mouth is the Truth!” Jesus, the Word of God, is the Truth (John 14:6) and He was in the mouth of His servant Elijah! In other words, God reveals Himself to His people through the mouths of His servants. This will be clearly demonstrated by Elijah’s prayer.

When it was Elijah’s turn to call upon God and to publicly reveal Him to the people, notice what he prayed. After the false prophets had been crying out to their gods all day long and couldn’t get a heavenly response from them, Elijah simply said to God, “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done

all these things at Your word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.” (I Kings 18:36-37). Notice that Elijah prayed for four things: 1) That God would reveal Himself to His people. 2) That God would reveal to His people that Elijah was His servant. 3) That God would let the people know that Elijah was only doing what God had commanded him to do. 4) That God would turn His people’s hearts back to Him again.

Notice that the four things that Elijah prayed for are the same things that were prophesied about John the Baptist’s ministry: *“For He [God] has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us... And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest. For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins... To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”* (Luke 1:68-79). *“And he [John the Baptist] will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”* (Luke 1:16-17). Notice these four things: 1) God raised up a horn of salvation unto His people. 2) He would be known as a prophet of the Most High. 3) In doing so, God would again visit and redeem His people through His servant. 4) And consequently, *God would turn their hearts back to Him again.* This is the work and ministry of the prophet Elijah.

As was mentioned above, John the Baptist was sent by God approximately eight-hundred years later to spiritually do the same work that Elijah did during his ministry. Their message and mission were the same. They were sent before God to turn His people’s hearts back to Him in preparation for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit (pictured by the promised “rain coming upon the earth”). That is why Jesus called John the Baptist “Elijah” (Matt. 11:14). It was because John the Baptist had an “Elijah-type” ministry and work to do in preparation for His coming.

Both Elijah and John the Baptist were sent by God to prepare His people and warn them that they had better *repent* (turn around) and make their “paths” (spiritual walks) straight before God (Matt. 3:1-6). Both of these prophets rebuked the religious leaders and teachers of Israel who had spiritual control over the people of God and who had enslaved them by their false teachings and traditions. Just like Elijah, John the Baptist wasn’t trained at the Temple in Jerusalem either. He lived in the desert wilderness for most of his life in relative obscurity away from the religious community, and like Elijah, was not accepted by his own people (Matt. 11:18). The Bible says that John was “in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel” (Luke 1:80). Curiously, the Bible even says that Elijah and John dressed alike. They both wore coarse animal hair coats tied together with a leather belt around their waists (II Kings 1:8; Mark 1:6; Zech. 13:4).

ELIJAH THE PROPHET MUST COME FIRST TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD – THE CHURCH

Jesus said that it was necessary that “Elijah” must first come and “restore all things” before His

coming (Matt. 17:11). During Elijah's day and in John the Baptist's day, the people of God had shifted so far away from the Truth, and away from the Light, that they didn't even really know God or realize that they were spiritually "sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79). They had a form of godliness, and they had God's words with them, but their hearts had been so far removed from God because of their false teachers and leaders, that they couldn't even recognize God anymore or His servants. They had become so spiritually blind that they rejected His messages, persecuted and murdered His prophets, and ultimately, even killed His Son – all the while thinking that they were right with God! That is why God said that He must first send "Elijah the prophet" to His people before the rain comes upon the earth (Mal. 4:5). In the Bible, "rain" pictures two things: The great out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon those who are ready to receive it (Hos. 6:3; Joel 2:23); and divine judgment upon those who are not (Gen. 7:12; Ezek. 38:22; Matt. 7:25-27).

The Bible is clear that once again, the prophet "Elijah" is going to have to be sent by God to His people (the Church) in these latter days to spiritually prepare them for His coming – the Holy Spirit being poured out upon them. He is going to need to spiritually set straight the "crooked paths" of God's people so that He can come to them again and walk among them. As it is written: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord. Make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled [lifted up] and every mountain and hill brought low [humbled]; and the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation [saving power] of God.'" (Luke 3:4-6).

In Biblical times, when a king was planning to visit a certain place, his messenger was sent before him to "clear the land" and to prepare His subjects to meet him. This messenger was sent before the king to clear the king's path of any stubble, debris, or impeding objects, so that the "king's highway" was straight and unhindered for his arrival. This is the same metaphor that is being used here in the Scriptures. Christ the King is soon coming back to this earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Therefore, He is sending His messenger(s) before Him who shall clear His way and spiritually prepare His people to meet Him! That is why we must be sure to have our proper "wedding garments" on when we meet the King. Otherwise, we will find ourselves cast out of His sight (Matt. 22:1-14). We can't meet the King in spiritually filthy, dirty, rags or spiritually naked. We must be clothed in white raiment (Rev. 3:17-18). Elijah's job is to spiritually clear the way before Him and to prepare His people for His visit – that is, Christ's coming! Notice these verses:

"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His Temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in Whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness... Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him. For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven. And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts...Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers." (Mal. 3:1-18; 4:1-5).

Notice that it says that the proud and all those who do wickedly will be as “stubble” – that is, as worthless debris. They will be taken out of the way – removed – spiritually burnt up – destroyed! For the Bible says that God is a consuming fire, and that nothing unholy and profane shall stand before Him – that is, in His presence (Deut. 4:24; Deut. 9:3; Heb. 12:29). Notice that it also says that He is coming to His Temple! He is not coming to the gentile world at this time. He is coming to His Temple – that is, *to His own people!* For it is written to the Church: “Do you not know that you are the Temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the Temple of God, God will destroy him. For the Temple of God is holy, which Temple you are.” (I Cor. 3:16-17). He is coming to refine His people and to purify them – to clean them up with “launderers’ soap” as He puts it (Mal. 3:2). To wash them with the “washing of water by the Word that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:26-27).

Notice also that it says to the Church, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the *great and dreadful* day of the Lord”. The day of the Lord will be both “great” to some in the Church, and “dreadful” to others. Let me explain. This is the same type of description that Jesus used when He referred to this time period of judgment and refinement in the Church – the House of God. For it is written: “The time has come for judgment to begin at the House of God” (I Peter 4:17). During Jesus’ ministry, He repeatedly warned us that there was going to be both “weeping and gnashing of teeth” within the Church during this refinement/judgment period (Matt. 8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). In other words, some will be broken and humbled by the Rock, and will *weep* when they realize that they have been misled and that they truly don’t know God. When they hear the truth and realize that God is more real and personal than they believed, they will fall upon the Rock and be broken just as Jesus said that they would be as they begin to recognize their spiritual poverty. For Jesus said, “Whoever falls on this Stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.” (Matt. 21:44).

Just like the poor humble widow woman of Sidon who recognized her spiritual poverty, and confessed, “I don’t have any bread [Jesus Christ], but only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar”, some of the people in the Church will become broken and humbled when they realize that they don’t really know Jesus Christ and will consequently fall upon Him (the “Rock”) and be broken (humbled). And then God will quickly revive them and exalt them as He promised, just like He did to the widow woman. For it is written, “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time” (I Peter 5:6). And again it says, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” (James 4:10). Christ will immediately exalt everyone who humbles himself or herself by filling that man or woman with His Holy Spirit, so that “the oil in their jar” will never run out! For it is written, “He who eats of this Bread and drinks of this Water will never hunger and will never thirst. For the water that I shall give him will become a fountain of water springing up out of him into everlasting life” (John 4:14; 6:48-51). And again it says, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his own belly will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:37-38). Yes, whosoever humbles himself in the Lord, God will surely lift them up and revived them with His quickening Spirit and comforting truths, just like He did to the poor widow lady and her son. For it is written: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek [humble], for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who

hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” (Matt. 5:3-6).

Sadly, on the other hand, there will be many Christians during this time who will harden their hearts against Him in their self-righteous arrogant pride, and try to oppose Him and His servants, and consequently, they will be smashed and “ground to powder” (Matt. 21:44). As Jesus said there will be both weeping and gnashing of teeth in the Church! As was mentioned earlier, there is coming a great out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God again - that is, the “latter rain” is surely coming upon the Church (see Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23; Acts 2:17; James 5:7). To some in the Church, this rain will be exciting and *great*, absolutely refreshing and invigorating! To others, it will be *dreadful* and a time of great crisis. Instead of the “rain” bringing life and revival to them, the coming of the Spirit will only bring judgment and great upheaval! In other words, these individuals will be “gnashing their teeth” in anger, resentment, and resistance against God!

As was stated earlier, John the Baptist warned that “every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low” (Luke 3:5). The “valleys” being referred to here are every lowly person who is humble before God and in a lowly contrite state. In other words, every humble person will be exalted and lifted up by Him. Consequently, every mountain and hill will be abased. In the Bible, “mountains and hills” typically personify kingdoms, governments, hierarchies, self-righteous individuals, and everything that exalts itself above God (Isa. 2:12-18). Yes, God is going to humble everything and everybody that “stands” before Him beginning with His own people – the Church. For it is written: “And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His Temple... But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?” (Mal. 3:2). And again it says to those in the Church, “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (I Cor. 10:12). God is going to test and to prove all of us in the Church to see whether or not we are built on man’s traditions and doctrines or upon the Rock – His Word. He is going to see what our “foundation” truly is built upon. For it is written: “Yet once more, I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens. The words, ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken – that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain” (Heb. 12:26-27). “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ [the Word of God]. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames [of refinement].” (I Cor. 3:12-15). God is truly going to purify and refine His people in fire as He prophesied. They are spiritually going to be sent to Zarephath – the place of refinement and testing once again!

As a result of this refinement period, the Church will then spiritually become a “fruitful field” again just like they were in the days of Elijah at Mount Carmel. The false prophets and teachers, and all those who oppose God in Israel, will be exposed for what they are and “put to death” so to speak, by His discerning Spirit and by His powerful Word which is sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16). For “then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” (II Thes. 2:8). Notice, after God supernaturally revealed Himself to His people through Elijah, it says that all of the people of Israel fell on their faces (humbled themselves) and cried out, “The Lord, He is God! The Lord,

He is God!” Whereupon, Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!” So they seized them and took them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there according to the commandment of the Lord (I Kings 18:39-40; Deut. 13:5; Deut. 18:20). The Hebrew name *Kishon* means “curving or turning”. In other words, the people of God were being “turned” back to God. Their hearts were turning back from following after the false practices and traditions of men as taught to them by their false leaders and teachers, and were now being turned back to God and to the truth of His Word – for this was Elijah’s work and ministry! To expose and destroy the works and teachings of Jezebel and her false prophets, and to turn the hearts of God’s people back to Him in truth!

THE SPIRIT OF JEZEBEL IN THE CHURCH

As was mentioned above, Jezebel exercised great influence over the people of Israel (the Church). She instituted and ordained false prophets and pastors over the people, in order to deceitfully lead them away from the truth of God’s Word, and to teach them the ways of Baal, a pagan god. In Hebrew, the name *Baal* means “lord, possessor, and/or husband”. This is why the Bible prophetically says that Jezebel “teaches and beguiles the servants of God to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols” (Rev. 2:20). The Bible says that Jezebel has once again taken an administrative position in the Church, by calling herself a prophetess, and is causing the Bride of Christ (the Church) to cheat on her Husband – that is, to cheat on Christ, who is the Word of God – the Truth, by cavorting with liars, and embracing the doctrines and false teachings of men. The apostle Paul said that these false doctrines and teachings are actually “doctrines of demons” – which are false gods (I Tim. 4:1). By embracing and adhering to false teachings and doctrines of men, the people of God (Christians) are actually serving and worshipping (“sacrificing to”) false gods! Notice these Scriptures:

“My beloved, flee from idolatry... Are not those who eat of the sacrifices participants of the altar? ... I say that the things which the gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons.” (I Cor. 10:20-21).

“For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial (the Devil)? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the Temple of God with idols? For you are the Temple of the living God. As God has said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore, ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. And you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.’” (II Cor. 6:14-18).

“In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men...All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition...Making the Word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.” (Mark 7:7-13).

“The Lord says, ‘These people come near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. Their worship of Me is made up of rules and commandments of men.’” (Isa. 29:13).

“Do you not know that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, you are [and have become] the servants of that one that you obey?” (Rom 6:16).

In other words, if you follow man’s teachings and traditions which the Bible calls “doctrines of demons”, you are no longer serving God, but serving idols (false gods). This is why God says that Jezebel is once again teaching and beguiling His servants to “commit sexual immorality and to eat things offered to idols” (Rev. 2:20). The people of God have left their “first love” (Rev. 2:4) – that is Christ, the Truth, the Word of God, and have instead now embraced lies – that is, the teachings and traditions and commandments of men. “Baal”, which was an idol made by men, has once again become the wicked “lord, possessor, and false husband” of the people of God in place of Jesus Christ – the Word of God! God says that they are again serving lies created by men and not serving and abiding in the Truth. This is what the Bible spiritually calls “sexual immorality and eating things offered to idols” (Rev. 2:20)!

ELIJAH CONFRONTED JEZEBEL

Once again, the spirit of Elijah is going to visit the Church in order to prepare the way of the Lord by turning His people’s hearts back to Him before God sends the great out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon the earth! God is getting His people ready to receive Him. For it is written: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy. Your young men shall see visions; your old men shall dream dreams. *And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they shall prophesy.* I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath. Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Acts 2:17-21).

Just as in times past, God’s people have again collectively spiritually strayed from Him (the Truth) and have been serving other gods and idols which were made by “men’s hands”. In other words, they have replaced God’s Truth with fables and lies, and have embraced traditions and doctrines that were instituted by men rather than remaining faithful to their spiritual Husband, Christ – who loved them, and gave Himself for them, and bought them with His own precious blood, sanctifying them, and “cleansing them with the washing of water by the Word” (Eph. 5:25-26). Collectively, they have been deceived and bewitched (Gal. 1:6; Gal. 3:1), and have become spiritual children again who are “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14). They have become dull of hearing and have become babes in need of milk instead of solid food which is for the mature (Heb. 5:11-13). They have lost their way, and have left the precious oracles of God to embrace fables and fairy tales just as Paul said that they would do (II Tim. 4:3-4).

Because of the wicked deceptive “prophetess Jezebel”, the people of God today – Christendom as a whole – have once again lost sight of who God really is. They don’t really know Him. Under

Jezebel's wicked influence, they have again cast off His prophets and silenced them, just as Jesus prophesied that they would (Matt. 23:34), and have appointed unto themselves false preachers and teachers who tell them what their "itching ears" want to hear instead of the precious truth of God's Word (II Tim. 4:3-4). Their hearts have been deceitfully led astray, and they are ensnared by the lies and doctrines of men. They trust in their vain customs and traditions. They don't know God or His delivering power and feel that their religious observances and ritualistic church attendance will save them. Not realizing that they are truly "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked", they grope in the dark believing that they are spiritually rich, and in need of nothing (Rev. 3:17). Because of this, God, in His infinite mercy, is going to visit and redeem His people once again (Luke 1:68). For He says, "Return to Me, backsliding Israel, says the Lord. And I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful, and I will not remain angry forever... Return, O backsliding children, says the Lord, for I am married to you... And I will give you pastors according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding... Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the Lord... For you have perverted your way, and you have forgotten the Lord your God. Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings, says the Lord." (Jer. 3:12-22).

God loves us. He loves His people. That is why God said that He will send us Elijah the prophet again before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5). In His mercy, and for His great name's sake, God will once again send forth the "spirit and power of Elijah" to be upon His servants, and they will show the people of God the Truth and reveal to them the power of God. The Lord will once again bring forth His prophets "out of the caves" where He has hidden them during Jezebel's current administration (I Kings 18:4, 13), and will expose the false prophets of Baal that she has set up in their place. Those people in and around Israel (Christendom) who are humble and teachable, like the widow of Sidon was, will be spiritually fed and revived in the Lord, and will indeed once again find God's truths in the mouths of His servants the prophets (I Kings 17:24). These coming "Elijahs" will truly point the people of God who are now currently "sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death" to the Way of Peace (Luke 1:79). They will prepare the Way of the Lord before Him (Luke 3:4), and will "slay" (discredit) all of the false prophets of Baal with "the sword" – that is, with the Word of God (Heb. 4:12). They will turn the hearts of the people of God ("the children of Israel") back to the Lord their God and back to "their forefathers" – that is, back to the Biblical patriarchs of old (Mal. 4:4-6; Luke 1:16-17). These Elijahs will expose the wicked spirit of Jezebel that now permeates the Church with her false teachings and lies. For they will surely "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). And then all of Christendom can truly say, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and *His wife has made herself ready!*" (Rev. 19:7).

PART 7

COMPROMISED CHRISTIANITY: OFFSPRING AND PRODUCT OF THE DEVIL

When I look at Christianity today, I am deeply saddened and troubled. It is not the legitimate descendant of true biblical Christianity, but rather, the illegitimate offspring of an unholy alliance with an evil world. It is a counterfeit. A bastard child. A vain religion that looks like the world, smells like the world, acts like the world, and let's face it – is OF the world! “But how can this be?” one might ask. “For Jesus Himself said that the gates of hell would never prevail against His Church (Matt. 16:18). How then can today's accepted Christianity be of the world and not of Christ?”

God's people have long sold themselves out to the world by marrying-up with it. The Bible is replete with examples of this. In fact, this is exactly what the story of Esau in the Bible is all about. Esau was the oldest son of Isaac. He was in line to inherit all of the promises and birthrights afforded his family by God. He was destined to “inherit all things” and to be numbered among the patriarchs and saints of God. And yet, his heart lusted after material things. He coveted the things of the world which are seen, and the things which are temporary – symbolized by the worthless bowl of lentil soup that he sold his birthright for – rather than the eternal things of God which are not seen and are invisible (II Cor. 4:18). Esau craved the things which pleased his flesh and not his Father. His spiritual carelessness and earthly materialism not only cost him his precious birthright, but it also completely disqualified him from being a legitimate heir. His lack of spiritual foresight and vigilance, as well as his lust for material things caused him to foolishly trade away his precious birthright and eternal inheritance for emptiness and despair, and ultimately, divine rejection (Mal. 1:2-3; Heb. 12:16-17). Being the firstborn, he was directly in line to have the One and Only true God be referred to as the “God of Abraham, Isaac, *and Esau*”; but instead, God became known as the “God of Abraham, Isaac, *and Jacob*” – that is, the God of his younger brother, Jacob. Esau lost his inheritance – divinely signified by his father Isaac's blessing. As a clear indication that he had completely spiritually sold-out to the world, he married not just one, but two Canaanite women – thus forever intricately linking his life (and the lives of his offspring) to the world. The Bible clearly points out that this decision deeply grieved his parents (Gen. 26:35; 27:46; 28:1, 8). How much more it must have grieved His heavenly Father!

In the Bible, marriage symbolizes “becoming one”. That is, forming an indissoluble alliance which can never be broken or untangled. It is a spiritual relationship picturing the intimate and inseparable bond between two parties which result in the production of offspring that is “a complete and perfect melding of the two”. By entering into marriage with the “daughters of Canaan”, Esau made a spiritual covenant with the world that could not be broken. In his children he brought forth a new seed that was contaminated and polluted – that is, a seed that was partly of God (of the Biblical patriarchs) and partly of the world. In the Bible, Esau's descendants were called Edomites. Although they were considered the brothers of the Israelites (who were the true seed), God told the Israelites to not meddle with them (Deut. 2:4-5; Num. 21:4). They were set-aside by God for special

judgment (see the book of Obadiah). Like Esau's lineage, this is what Christianity is today - an offspring that is contaminated and polluted. It is partly of Christ and partly of the world. Therefore, in its present state, it is no longer a legitimate heir.

BALAAM'S TRICKERY

When the Israelites left Egypt, on their way to inherit the promises given to their fathers [i.e.: the Promised Land], they were craftily observed by Balak, king of Moab. Afraid that the Israelites would also destroy him and his people – the Moabites, as they had done the Amorites, Balak tried to hire the greedy prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites. Realizing that God wouldn't allow him to curse them, but rather only to bless them, Balaam wickedly advised the Moabites, along with their allies the Midianites, to subtly seduce the Israelites into “disqualifying themselves” from the blessings of God by enticing them into disobedience through lust and intermingling (fornication). He counseled Israel's enemies to destroy them by cohabitating with them – by using their desirable daughters to lead them astray into “serving other gods”. By using trickery and seduction, Satan (through Balaam) was able to bewitch the Israelites into being drawn into sexual immorality and idolatry. They formed unholy bonds and illicit unions with gentile women who led their hearts astray into idolatry. In other words, Balaam advised that “if you can't run them out, then *breed* them out”. Balaam knew that if you can't conquer your enemy through outside means, then conquer them *internally* so that they will ultimately destroy themselves! Balaam knew that lusting after material things (in this case, beautiful women) can lead people into idolatry and away from the blessings and promises of God – thus effectively causing the once true holy people of God to disqualify themselves and prevent them from producing a godly seed (Mal. 2:15). The sexual immorality and illicit intercourse that takes place as a result of this lust will undoubtedly produce a corrupt lineage of children that will thus have an “allegiance” to two differing and opposing gods – the One True God of Israel and the god(s) of this world. You can't serve two masters. That is why Jesus warned us that you can't serve God and mammon. It is impossible! Trying to row two boats only leads a person around in circles going nowhere, thus ultimately rendering them unprofitable and useless!

As we shall see from the Bible and history, this is an effective and crafty tool of Satan. He knows that if he can keep us tied up and confused – caught between two opinions and two allegiances – then he can render us spiritually useless and unprofitable. We are then worshipping God in vain (Mark 7:7); and have become vain corrupt children in whom is no understanding or truth. This is exactly what Satan did through his human agents during the time of Elijah. The people of God were so spiritually confused by their leaders that they couldn't even answer Elijah as to which God was the true God of Israel – God or Baal (I Kings 18:21). Jezebel and her false prophets had so thoroughly corrupted and poisoned the people with her pagan doctrines and false teachings, that the children of Israel couldn't even discern what was true or false anymore. They had become spiritually frozen, impotent, and stale. They became unproductive, unfruitful, and unclean. Their worship of God was meaningless, empty, and vain. They became, for all intents and purposes, spiritually dead.

THE “HOLY” ROMAN EMPIRE

Many don't realize it, but Satan employs this same tactic of "defeating your enemy from within if you can't beat him from without". After trying unsuccessfully for three-hundred years to violently wipe out Christianity through ten successive state-sponsored persecutions using the Roman Empire, Satan suddenly changed his military strategy. He decided instead that he could defeat the Christians "from within" by craftily joining-up with them. This is exactly what he did beginning in the fourth century in 313 A.D. To the weary and heavily-persecuted Christians of the fourth century, the shocking news that the head of the Roman Empire – that is, the emperor, the one that had mercilessly pursued and slaughtered them for three centuries, had now "converted to Christianity" must have been greatly welcomed! History reveals that in accordance with Satan's plans, ten Roman emperors tried unsuccessfully to thoroughly stamp-out Christianity with bloody state-ordered persecutions. Using every evil device and weapon imaginable, the Roman Empire carried-out ten successive genocide campaigns against the Christians beginning in 64AD through 313AD. Before he died, the apostle John recorded these stunning prophecies of Jesus concerning what was going to take place within Christendom over the next three centuries: *"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, **and you will have tribulation ten days [ten times]**. Be faithful until death, and I will give you a crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death"* (Rev. 2:10-11).

Backed by Satan, the Roman Empire tried to destroy Christianity ten times during the first three centuries of its existence. On the following page is a list of those ten official state-sponsored persecutions:

<u>Persecution</u>	<u>Emperor</u>	<u>A.D. Date</u>
First	Nero	54-68
Second	Domitian	81-96
Third	Trajan	98-117
Fourth	Marcus Aurelius Antoninus	162-180
Fifth	Lucius Septimus Severus	193-211
Sixth	Marcus Clodius Pupienus Maximus	235-238
Seventh	Decius	249-251
Eighth	Valerian	253-260
Ninth	Aurelian	270-275
Tenth	Diocletian	284-305

As stated above, Jesus prophesied in the Book of Revelation that there would be "ten days" (ten times) of church-wide persecution coming over the next three centuries following His death. And history records that this prophecy did indeed come true. However, notice Jesus' prophetic words to the church generation that would follow after these prophetic "ten days of tribulation" were over. He warned the succeeding "Pergamos era" of the Church which would soon follow these ten days of persecution:

"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name,

and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Rev. 2:13-17).

It was during this time in church history, beginning in approximately 313 A.D. that Satan changed his tactics. Instead of continuing with his bloody campaign to wipe-out Christendom, he decided to meld with it and become part of it. “If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em”, as the saying goes! In accordance with Jesus’ prophecies, and later substantiated by history, Satan realized that since he couldn’t conquer Christianity from without, he would instead infiltrate it, and seek to destroy it from within.

It is obvious from the above text (and from history) that Satan moved-in and took “a place of rulership” within the Church. For Jesus had prophesied to His people, saying, *“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas my faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells”*. He said that they had within their midst *“those who hold the doctrine of Balaam”* and those *“who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which thing I hate”*. It is obvious that by this time in church history, Satan had begun to completely infiltrate the Church! He was beginning to pollute things from within so that a corrupt and polluted spiritual seed might come forth. Up to this time in history, the Roman Empire had been the outspoken enemy of the Church intent on destroying her. But as we see, beginning in the year 313 A.D., the emperor of Rome is now found *legalizing* Christianity, and putting his official “seal” on it and imperial endorsement behind it – with the only requirement now being that the emperor himself – that is “Caesar” himself, was to now be recognized as the “head of the Church” instead of Jesus Christ!

With the deathbed “conversion” of Emperor Constantine the Great in the fourth century, Christianity would soon become recognized as the “official religion” of the Roman Empire. Instead of persecuting Christianity, like it had done for the past three centuries, it now became the unspoken goal of the imperial throne to promote it. Eventually, with this imperial backing, the newly emerging “Holy Roman Empire” would come to rule over and religiously enslave the European and Byzantine peoples and territories for the next twelve-hundred and sixty years. Its religious decrees and dogmas would also eventually evolve into the official imperial mandate that “anyone who did not recognize or adhere to the state’s ‘Christian’ religion would subsequently be found guilty of treason, blasphemy, and/or heresy, and would consequently be subject to imprisonment, torture, and/or death”. Although it didn’t immediately become apparent and wasn’t initially manifested during the reign of Constantine the Great in the fourth century, the state-sanctioned “Christianity” that he endorsed and helped produce, would soon become a horrific nightmare which would eventually lead the world into the incredible religious bondage and superstition of the Dark Ages and culminate into the terrifying bloody inquisitions of the Middle Ages.

THE LORD’S FAITHFUL MARTYR “ANTIPAS”

The name Antipas referred to by Jesus in the above-mentioned prophecy is a combination of two Greek words: “*Anti*” meaning “against”, and “*pas*” which is a derivative of “*pater and papas*” which means “papa or father”. The word “Antipas” literally means “against the father” or “against the pope”. It was during the second century that the Bishop of Rome (later to be called the Pope) began to slowly rise in prominence over the other bishops throughout the empire. The “doctrine of the Nicolaitans” which had first tried to infiltrate the Church a century earlier (see Rev. 2:6) but had been successfully stayed was now beginning to permeate the whole Church (Rev. 2:15). The doctrine of the Nicolaitans is the “clergy/laity system” that slowly crept into the Church. It is the setting-up and practice of “hierarchical governments” within the Church. Shortly after the deaths of the apostles, evil men began to set themselves up in authority over others in the Church, calling themselves “apostles” and “bishops” and drawing the disciples away after themselves (Acts 20:29-30; Rev. 2:2-6). They began to require others to call them “father” and the like, thus denoting their supposed “superior spiritual preeminence” within the Church, even though Jesus condemns this practice in Scripture (Matt. 20:25-28; 23:8-12). As their power and influence grew within the Church, it culminated into the clergy/laity system that now permeates all of Christendom. In addition to this, it allowed for the “fathers” – locally called “bishops” to rise in power and prestige over one another which ultimately would lead to the official creation of the office of the Papacy (aka. the Pope – the “Holy Father”). This title of “Holy Father” is another name for God. That is why it was prophetically written that this person (the Pope) would “*exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the Temple of God [among the Church], showing himself that he is God*” (II Thes. 2:4). That is why Jesus spiritually commends His “faithful martyr Antipas” (meaning, “against the father or pope”) in the prophecies that were given concerning this time period because Antipas stands against and resists this imposter “father” and opposes his very presence in the Church (Rev. 2:13). Consequently, “Antipas” (that is, *anybody* who opposes the pope’s influence and presence in the Church) is persecuted and martyred for his or her opposition during this time. And as history later showed, this indeed came to pass. All who opposed the Pope were excommunicated; their lands and possessions were confiscated; and they were subsequently put to death (martyred).

The Apostle Paul said that the Day of Christ would not come until the “falling away” from the truth had come first, and until this “man of sin had been revealed” – that is the “son of perdition” who had infiltrated the Church (II Thes. 2:1-4). The Papacy with all of its unholy cabinet and priestly administration is not only part of this “man of sin” that infiltrated the Church, in and through the false doctrine of the Nicolaitans, but so are also all of its Protestant copycats! Let me explain. The first three chapters of the Book of Revelation describe the prophetic history of the Church down through the ages. That is, Jesus Christ revealed to His people what prophetically was going to happen within Christendom beginning during the time of the Apostle John (the last surviving original apostle) on down to the present time in church history. This beginning era of church history was called the Ephesus Era (Rev. 2:1-7). It covers the first few decades of the church during the Apostle John’s lifetime. The second era of the church, called the Smyrna Era (Rev. 2:8-11), primarily describes the traumatic period in church history that refers to the time shortly after the original apostles’ deaths when the fledgling Church was suffering the first three-hundred years of

intense Roman persecution. The third church era described in the Scriptures, called the Pergamos Era (Rev. 2:12-17), primarily describes the time period in which Satan quits his strategic outright attacks on the Church and begins to infiltrate it by using “the doctrine of the Nicolaitans” – setting up hierarchical governments within the Church. This is how he seizes control and ecclesiastical power in which to begin deceiving the people in order to spiritually lead them astray. The Bible says that he spiritually leads the people astray by utilizing “the doctrine of Balaam” which is teaching the people of God “to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality” (Rev. 2:14). This is the exact same evil tactic that Balaam used centuries earlier to cause the children of Israel to disqualify themselves and render themselves “unclean” so that God would reject them and curse them instead of bless them (Num. 22:1 - 25:18). In other words, Satan using the same subtle and wicked doctrine (and methodology) of Balaam once again successfully perverted and corrupted the congregation of the Lord – His people – so that they and their spiritual offspring would become contaminated and polluted before God – thus nullifying them from being the true legitimate heirs and “holy seed” (Mal. 2:15).

THE “SICKBED” AND THE RESULTING OFFSPRING CHURCHES

The next prophetic time period that is discussed in the Book of Revelation after the Pergamos Era is the Thyatira Era (Rev. 2:18-29). This era of church history describes the time period in which “children” churches are born as a result of this illicit spiritual union between the Church and its worldly “harlot” lover. Speaking prophetically, the Bible refers to this corrupt ruling administration or “mother” within Christendom as being a type of “Jezebel” (Rev. 2:20). This is a direct reference to the wicked queen that the King of Israel illegitimately married during the days of Elijah the prophet. She subsequently took over control of the religious administration and ministry in Israel teaching the people of God to commit idolatry and spiritual adultery (“sexual immorality”) by embracing and serving other gods. She mixed-in paganism with the true worship of God. She set up false teachers and prophets who led the people away from the truth of God’s Word, and instead had the people observing vain and idolatrous pagan traditions and practices. God likens what happened in Christendom, beginning with the Thyatira era in church history and continuing on down even unto our own present age, as the same as when Jezebel took over the religious and priestly administration of the Old Testament “Church” (Israel) during the days of Elijah, and consequently led the people of God astray.

Just like Jezebel’s illicit marriage to King Ahab of Israel resulted in the setting-up of false teachers and idolatrous practices within the Old Testament Church, this illicit New Testament “union” between God’s people and the world has caused a false religious administration (the “great mother harlot”) to be set up within Christendom that has caused a great falling away from the Truth which is called *apostasy* (from the Greek word meaning “falling away”). Because of this great apostasy, God said that He would give this modern-day Jezebel time to repent, but that she would not, therefore, He would prophetically “*cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds*” (Rev. 2:21-22). This is a direct reference to the time period from the Protestant Reformation on down to our present time. This “sickbed” describes the bloody Protestant Reformation and speaks of all of the resulting offspring churches

that came forth as a result of this revolt against the Catholic mother Church. Notice the next verse: *“And I will kill her children [offspring] with death. And all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.”* (Rev. 2:23).

History shows that after Constantine the Great “legitimized” and legalized Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church later emerged as the one universal “Christian” Church which administered sole governing authority over all of Christendom. (The word “catholic” literally means universal). This was the direct result of later Roman emperors declaring Christianity as the official state-sanctioned and state-sponsored religion of the quickly-emerging “Holy Roman Empire”. The religious ruling-class and ecclesiastical governing body soon became known to the world as the Catholic (“universal”) Church, and it soon exercised supreme authority and control over most of Christendom for the next 1260 years (from the time of the decrees of Constantine to the Protestant Reformation) just as Jesus had prophesied that it would (Rev. 13:5). The bloody Protestant Reformation which began in the mid-1500s was a backlash and revolt against the sovereignty and absolute power that Catholicism held over Christianity. This is the “sickbed” that God refers to. What emerged from this “sickbed” (or “bed of defilement”) were all kinds of Protestant churches that vary slightly from their Catholic “mother”, yet are virtually the same in doctrines, practices, and teachings. These “children” churches, which arose out of the Protestant Reformation, can all trace their maternal roots back to their original Catholic “mother”. Although, their church names are different, their teachings and doctrines are all virtually the same: Sunday worship services; church buildings; clergy/laity systems; hierarchical governments; pagan holiday observances and celebrations; tithing; required church attendance; sacraments; praise and worship liturgies; prepared sermons; etc. These “offspring churches”, which we loosely collectively refer to as “Protestant churches” today, were all created and “conceived” from this original “mother harlot” whom the Bible describes as sitting upon “many waters” (Rev. 17:1). The Bible reveals that this phrase “many waters” symbolically means that this mother harlot “sits upon” (that is, she rules over) many “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (Rev. 17:15).

GOD WILL JUDGE THE GREAT WHORE AND HER CHILDREN

God says that He is going to kill these “offspring churches” with death, and that He is going to judge this great whore *“with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication”* (Rev. 2:23; 17:1-2, 16-18; 19:2). The Bible even goes further to identify this woman as that *“great city which reigns over the kings of the earth”* – meaning, Rome where the Vatican is. During the Apostle John’s day (the man who wrote the Book of Revelation), Rome controlled the whole known world and ruled over the kings of the earth, both militarily and secularly speaking. In Jesus’ prophecies (which John records in the Book of Revelation), Rome is further portrayed as spiritually ruling over them in the form of this great mother harlot – the Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess who teaches and beguiles the Lord’s people into committing spiritual fornication and idolatry (Rev. 2:20). God says that He will cast those who have fornicated with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds (Rev. 2:22). He also says that He will kill any subsequent children that were born of her as a result of this

(spiritual) adultery (Rev. 2:23).

It is interesting to note here that this is exactly what also happened to the real physical Jezebel's lineage as well. Her history is given in the Bible as a spiritual type. God completely destroyed her whole household and all of her children too! He judged that her corrupt and apostate descendants were not to be the legitimate heirs and rulers of Israel. Hers was an illegitimate and illegal marriage and reign that was not to be found among the congregation of the Lord or ruling in His House. She and her children were killed; her priests and false prophets were slain; and her teachings and doctrines were destroyed. The kings of Israel (who were supposed to be picturing the pure and undefiled rulership and lordship of Jesus Christ) were not to be intermingling and fornicating with the daughters of this world – thus contaminating and polluting the royal and holy seed! As is prophetically written: *“For you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people”* (I Peter 2:9). And again, *“Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.”* (II Cor. 6:17). Our holy members are not to be joined to a harlot – either physically or spiritually speaking! As it is written: *“Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two’, He says, ‘shall become one flesh.’ But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”* (I Cor. 6:15-17). These things are spiritual as well as physical! The Word of God cuts both ways. As it is written: *“First comes the physical, then comes the spiritual”* (I Cor. 15:46). God will destroy all that is born of the harlot! Unless, of course, they repent – as did Rahab the harlot – who by faith was accepted, and so was her offspring, David (her great-great grandson), who later became a true shepherd over God's people ruling them in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Rahab and her descendants are therefore a spiritual type of all those who were once considered “unclean in Israel”, but *who by faith were grafted in and washed clean by the blood of the Lamb*, and who are now able to sit down at the same table with our fathers – that is, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God.

All of these things that are mentioned above are a spiritual allegory. What happened physically in Israel is a spiritual type for us today! For example, just because we may be the product and offspring of a contaminated Christianity, as described above (that is, from Catholicism, Lutheranism, Eastern Orthodox, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodism, Baptist, etc.) does not mean that we cannot be grafted in by faith and washed clean by the water of the Word (that is by Christ's blood and by His biblical Word). Although our spiritual mother may have once been a harlot, and we may have been spiritually conceived in and through religious deception, does not mean that we have to be spiritually killed or cut-off! For God Himself has shown through the example of Rahab the harlot and her Davidic descendants that anyone “who fears God and does righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:35); and whoever calls upon His name and worships Him in spirit and in truth will be saved (Acts 2:21; John 4:23-24). For God Himself prophesied that “the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers of God will worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). Notice that this Scripture clearly implies that there are false worshipers who obviously don't worship God in spirit and in truth! These worshippers are obviously counterfeits whose worship of God is in vain (Mark 7:6-7). They may look the part; they may act the part; they may even bear His name – the name of Christ – that is, “Christian”. But don't be fooled. They are none of His! Scripture says that if you don't have the Spirit of Christ – that is the Seed of the Father (the Holy Spirit) in you, you are none of His (Rom. 8:9; I John 3:9, 24). Carefully note the spiritual

allegory described in the next section that is given in the Scriptures to teach us regarding Abraham's sons.

NOT ALL OF ABRAHAM'S SONS WERE LEGITIMATE HEIRS

It is written that Abraham had many children. But Scripture says that not all of them were “the children of the promise” or legitimate heirs (Rom. 9:7-8). Even within Isaac, not all of his sons were counted as “the seed” – that is, as the seed of promise (the holy remnant). For it is written that He is called “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”. He is not called “the God of Abraham's or Isaac's or Jacob's children”. As it is written: *“Those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed”* (Rom. 9:8). In other words, not everyone who calls Abraham “father” is accepted by God. Neither is everybody who calls God their Father accepted by Him either! The Jews in the first century tried to make this paternal mistake; but John the Baptist pointed it out to them, by saying, *“You better show forth fruits that show you are of a repentant heart! And don't think that you can say to yourselves that we have Abraham as our father. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire!”* (Matt. 3:8-10).

We have many in the Church today who think that just because they wear His name, and “look the part” and go through the same rituals that the “church patriarchs” prescribed, that they are accepted by Him. Nothing could be farther from the truth! Just because you have one parent's true blood in you doesn't mean that you aren't contaminated by the other's! Even when the people of the world go to breed animals they are aware of this simple truth. They look for animals that have a true unspotted pedigree in both parents! Please don't mistake me here. My intent is not to talk about physical human pedigrees, but rather, spiritual ones. For the physical means nothing; but the spiritual means everything (John 6:63). But because we are physical, that is, fleshly, God often gives us physical prototypes in Scripture so that we can begin to grasp the spiritual concepts and precepts (messages) that He is trying to convey to us. I realize that these things that I am writing about are spiritually “heavy” and that some things are hard to understand; but I am speaking to those who know the Word of God and to those who are *“weaned from the milk and drawn from the breast”* (Isa. 28:9). I am not speaking to babes here, but to those who are mature, and who know the Scriptures, and *“who by reason of continual use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”* (Heb. 5:14). God is going to once again clean-up Israel – that is, He is going to clean-up the Church! He is going to do away with Jezebel and her corrupt administration and teachings that now permeate Christianity! He is going to destroy and kill all of her offspring churches and cut off her descendants. He (or she) that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit *is saying to the churches*. Take heed for the time is soon drawing near!

Let's get back to the allegory of Abraham's children. Ishmael was the son of Abraham. But he was born of an Egyptian mother. In the Bible, Egypt symbolically represents “the world”. In other words, Abraham, during a time of spiritual weakness formed an illicit union and alliance with the

world. This illicit offspring, named Ishmael, was later rejected and cast out from inheriting the great promises and spiritual blessings reserved for the true descendant of Abraham – that is, through Isaac – the child of faith. As the Bible itself readily admits, this is a spiritual allegory. It clearly shows that those who are spiritually born of the world – that is, born of a worldly mother (church) by the will of man, will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Gal. 4:22-31; John 1:13). Those in Christendom today who think that their church attendance, tithe-paying, lip-service, law-keeping, festival/holiday observance, and external Christian packaging is going to save them and deliver them into the promises of God, are sadly mistaken! This is the same thinking that Ishmael and his mother thought. God is not interested in fleshly (worldly) packaging! Abraham’s true descendants are *of* faith and *by* faith (Gal. 3:7). Faith is an inner relationship with God that is developed by an enduring and abiding trust in Him. It is what allows us humans to rely on Him, to rest in Him, and to exist and have our daily assurance in Him. This is what pleases God, and not the other. Packaging means nothing to God!

Notice in Scripture that the Midianites were also sons of Abraham. They were the descendants of Abraham through his son Midian by his wife Keturah whom he married after his wife Sarah died (Gen. 25:1-4). But notice that it says that although Abraham had many sons, “he gave all that he had to Isaac” and sent his other sons away – that is away from Isaac – with some “parting gifts” as it were (Gen. 25:5-6). Like Ishmael, they also were not to be heirs of the promises and the birthright. This birthright is symbolic! Remember that which is written: “He came unto His own but His own did not receive Him. But as many as did receive Him [by faith], to them He gave *the right to become children of God*, even to them who believe in His name; who were born, not of blood [that is, of the flesh], nor by the will of man [by the will of human fathers], but of God.” (John 1:11-13). In other words, to those who believe in Him [have faith in Him], God gives them the right [right of birth or birthright] to be His children – as opposed to those who don’t truly believe – they are rejected as impostors, and are not really His children. Notice this from the Scriptures – continuing on with the Midianites: The Bible tells us that the Midianites later joined up with the outcast Ishmaelites (the descendants of Ishmael), so that they became somewhat synonymous as a tribe of people (Gen. 37:25-36; 39:1). This occurred about the time of Joseph, who was the great-grandson of Abraham by way of Isaac and Jacob. Joseph was the son of Jacob. A few centuries later, Moses was commanded by God “to take vengeance on the Midianites” for what they did to the Israelites through the wicked counsel of Balaam (Num. 31:1-24). Remember that it was Balaam that counseled the Midianites on how to infiltrate the Israelites and get the Israelites to disqualify themselves from being God’s people through fornication and idolatry. Moses therefore commanded that every male of the Midianites was to be put to death, as well as every female who had “known a man intimately” (been “one with a man” – had sexual intercourse). Every virgin female captive and all of the war spoils, as well as anyone or anything that had touched a Midianite was to be ceremonially cleansed by either fire or water before that maiden or item was allowed to be taken into the camp of Israel (Num. 31:15-24). This too has spiritual implications as we shall see in the next section!

Going back to the prophetic Church history that is given in the Book of Revelation. After God declares that He is going to kill all the offspring churches that come forth from the great mother whore, He encourages His people that have ears to hear to hold fast to the true doctrines and to overcome, and to not fall victim to the false doctrines and “depths of Satan” as He calls them (Rev.

2:24-29). As Christianity continues on down to the present time, referred to as the Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea Eras, it has left us with a mixed bag spiritually. Many are fast asleep or “dead” as the Bible puts it, and many are lukewarm. That is, they are neither hot nor cold for Christ; and/or are spiritually complacent and think that they are alright and don’t spiritually have need of anything. At the same time, there are a “few who have not defiled their garments” within the Church [Christendom] and who are faithful to Christ – ever striving to follow Him and to obey Him and to overcome themselves, sin, the devil, the world, and the false teachings and traditions of the churches (Rev. 3:4). These are the true seed – the children of faith – those who by faith shall inherit the promises and who are the true sons and daughters of God. These are the ones who shall not be sidetracked nor shipwrecked by the false teachings of Jezebel or of Balaam; those who have not known the depths of Satan, nor have spiritually mingled with that great mother harlot or her suitors. These are the virgins who have been tried and tested in the fire and have been washed clean by the waters of baptism, and by the pure water of the Word, and by the blood of the Lamb. These are the true inheritors and the true descendants of Abraham; who by faith “subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, obtained promises, endured afflictions, and worked righteousness”. These are the true sons and daughters who have not been tainted by the world and who have not married the daughters and sons of this world. These are the true and godly seed that the Lord seeks after, and who will truly carry His name upon them forever and for all time. These are the legitimate heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. These are the true and legitimate descendants of true biblical Christianity!

THE VIRGIN DAUGHTERS OF MIDIAN: ARE YOU A MIDIANITE MAIDEN?

As was mentioned earlier, Abraham had many children. One of his sons was named Midian who was the father and founder of the Midianites. As the New Compact Bible Dictionary explains, “the Midianites have long since disappeared from among mankind”. That is because the Israelites, under the command of Moses, completely destroyed and wiped-out all of the male Midianites as well as all of the non-virgin women (Num. 31:1-18). Remember, God commanded them to do this.

Before I go any further, perhaps I should relay the following: God says in His Word that the physical, that is – the fleshly realm profits nothing; but that it is the spiritual that gives true life (John 6:63). God created us in this physical world with physical bodies so that we can begin to understand the spiritual realm. After all, that is what He told Moses. He gave us physical examples and types in this physical creation, so that we might be able to begin to comprehend the spiritual realm and spiritual truths (Exod. 25:40; Heb. 8:5.). I once asked God why things in the Old Testament seemed so physically harsh and severe. He told me that He purposely had Old Testament examples recorded in that way so that we who are now under the spiritual covenant of the New Testament would learn to fear and recognize the spiritual seriousness of our situation. He quoted, “Just as it is written: *‘First comes the physical, and then comes the spiritual’*” (I Cor. 15:46). He said that all those people in the Old Testament were under the physical covenant, and that we who are living now are under the New Testament – a spiritual covenant. Quoting the Bible, He told me, “*Now all those things happened to them [physically in the Old Testament] as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.*” (I Cor. 10:11). And again, He warned

me, “As it is written: *‘These things became your examples, to the intent that you should not lust after evil things as they also lusted; and do not become idolaters as were some of them... nor commit sexual immorality as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer.’*” (I Cor. 10:6-10). He said that those who transgressed the physical covenant died without mercy, so how much more severely shall we who transgress His spiritual covenant be punished?! As it is written, *“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?”* (Heb. 10:26-31).

By giving us such dramatic and violent examples and physical types in the Old Testament, God clearly is demonstrating to us the seriousness and sobriety of our New Testament callings. In the stories of the Bible, He has given us Old Testament types and physical witnesses to serve as examples and to give us clear spiritual insights into the serious spiritual consequences that accompany our walks. By examining and studying what happened and occurred to our physical counterparts and spiritual ancestors, we can better understand and appreciate (and be forewarned of) the great spiritual responsibilities that we have been afforded by God in Christ Jesus. As it is written: *“For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: ‘And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or thrust through with an arrow.’ And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.’) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven... Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”* (Heb. 12:18-28).

Getting back to the virginal Midianite maidens that were spared slaughter by Moses and the Israelites. These maidens are a spiritual type of those who have been a product of “contamination by association” within the churches. Let me explain. Remember that these Midianite virgins were descendant “daughters” of Abraham by way of Midian, Abraham’s son; they were not conceived by Sarai (whom God had re-named Sarah, meaning “Princess” – symbolizing royalty, denoting a royal bloodline – Gen. 17:15-16); instead, their distant mother was Keturah, Abraham’s concubine (Gen. 25:1-4; I Chron. 1:32-33). In other words, like Ishmael, these Midianite maidens were not children of the legitimate royal bloodline which descended down from Abraham *and* Sarah. Although they had one parent’s royal blood in them, they weren’t (and are not) recognized as true

royal heirs because they were not descended from the legitimate mother. Just like when a king has children by other “lesser wives”, the resulting offspring are not recognized as “full heirs” legitimately in-line for the throne. Of all the children of Abraham, only Isaac who was the product (offspring) of Sarah was recognized as the legitimate royal heir through whom the promises and blessings of God would come.

Just like what often happens in royal families, conflict, fratricide, and political jockeying often take place, as each son/brother vies for the royal throne. The “lesser princes” often war against the “chief prince” to try and take his throne and inheritance. This is what happened in Israel’s physical history as well. The promised seed and the royal bloodline (“inheritance”) flowed from Abraham and Sarah to Isaac, and then to Isaac’s son Jacob who was re-named Israel (meaning “prince of God”). However, many of Abraham’s other sons and descendants wickedly tried to thwart Israel’s “inheritance” and illegitimately re-direct it to themselves. For the next four hundred-years, the Ishmaelites, the Midianites, the Moabites, the Edomites, and the Ammonites, all of whom descended from Abraham and his relatives, would continually harass and persecute the Israelites as they tried to follow God. All of these tribes were descendants and relatives of Abraham, but *not* of Sarah. But before I address the spiritual significance of being born of Sarah, let me finish the point regarding the Midianite maidens.

Notice that these Midianite maidens were not allowed into the camp of Israel (the Church) until they were washed clean over a seven-day period (the biblical standard for thoroughness and completeness). Anything that couldn’t be “cleansed” by fire had to go through this washing process – including their clothes, wooden instruments, blankets, etc. Anything that could survive the fire had to be purified by flames before it could be accepted into the camp. This “cleansing process” had to take place because the Midianites were “unclean” even though they were the relatives of the Israelites being the sons and daughters of Abraham. In other words, they were tainted, corrupted – considered a “polluted seed”. Although they had the “right father”, their “mother” wasn’t of God – but rather she was of the world; she was a bondswoman – a slave in bondage who was subservient, a “second-class” wife, as it were. She was not free. (I will explain this spiritual truth further in the next section.) Suffice it to say, that these Midianite maidens were virgins; but yet, God still required that they be thoroughly-washed and cleansed; and that anything or anybody that touched them was to be purified by water and/or fire for seven days before they were allowed to enter Israel (Num. 31:18-24).

Why was God so meticulous regarding these Old Testament Midianite maidens, one might ask? The answer can be found in the Book of Revelation regarding the same spiritual descendants that they picture and represent in the New Testament. The offspring and spiritual children that the great whore has produced in Christendom as a result of her illicit mating with the “Church” (that is, with Christianity) has created an innumerable amount of children who are a polluted and spiritually-contaminated seed. The “virgins” (those that have a pure heart) who come forth from this illicit union will need to be washed clean by the blood of Christ (representing God’s forgiveness) and washed by the water of His Word (given the Truth), so that He can present them to Himself as part of His holy people (the Church) having neither spot nor spiritual wrinkle. As it is written: *“These are the ones who came out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”* (Rev. 7:14). And again, it says: *“Christ also loved the Church and gave*

Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27). Like the Old Testament Midianite maidens, they will be washed clean, made pure, and then grafted into Israel – the New Testament Church!

Remember what was written to the Thyatira era of the Church – that is, to those who have allowed *“that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and beguile My servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols.” (Rev. 2:20). “I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality”, Christ says, “and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed [a bed of defilement], and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation [a perilous time of testing and great crisis], unless they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death. And all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. But to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they are called, I will put on you no other burden.” (Rev. 2:21-24). Notice that God says He will bring them into great tribulation unless they repent of their deeds. He also said that those “who do not have this doctrine, and who have *not known* the depths of Satan”, He will put no other burden upon them. The Bible uses the phrase “having known” or “knew” to imply having sexual relations or having intimacy with. For example, “Adam *knew* his wife Eve and she conceived and bore Cain” (Gen. 4:1). In biblical terminology, “knowing” someone shares the connotation of knowing them intimately – meaning sexually. For example, the evil men of Sodom and Gomorrah wanted to rape the two men (angels) that came unto Lot, and so they came unto Lot saying, “*Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may **know** them.*” (Gen. 19:5). The same was true about the Midianite maidens. Moses said: “*Why have you kept all the women alive? Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord... Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has **known** a man intimately. But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have **not known** a man intimately.*” (Num. 31:15-18).*

God promises that those “who don’t have *the doctrine*” (hold to the beliefs and teachings of Jezebel) and those “who have *not known* the depths of Satan” (that is, they are still spiritual virgins – they have not been deeply intimate and completely contaminated by Satan yet), He will not bring upon them any more tribulation (trouble) than that which they have already gone through (Rev. 2:24). In other words, He will wash these “innocent” young spiritual maidens clean of the spiritual filth and contamination that they had been exposed to because of their worldly “mother”; and thereby mercifully graft them into His people Israel (the Church).

SARAH – THE MOTHER OF ALL WHO ARE NOT IN SPIRITUAL BONDAGE

The Bible speaks of a great spiritual allegory regarding two “church” mothers. It says this: *“It is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two*

covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother... Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does the Scripture say? 'Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son.' Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman." (Gal. 4:22-31).

As the Bible states, Sarah corresponds to the Jerusalem which is free and is from above. Those who are born of her are born of the Spirit and are the children of promise (faith). As the Bible says, we "are not children of the bondwoman but of the free woman [Sarah]" (Gal. 4:22-31). That is to say, we are not the products of a defiled church or church system (a mother who is figuratively "in bondage" with her children), but rather, we are the offspring of the free woman – a "church" without walls – we are people of faith who are not in bondage – people who don't go to church, but rather, those who *are* the Church!

If you are the product and offspring of one of these "women of bondage" or "church mothers" do not fear, for God has made a way whereby you can be grafted-into Israel. Spiritually speaking, you already have Abraham as your father, in and through faith – that is, you already believe in God and His work on earth in and through Christ Jesus; but you have been made unclean by your mother – that is, the worldly church – that great whore and religious system that has contaminated Christendom and given you false teachings and traditions. Just like in the days of the Midianite maidens, God has provided a way to purify you and clean you up by the blood of Christ, the waters of baptism and by the washing of water by the Word. If your spiritual garments are unclean and defiled, Jesus can wash them clean. He can give you a white wedding garment. Come out of the pollution and defilement of the churches, just as those Midianite virgins came out of the camps of Midian and joined the true descendants and sons of Abraham who were by faith and not by flesh.

Notice that after the polluted "children" churches come forth as a result of the spiritual adultery that had taken place during the Thyatira era of Christendom, true Christianity as a whole is left almost completely spiritually dead. God, speaking to the next succeeding church era to follow Thyatira called the Sardis era, has this to say: "I know your works, that you have a name [Christianity] that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life" (Rev. 3:1-5). White garments picture purity and virginity. God is calling for those who are the descendants and offspring of these spiritually dead churches to overcome! They are to repent and to come out – that is, to come out of the churches that are dead and who are not speaking and teaching the truth! "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My

sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” (II Cor. 6:17-18).

For those of you who don't know, we are in the Sardis era of Christendom right now. As a result of “the calling out of all of those who are to be saved” throughout the whole world from every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, we will soon be entering the Philadelphia era of God's Church. It will be during this time, yet ahead, that God will open a door of great witness throughout the whole land that will both strengthen and humble many. For God says of this yet to be era: “See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue [church] of Satan, who say they are Jews [that is, spiritual Jews – “Christians”] and are not, but lie – indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.” (Rev. 3:8-9). I have seen these days to come in visions and in dreams. And lo, I can tell you, that what a great time it will be! For it is written: “‘In those days,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of one who is a [spiritual] Jew saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’” (Zech. 8:23). And again, it is written: “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.” (Dan. 12:9-10). And again, He says, “Those that know their God shall be strong, and shall do great exploits.” (Dan. 11:32).

At the same time, running concurrently with the Sardis and Philadelphia eras of Christendom, is the attitude of the Laodiceans which God addresses in His message to the church era of Laodicea: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am [spiritually] rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (Rev. 3:15-21). Not only are the churches as a whole spiritually dead, as a result of being born of a worldly mother, they are spiritually complacent as well! Many Christian churches and professing Christians today think that they are spiritually okay and healthy. They couldn't be further from the truth! As God says, they “*do not know* that they are [spiritually] wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked”! May God help us all to realize our own spiritual poverty, blindness, and contemptible wretchedness before Him, and lead us all to a repentant attitude – continually!

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