



LYING

SIGNS

AND

WONDERS

C. Parker Thomas

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2nd Edition

C. Parker Thomas

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Introduction

“Take heed that no man deceive you.” “For many shall come ... and shall deceive many.” “Many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many.” “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders ...” (Matthew 24:4, 5, 11, 24). “Let no man deceive you by any means” “... after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.” (II Thessalonians 2:3, 9).

A number of years ago God began to impress in a new way these scriptures warning of great deception at the end of the age upon the mind and heart of Brother C. Parker Thomas. God’s dealings with Brother Thomas resulted in many new insights into the scriptures relating to the end time, a deeper sense of urgency in the ministry of warning and teaching God’s elect, and ultimately in a series of articles published in the Midnight Cry Messenger. These articles, together with three articles by other brethren that the author felt would serve to confirm the message of the whole are here gathered into book form.

This second edition, published in early 1996, contains a new last chapter entitled “1995 Update,” which, as its title suggests, discusses world conditions in 1995 in the light of the truths contained in the rest of the book.

This book is sent forth with one objective: to edify and strengthen believers that they might be instructed and prepared for the great events of the end time. In view of Jesus’ emphatic and repeated warnings against deception, it is the author’s fervent prayer and desire to warn all who can receive such warning that the deception of which Jesus spoke is here all around us now.

You will profit from this book if you: are an honest seeker of truth; are a good “Berean” (Acts 17:11); will prayerfully seek the Lord concerning these teachings. On the other hand, this book will not benefit you at all if you: are mentally and spiritually enslaved by religious tradition; consider anything, no matter what, more important than possessing truth, no matter what the cost. I sincerely hope that you fall into the first class and that you will weigh honestly before the Lord what is taught in this volume, searching the scriptures whether these things are so.

There will, no doubt, be many surprises in store for you as you read. You will perhaps be amazed as you realize some of the lying signs which Satan has erected for the purpose of pointing unsuspecting men and women away from the path of truth and light and divine blessing.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, Christ is coming soon! The “blessed hope” of believers is soon to make a dramatic and sudden intrusion into human history. Even as we heed the other exhortations of scripture to “watch,” “be ready,” “purify” ourselves, “be sober,” “endure to the end,” etc., let us also heed Jesus’ warnings against deception. Wise virgins, arise; trim your lamps: Behold, the bridegroom cometh!

Foreword

Our desire here in publishing this collection of articles in one volume is to further the distribution of truth that we believe to be relevant to this day and hour. When we speak of this as being truth, we are by no means dogmatically claiming perfect revelation. But we do believe you will find an essence of truth that can only be interpreted in the light of present world conditions.

Aware of the fact that our interpretation of many doctrines is different from many, we simply ask the reader to prayerfully consider what is written in the light of the scriptures. All we ask of any one is that he have a good conscience toward God in being fully persuaded in his own mind. Romans 14:5.

We wish to gratefully acknowledge the contributions of others which have made this work possible. Dr. George B. Fletcher, the author of the chapter *The Two-Stage Theory of the Second Coming of Christ*, has been a great inspiration to us through his writings relating to many of the subjects covered in this volume.

Brother Philip Enlow, the author of the chapter *Who is a Jew?*, has also put in much time and labor in the publication of this material in its present form. We wish to also acknowledge the work of Sister Merilea Morris, who has sacrificially given many hours in typing and proof reading the manuscript which was originally published in the *Midnight Cry Messenger*.

Lastly we want to gratefully acknowledge the labor of love by the people of the Bible Tabernacle, including Sister Mildred Medlin in publishing this material in its original form in the *Midnight Cry Messenger*.

An Unworthy Servant,
C. Parker Thomas

CHAPTER ONE

THE AWAKENING

“Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.” Isaiah 52:1-2. Read also Isaiah 60:1-5, Matthew 25:1-13, Zechariah 14:6-21, I Corinthians 13:9-12.

The dust that spiritual Zion needs to shake herself from is a type of that which is earthy or natural. This speaks of the base nature of man that constantly seeks to draw him away from God. From the mention of Egypt in verse four of Isaiah 52, it is also evident that the world system was responsible for the captivity that is pictured here. When man is taken captive by the flesh and the world, he invariably finds a religion that will accommodate his condition. This is the condition of the sleeping Church that must be awakened and prepared for the coming bridegroom.

I believe it is through truth that men are quickened and awakened to spiritual reality. Even as men who are sleeping naturally are awakened by dawn’s light, those spiritually asleep are awakened by divine light. The same God who spoke in the beginning and said, “Let there be light,” is speaking today and saying, “Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Church; put on thy beautiful garments, prepare thyself for the evil day of all evil days and get ready for the coming bridegroom.”

DARKNESS

Darkness always precedes and prevails until light comes. Genesis 1:2-3. Were it not for the darkness there would be no need of light. Darkness is the absence of light. Darkness is a state of being. It is the benighted condition of man out of touch and union with him who is “the light of the world.” John 1:4-10, 8:12.

In addition to man’s own nature and the world system being against him in knowing God, he is kept in darkness by many clever inventions of Satan. Perhaps religious tradition is his greatest.

The reason religious tradition is Satan’s greatest invention is because it is so close to truth. We might say it is truth misapplied, truth misunderstood and truth mixed with error. It is also truth devoid of life because it is not

relevant to man's need. Tradition does not always ignore the scriptures but rather uses them the wrong way.

Tradition insists on holding on to the revelation and blessings of yesterday, but it cannot see or receive what God is saying and doing today. Although religious tradition claims great faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles and prophets of old, it is unable to recognize those sent of God in its day. John 5:39-46. Matthew 17:12-13.

When man begins to see his own depravity and turns toward God, Satan quickly substitutes religious tradition for light. Upon receiving religious tradition which masquerades as light, the man is in worse condition than in the beginning. Jesus said, "... If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." Matthew 6:23.

The reason his condition is worse is that he is now filled with a force that deceives him into thinking he has truth. In this condition he becomes anti-truth. Truth that would set him free is made void. Mark 7:13. The darkness that is in him in the form of religious tradition hates "... the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." John 3:20.

LIGHT

Light is truth that dispels the darkness and sets men free. It is the living word of God coming forth in knowledge and wisdom. It is the sovereign expression of divine energy through truth. It is spirit and truth imparting life to those who believe. John 6:63. It is God in action by his Holy Spirit.

The light we have had in times past has been mixed with darkness. Zechariah spoke of a day known unto the Lord that would be neither clear nor dark (a mixture). But he said, "... at evening time it shall be light." Zechariah 14:6-7.

The Apostle Paul said, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." I Corinthians 13:9-12. This light, in the form of truth and knowledge which enables us to know as we are known, has to come at God's appointed time. Even God's people, who are truly born of his Spirit have been in semi-darkness. They have been sleeping right along with the foolish virgins who have no oil. Matthew 25:1-13.

Today, I believe, is the time of the final awakening before the coming bridegroom. The true Zion of God (the Church) must awake and put on its strength first. Isaiah 52:1. We put on our strength as we put on Christ.

Romans. 13:14. It is through the restoration of truth that we put on Christ. It is his strength that will enable us to stand against the wiles of the devil. It is, no doubt, because of the loosing of Satan that precedes the coming of the Lord that we must put on our strength.

And though the enemy is coming in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord is raising up a standard against him. Isaiah 59:19. The prophecy of Isaiah 60:1-2 is being fulfilled. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee."

As we put on Christ we also put on the beautiful garments of his likeness. It will take truth to do this, truth we have not had before. It will take truth that disturbs our present way of life that is so enmeshed in the world system. It will take truth that shatters our cherished traditions taught us by the precept of man. Because of this, much that is taught in this volume will seem contrary to what some have come to accept as truth. All I ask the reader is that he prayerfully examine what is taught by the word of God.

CHAPTER TWO

GREAT DECEPTION

“And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” Matthew 24:3-5.

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things: And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” II Thessalonians 2:1-7.

Great deception will precede the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him. In fact, there has always been deception for those who love not the truth that they might be saved.

Many have already come in Christ’s name and deceived many. Matthew 7:22-23. Matthew 24:5. I Timothy 4:1. The mystery of iniquity has always worked in deception but has, in times past, been held back by divine restraint. II Thessalonians 2:7.

STRONG DELUSION

However there is a deception that is associated with and reaches its climax of delusion at the coming of Christ. This will take place when God removes his restraint and the mystery of iniquity is allowed to come forth in full manifestation. The release of this Satanic power is what brings to an end man’s day of grace. Jesus likened this day to the days of Noah when he said, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” Matthew 24:37. Genesis 6:3.

Surely it is significant that both Jesus and Paul warn us about being deceived concerning the coming of Christ. It is evident the deception would

have to do with Christ's coming and the end of the age. It is also significant that both Jesus and Paul warned us of lying signs and wonders to be especially manifest before the coming of Christ. Matthew 24:24. II Thessalonians 2:9-12.

Jesus said that the deception would be so great that if it were possible it would deceive the very elect. Paul called it strong delusion. The deception will be so complete until all whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life will worship the anti-Christ beast. Revelation 13:8. According to II Thessalonians 2:10-12, all mankind who love not the truth that they might be saved will be sent strong delusion, believe the lie and be damned.

NUMEROUS

It is very plain that we have numerous forms or types of deception referred to by the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul. We might say the deception comes in two extremes with many variations in between to afford man a choice. One is the deception caused by the high sounding phrases of false teaching and the other is many lying signs and wonders including phenomena.

Knowing of the great deception associated with his coming and the end of the age, Jesus' first concern was that we be not deceived. Before he began to deal with the question of how to recognize the signs of his coming he warns the disciples. "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Matthew 24:4-5.

Let me emphasize that Jesus said **many** — not a few — would come in his name and deceive **many**. He is actually speaking of those who will be preaching and saying that he (Jesus) is the Christ. The many false prophets (preachers, teachers) who will deceive many will be considered sound-in-the-faith preachers of Jesus Christ. They won't be among the few religious quacks who have made all sorts of strange and foolish claims.

These false preachers have not appeared as false prophets to the many they have deceived. They, for the most part, are not counted among the modernists who deny the virgin birth and the atoning blood. Neither are they in the class of the Father Divines or other rank heretics who have claimed to be God.

In Paul's warning to us concerning Christ's coming and our gathering together unto him he said, "... be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means" II Thessalonians 2:2-3.

Whether we can realize it or not this is exactly what has happened. Most of our religious world is deceived on this question. God's word spoken through many is being fulfilled. It is being fulfilled in more ways than most of us could possibly imagine. Great deception through false teaching and lying signs and wonders is on every hand. The end of the age and the coming of the Lord is, I fear, much nearer than we dare think.

UNPREPARED

Through this delusive work of Satan, religious mankind is almost totally unprepared for the things that are coming on the earth and the end of the age. By this I mean the final loosing of Satan, the coming of Christ and the end of this present world. The prophecies of Christ, Peter, Paul and the Old Testament prophets are being fulfilled. Matthew 24:37-39, II Peter 3:10, I Thessalonians 5:2-3, Malachi 4:1.

CHAPTER THREE

FALSE PROPHETS

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name saying I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many.” Matthew 24:4-5 & 11.

Our purpose here is to awaken the seeker of truth to the shocking realization that Christ’s words of warning were not in vain. He knew many (not a few) would come in his name saying he was Christ and would deceive many. In fulfillment of his prophetic foresight, many false prophets have arisen and have deceived many. It is my conviction that most of our religious world is deceived.

In Matthew 7:13 and 14, Jesus contrasted the true and the false way by saying, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

The fact that Jesus was warning us of false prophets who preached a false way is borne out in verse 15 where he said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

It is also very evident that Jesus knew the vast majority of humanity would enter the false door of religion and travel the broad way to destruction. The few that found the true door to life, no doubt, are the same as the little remnant mentioned elsewhere in the scriptures. Isaiah 1:9, Luke 12:32, Luke 13:23-24, Romans 9:27 and 11:5.

In spite of Christ’s warnings of being deceived by the many false prophets, it is quite obvious that only this little remnant of true believers would escape the snare of deception that leads to destruction. Our purpose here is to set forth characteristics of the false prophet so that God’s people can recognize the wolves who come in sheep’s clothing.

Before setting forth these signs of a false prophet, let me hasten to say that I believe many of God’s servants, basically good men, have been in varying degrees influenced by falsehood. Because of the carnal condition of the Church in general most of the ministry has been very carnal. In this

carnal state the ministry hasn't been able to discern between good and evil. I Corinthians 2:15 and 3:1-4. Also Hebrews 5:11-14.

Although these men have been influenced by falsehood and have consequently contaminated the people, I do not consider them false prophets. Even though their ministries have been clouded with error in varying degrees, there has been some ministry of life and truth through them. However it is God's will that these brethren be delivered and set free from such spiritual contamination.

THEIR FRUIT

After Jesus warned us of false prophets that come in sheep's clothing, he said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."

A man's ministry is known by the fruit he bears. If he has a true ministry of Christ, he will beget sons and daughters with the spirit of Christ manifest in their lives. This is the reason our religious world today has so little of the life of Christ manifest in it. Much of it has been conceived and brought forth by false prophets who have preached another Jesus, another gospel and another spirit. II Corinthians 11:3-4. As we have said elsewhere, everything has to bring forth after its own kind. You do not get apples from an orange tree nor cherries from a plum tree. The lack of Christ in today's professing Christianity is because it has been brought forth by another spirit.

The life of Christ cannot be feigned or pretended. There is a difference between people who are naturally nice by reason of temperament and culture and those who have received Christ's Spirit. Galatians 4:6. Many today mistake culture and religious training for Christianity. There is a vast difference. The Christ life must come from within because the Spirit of God has indwelt the person. This life will manifest itself in the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

The fruit of the Spirit that is produced in the life of a true believer will be recognized by those with spiritual discernment. When Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits ...", he was speaking to believers for their benefit. Those who are spiritually blind will not be able to tell the difference between the fruit of the Spirit and the natural graces that might be present.

In most cases the fruit of the Spirit can only be proven by close association over a period of time. It is not too difficult to be a Christian on Sunday and on special occasions. But it takes Christ within to be a Christian in the home, on the job, and in the school, Monday through Sunday. The

difference in the fruit of the Spirit and the natural graces is the same as the difference between a Virginia apple and one made in a wax factory. From a distance they may both look alike. One is produced by God and the other is produced by man. The fruit of the Spirit will stand up under the heat of trial and testing. The wax apple will melt and completely lose its identity when it is exposed to heat.

The fruit of the Spirit is decidedly different and will prove itself over a period of time. Its love is greater than natural love. Its joy and peace is different from that the world gives. Its long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance also goes beyond that of the natural man.

The true minister not only will manifest these qualities in his own personal life, but will also produce them in others. He not only will prove himself over a period of time, but he will beget fruit that will prove itself over a period of time. Jesus said in John 15:16, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain . . .” Speaking of his apostleship Paul said, “If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.” I Corinthians 9:2.

This fruit is lacking in the life of the false prophet. He often comes on the scene with a flourish and much outward show but there is little genuine fruit to show when he is gone. He might even make many great claims and for awhile have many enthusiastic followers but there will be little fruit that will remain and stand the test of trial and time. If he builds a work at all it will be around something other than Christ.

The hireling false prophet, whether he is an independent or a denominational man, is not likely to stay in one place long enough to prove himself. He is always looking for greener pastures. He is more interested in himself than he is in the sheep. He doesn't like to fight the wolf or the lion that tries to take a lamb out of the flock. Acts 20:28-30.

The false prophets which are produced by the religious systems simply produce more of the same in the people. Being hirelings by nature the denominational false prophets find it to their advantage to remain within and loyal to the system. They like their place at Jezebel's table. She takes good care of her own. They know where their bread is coming from and which side it is buttered on. I Kings 18:19. Let us consider more specifically the signs of a false prophet, whether he is in a religious system or an independent.

SECTARIANISM

A sectarian spirit is often the manifestation of a false prophet. Although sectarianism is a curse that has contaminated many of God's people, it is the product of seducing spirits working under the guise of divine inspiration. It is a form of spiritual delusion that literally makes the person or group believe that they only are right.

It only manifests itself by a narrow, sectarian exclusiveness that cannot fellowship anyone outside of its own group. In fact it is often completely intolerant of all others. It occupies itself very much with convincing its converts that it is the right church or group. Likewise much effort is spent proving that all others are wrong. Great stress is also put on certain doctrines and experiences believed by the group or the prophet of such a group. They are almost under a compulsion to convince others of their doctrine or their experience. The sectarian spirit is often so manifest in them until you can identify them after brief contact. The center of their religion is their doctrine, their experience, their prophet or their Church, not Christ. Such groups are also given to quoting much from the teachings and supposed Bible interpretations of their human founders.

BLIND LOYALTY

Another manifestation that is suspect in a minister is blind denominational loyalty. Men who blindly follow the teachings and practices of any group are in great bondage. Men who are not free to search the scriptures and seek light and revelation from above may be false prophets. Beyond doubt there are many denominational hirelings who cater to their movement for advantage sake. These men appeal to the people according to their pet doctrine or experience. They use religious psychology on them. They give the people what they want whether it be tongues, eternal security, predestination, sanctification or glorification of their movement. This is a perfect fulfillment of Paul's prophetic warning in II Timothy 4:3-4.

These men are not the servants of Christ. This is the type that seek honor from men rather than God. Identification with their movement is more important to them than identification with Christ. They are our modern Pharisees and have the same spirit as those confronted by Christ in John 5:41-44. "I receive not honour from men, But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you, I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"

At the other end of the spectrum there is another group of false prophets that feign belief in any and everything but actually are loyal to none. These are inter-denominationalists that supposedly love everybody and try to cooperate with all. They like to stress cooperation among all churches and all people. They very adeptly avoid issues that might offend. They just try to fit in wherever they are. Neither of these two extremes is representative of Christ but either could be the sign of a false prophet.

WRONG EMPHASIS

The most obvious thing about the false prophet and the false way is the wrong or over-emphasis. Although Christ is recognized and used as a figurehead, the false prophet has a message with something else at its center. His main thrust is wrong. It is not Christ-centered. At the center, instead of Christ, is a doctrine, a supposed revelation, an experience, good works, the movement itself, or some human personality. Often the human personality at the center instead of Christ is the founder of the movement or the leader. Many times the center is simply the local assembly with its personal program and ambition.

Although doctrines, revelations, experiences, good works, leaders and the church are important and have their place they must not be allowed to take the place of Christ. He is the head of man and the head of the Church. As the Father pointed Peter to his beloved son on the Mount of Transfiguration, we must forever and in everything point men to the Christ of God. Matthew 17:5.

The over-emphasis on the Holy Spirit that has been the hallmark of some is very wrong also. This scourge of error popularly known as the Charismatic Revival is, I fear, not inspired by the Holy Spirit they are so diligently trying to impart.

The Holy Spirit does not make himself the center of attraction. He does not speak of himself. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16-13-14.

What could be any plainer than those words? You will not find preachers nor believers in the New Testament glorifying the Holy Spirit nor making that the main thrust of their message. I am afraid that there are many false prophets at work in this movement today. Unregenerate man loves the idea of an experience that will fix him up without the necessity of becoming a true believer and disciple of Jesus Christ.

Paul the Apostle, who gave us more truth for the Church and this dispensation than anyone else, always kept Christ at the center of his life, works, and message. Like very few men, Paul knew that our completeness was in Christ who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Colossians 2:8-10. I Corinthians 1:30. This is why Paul said, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." I Corinthians 2:2.

Christ and him crucified. Christ's miraculous birth. Christ's life and works. Christ's victory over Satan and his evil host by use of the Word. Christ's resurrection and ascension. The victory of Calvary and the power of the cross. Christ's advocacy at the right hand of the Father. Christ's headship over his body, the Church. Christ's Church which is his body. Christ's kingdom. Christ come for his Church. These are things the Spirit of God will emphasize when a man is controlled by him. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20.

EMPHASIS OF MONEY

Another sign of a false prophet is the spirit that makes merchandise of God's people by always emphasizing money. This type might be found among the staid, conventional churches or among those who believe in the miraculous for today.

Those belonging to a conventional or fundamental group use a more sophisticated psychology to get their money. They engage in great building programs and find it rather easy to psyche the people into buying bonds or making long range pledges. They wouldn't stoop to the gimmicks and tricks of the other group to get their money, but they get it just the same and use some of the same psychology, only in a more refined or dignified manner.

The most flagrant transgressors in this area are some of the so-called divine healing evangelists who will stoop to just about anything to get money. It is not uncommon for these men to take an hour or more to raise their offering. Some receive as many as four or five offerings in one service. I have witnessed a general offering, special offering, pledge offering and two change offerings in one service.

Prophecy is also used to get the money out of the people. Sometimes they will prophesy that so many are to give a thousand dollars, others to give five hundred and still others are to give hundreds, fifties, etc. Sometimes the prophecy will tell certain ones who have money laid up for special purposes to get the money and give it to God's servant. Some are told to give their jewelry, such as watches and rings. Some are even told to go borrow the money if they don't have it.

All kinds of blessings and prosperity are promised to those who financially support their programs. Salvation and healing for loved ones, new homes, cars, jobs, etc., are promised if they line up behind God's great man of faith and power. On the negative side, judgment in the form of sickness, financial loss, or even death may come to those who refuse.

This type of minister is often in desperate circumstances and must have immediate help from all of his partners of faith. God's great plan, given especially to him, will fail if they do not give generously. I have often wondered about these men of great faith and power and why they don't have any more faith for their finances.

MANY GIMMICKS

Many ridiculous tricks and gimmicks are used to get money from simple souls that will believe most anything: red flannel to pin to the garments of those in need of healing, water from the Jordan river, miracle oil, magic billfolds, mustard seeds in bottles of oil, and handkerchiefs prayed over in Jesus' tomb if you will send so much money to finance their trip to the Holy Land. Still others are going on a long fast up in some mountain and they will take your request up there with them and pray over it. But be sure to enclose your offering when you send in your request.

The most tragic thing about these wolves in sheep's clothing is that much of their appeal is to sick people, depressed, lonely, aged, and those in trouble. Along with this there are some false prophets who use orphan's homes, missions, old folk's homes and other supposed benevolent works as a facade to get people's money.

SELF EXALTATION

Another sign of a false prophet that is very prominent among some is self exaltation. He often points to his great experience with God or what God showed or told him while on a long fast. His unusual gift is referred to by his associates who exalt him as "God's great man of the hour." His associates are careful to introduce him with high sounding phrases such as, "Brother Tremendous, God's great man to this generation." Much reference is made to the mighty signs and wonders that take place under the ministry of God's mightily anointed servant, Brother Tremendous. It will be noticed that very little of the word is preached by some of these supposed Samsons of faith and power.

Many of these men, some of whom claim to be prophets and apostles of Christ, have never established a local church in their life. They come in with a lot of flourishing fanfare, work the people up to a high emotional pitch, take their money and depart, leaving them to shift for themselves. It is characteristic for a false prophet to be more concerned about himself and his

ministry than the poor sheep. His great concern is his own welfare. “Yea, they are greedy dogs that can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.” Isaiah 56:11. Read also Ezekiel 34:1-10.

BROAD WAY

Legion are the preachers in most religious movements who preach a gospel that does not bring conviction to the people. Consequently they join the church without repentance and faith. Their gospel is a wide gate and a broad way. They do not guard the way to the tree of life with a flaming sword. Instead they offer them a wide, easy gate that leads to destruction. It is indeed a wide gate that the unrepentant can walk through.

These men do not challenge the people by telling them the truth about what it means to come to Christ and serve him. Matthew 10:34-39. They do not preach the Lordship of Christ to the people. Some actually teach that a sinner can be saved without receiving Christ as Lord. This is a complete contradiction of the scriptures. God will not come into a human vessel that refuses to bow to him as Lord. I Corinthians 12:3.

These no doubt are the false prophets Peter was speaking of in II Peter 2:1 where he said, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who (secretly) shall bring in (destructive) heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

This, I believe, is the most subtle form of denying the Lord that bought us with his precious blood on the cruel cross of Calvary. This is why Paul said, “For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” I Corinthians 6:20.

This gospel (which is not **the gospel**) is false and could be the sign of a false prophet. Today’s “easy believism” or “proof-text salvation” that does not really bring men to Christ is the result of such false teaching. This gospel is the wide gate of Matthew 7:13 that allows most everyone to get in without regeneration. But the way to the tree of life (Christ) is still guarded by a flaming sword (the word of God) that turns every way. Everyone that partakes of the tree of life must go through the sword and be slain.

Other movements that afford another type false prophet a good hiding place are the supposed peace organizations, civil rights groups, the hippie movement, the Jesus Freaks and various anti-Communist organizations. Although these false prophets may not be classified as ministers in the usual sense, they have taken the place of spiritual leadership over millions of people. They sit in Moses’ seat and are leading the people to destruction instead of the promised land.

There is a great shaking going on throughout the whole earth at this time. False prophets of every hue and stripe are coming forth to take the people in tow. It is a time of decision with men choosing for time and eternity. Only lovers of truth will escape the dragnet of the false prophet.

All false prophets have some truth. Satan himself uses the Bible. Matthew 4:6. Many false prophets will say Jesus is the Christ. Many will be very successful in building great churches and religious works. The most successful false prophets are intense, talented men who fully believe in what they are doing. They are inspired by the power of darkness and think it is God. Only the elect of God can tell the difference. Matthew 24:24.

CHAPTER FOUR

FALSE TEACHING

False teaching originates through the work of Satan and evil spirits. Though it comes through man it is the work of Satan who has access to the mind of man.

I Timothy 4:1 declares, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, ...” Weymouth’s translation says, “... giving heed to deceiving spirits and the teachings of demons.” Williams’ translation says, “... because they continuously give their attention to deceiving spirits and the things that demons teach.”

When Jesus warned us to “beware of false prophets” he didn’t just mean men who could be classified as false prophets, but also those we consider good men but who are in error. It is principally through deceived human beings that seducing spirits make their entrance into other lives.

There are multitudes of people including teachers and preachers who are blindly following demon-inspired false teaching. They think they are right because their minds have been completely taken over by seducing spirits through years of false teaching.

A deluded person is one who believes a lie to be the truth. He is absolutely sure in his own mind he is right. It is simply believing with all the heart in a lie. This is why the Lord says, “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” Jeremiah 17:9

Religious deception is most difficult to help people see. Everyone has been taught that he is right. If anyone is deceived it is the other fellow. By nature men want to believe in themselves and will invariably follow the dictates of their own depraved heart.

TWO EXTREMES

Knowing that man is prone to go from one extreme to the other, Satan cleverly gives man his choice. One extreme under the guise of exclusive revelation appeals to the narrow, sectarian type who is suspicious of everyone and everything.

The first work of Satan in leading this type into delusion is to convince him that almost everybody else is wrong. Strange as it may seem, Satan has

a point of truth here that cannot be refuted. The many divisions of the confused religious world speak for themselves.

The other extreme is that spirit which approves of anyone and everything so long as it is called Christianity. This spirit appeals to the group that supposedly despises narrow, sectarian exclusiveness. They humbly take pride in the fact they are broadminded and gracious. They call it love because they supposedly embrace everyone and everything.

This group, which is growing by leaps and bounds due to the spirit of ecumenicalism that is working mightily in this hour, also has a point of truth that cannot be denied. However, both are wrong because of the spirit that motivates them.

Satan, under the guise of the Holy Spirit, is an opportunist who quickly counterfeits the genuine move of God's Spirit. Any and every time there is a true expression of the sovereign Spirit that stirs things up, Satan will move in with a counterfeit to take control.

THE TRUE

There is a true exclusiveness about the people of God that sets them apart from the world. But it is not a narrow, sectarian spirit based upon certain doctrines or experiences. It is the Spirit of Christ that the world cannot receive. John 14:17.

There is also a true ecumenicalism that embraces all who have the Spirit of Christ. They see the one body redeemed by the blood of the Lamb that is one in the mind and purpose of God.

When the fundamentalist thinks of a religious deception, he thinks of something far to the right or left of his own supposedly sound-in-the-faith views. The modernist thinks of religious deception as belonging to the archaic past or the fundamentalist who refuses to consider the higher light or modern scholarship. In between these two extremes we have a thousand and one cults who base their belief upon wrested and twisted scriptures. Among these we find those who have supposedly received great revelations by visions, dreams, visitations of angels, or other phenomena.

THE CLEVEREST

However the cleverest work of Satan is in the matter of doctrine that is neither to the right nor left of orthodoxy. It is considered sound, Bible-based teaching that all true Bible-believing Christians hold. Although there is much error and subsequent darkness in Christendom as a whole, what I'm concerned about here is the false teaching concerning the coming of Christ and the end of this age. It is directly connected to and part of the anti-Christ conspiracy to rule the world with Satan as its head.

It is my conviction that there is much error in most of the teaching concerning the coming of the Lord. As already stated, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul both warned us of being deceived about this. They both saw the deception that would permeate the religious world's teaching on this subject.

FUNDAMENTALIST CONCEPT

Generally, the fundamentalist concept teaches that the Church will be raptured out of the earth and then the tribulation will set in with the reign of antichrist. During the tribulation the Jews will be converted and established in their earthly kingdom once more. At the end of the seven year tribulation the Lord will return with his saints, set up his kingdom and rule the world in righteousness for a thousand years. With earthly Jerusalem as the center, and Satan bound during this supposedly golden millennium, the Jews will become missionaries to the rest of the Gentile world that is still in unbelief.

After the thousand year reign, Satan will be loosed for a little season to deceive the nations once more. This deception will unite the Gentile world which will come against Jerusalem in a last all-out effort to destroy it. At this point, God sends fire down from heaven and devours them.

This, with some few variations, is the way much of our religious world says it will take place. To many the Scofield Bible with its footnotes has become a "thus saith the Lord." Much of the error is caused by misapplication of the scriptures and a literal interpretation of certain passages that should be seen as types and shadows. From this error have evolved certain doctrinal views and it is considered heresy to question them.

I certainly take issue with this and say it is folly to not question the teachings of our confused religious world. "For God is not the author of confusion..." I Corinthians 14:36.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TWO-STAGE THEORY OF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

BY DR. GEORGE B. FLETCHER

The Two-Stage theory of Christ's Second Coming teaches that Christ will descend from heaven to the air, raise the righteous dead and translate all the living saints, who will be caught up together to the "secret chambers" there to remain WITH Christ for a period of approximately seven years. The fulfillment of this view of Christ's Second Coming neither the waiting Church, nor the unbelieving world, is to have a moment's warning, the saints being appraised of it by their heavenward flight, and the world by their realization of the "missing ones." After the outpouring of judgments upon the earth during the seven years of the Church's absence WITH Christ — somewhere in space, he and his immortalized saints with the angelic hosts are to be manifested to the world by their visible descent in great power and glory to establish the kingdom of God upon the earth for a thousand years in a predominately Jewish world power kingdom, which is to be followed by a "little season" of universal rebellion — the greatest of all time — before the final consummation of all things.

This Two-Stage theory is a perversion of the Second Coming of Christ and involves a manifest contradiction, viz., two Second Comings of Christ which is an absurdity. Nowhere does the New Testament teach two future comings of Christ, first FOR his saints to the AIR, and then WITH his saints to the EARTH some seven years later. Those who hold this view seek to harmonize it with the New Testament by asserting that the coming FOR and WITH the saints several years later are not two comings, but two stages of the one Second Coming of Christ. This attempt to justify the theory cannot overthrow the testimony of the senses that the coming FOR the saints is a FIRST Second Coming and the subsequent coming WITH the saints some seven years later is a SECOND Second Coming of Christ. But this cannot be, Christ has come once the FIRST time, and he will come yet once again "... the SECOND TIME (and not in two stages) without sin unto salvation" Hebrews 9:28.

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

The Two-Stage theory of Christ's Second Coming is based upon an erroneous interpretation of Daniel's prophecy of Seventy Weeks DETERMINED "upon thy people" (the Jewish people) and "upon the holy city" (Jerusalem) — Daniel 9:24. The Two-Stage theory as popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible says the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy are an INDETERMINATE period of time, because the seventieth week is separated from the sixty-ninth week by this present dispensation, or Christian era of some 1970 years duration already. Whom shall we believe, — the Bible or Scofield? These seventy weeks are CONSECUTIVE, and to separate the seventieth from the sixty-ninth week is to destroy the time period given. This breaks the CONTINUITY of Daniel's seventy weeks. This is as if I were to saw off a yard stick at the 35th inch and attach a piece of elastic to the two pieces and stretch it to my liking. By so doing I destroy the measurement of a yard, and just so does the Two-Stage theory wrest the Scripture with reference to Christ's Second Coming. Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled at the FIRST Advent of Christ, and ran its full course in CONSECUTIVE FULFILLMENT. The Seventy Weeks of Daniel's prophecy are BEHIND US, and not before us; they are now HISTORY, not prophecy; they belong to the PAST, and not to the future; they have been FULFILLED and are not awaiting fulfillment. In the middle of the last or seventieth week the Messiah was cut off (Daniel 9:26). He caused the sacrifices to cease (as the book of Hebrews so clearly shows), confirmed the New Covenant with His disciples (which Christians commemorate every time they observe the Lord's Supper), declared the judgment that would overtake the Jews in the destruction of their city Jerusalem in 70 AD and terminated forever the Mosaic economy of things under the Old Covenant.

THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST

Christ warned his disciples against a two-fold aspect of his Second Advent, (Matthew 24:26-27), "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; behold he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." The Noachic civilization "knew not until the flood came, and took them ALL away; SO SHALL ALSO THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN BE." IF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST TAKES ALL THE WORLD OF THE UNGODLY AWAY, WHO WILL BE LEFT TO ENTER ANY SUPPOSED EARTHLY MILLENNIUM OF TIME AFTER CHRIST'S SECOND ADVENT? Christ also taught that at his Second Advent the goat nations (individuals) shall go away into everlasting destruction (nations as

nations do not go into hell), but the righteous into life eternal. IF THE GOAT NATIONS (PEOPLES) GO INTO EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT WHEN CHRIST COMES AGAIN THE SECOND TIME WHO WILL BE LEFT TO ENTER ANY SUPPOSED CONTINUATION OF TIME WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF HUMAN HISTORY OF A THOUSAND YEARS PLUS A LITTLE SEASON AFTER THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST?

In the parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) the tares — the children of the wicked one — are to be burned and ALL things that offend shall be gathered out of the kingdom. IF SO, WHO AMONG THE CHILDREN OF THE WICKED ONE WILL BE LEFT TO ENTER ANY SUPPOSED EARTHLY REIGN OF CHRIST AFTER THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST FOR A THOUSAND YEARS DURATION PLUS A LITTLE SEASON?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

The apostle Paul declared a SHOUT, the VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL, and a GREAT SOUND OF A TRUMPET are all to precede the gathering together of Christ's elect (I Thessalonians 4:16, 17) from the four corners of the earth at his coming. There is no secrecy here, It is open, visible, audible, noisy and agrees with the apostle John's statement in Revelation 1:7. Nowhere in the New Testament are we exhorted to look for a SECRET RAPTURE and open REVELATION some seven years apart to be followed by any earthly millennial kingdom of Jewish Supremacy AFTER the Second Advent of Christ, but rather we are to look for that "blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13), and for the fulfillment of the promise of a New Heaven and a New Earth at his Second Coming (II Peter 3:13; Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; Revelation 21:5). Christ's Second Coming ushers in ETERNITY, and not a continuation of time for an additional thousand years plus a little season. The Second Coming of Christ will be the END OF ALL HOPE FOR SINNERS as Paul makes so abundantly clear in II Thessalonians 1:7-10. The time of deliverance for the saints in the consummation of the redemption of the total election of grace of all ages will be the time of retribution for the eternal destruction of the total number of the wicked of all time. IF THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST (II THESSALONIANS 1:7) IS GOING TO BANISH WITH EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION ALL WHO KNOW NOT GOD AND OBEY NOT THE GOSPEL, WHO AMONG THE WORLD OF THE UNGODLY WILL BE LEFT TO ENTER ANY SUPPOSED MILLENNIUM AND PROPAGATE THE RACE FOR ANOTHER

THOUSAND YEARS PLUS A LITTLE SEASON OF TIME AFTER THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST?

The apostle Paul reveals that Christ is reigning NOW and “must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet.” (I Corinthians 15:25), and the LAST enemy that shall be destroyed is death (I Corinthians 15:26), which will be at the one and only Second Coming of Christ (Corinthians 15:54, 55). IF THE LAST ENEMY IS DESTROYED AT THE ONE AND ONLY SECOND COMING OF CHRIST (and not in two stages), HOW CAN ANY OTHER ENEMIES ARISE AFTER THE LAST ENEMY HAS BEEN DESTROYED?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE JOHN

Revelation 3:10 is often cited as a proof text for the SECRET PRETRIBULATION RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH before the so-called Great Tribulation erroneously based on a fallacious interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27. This text lends no aid to the false Two-Stage theory, for the natural and obvious meaning is THE SAFEKEEPING OF THEM IN THE MIDST OF WORLD WIDE TRIAL, BUT NOT EXEMPTION FROM IT BY BEING CAUGHT UP TO HEAVEN. The preposition “out of” (ek) signifies exactly this, and not rapture before the trial begins. John 17:15 is a passage parallel with this verse in Revelation 3:10: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” The Philadelphia saints were to be in the trial, but safeguarded in it. The word, “keep” is the same in both passages and means “observe, watch over, keep” but never “take out.” This explanation is confirmed by the words that follow: “Behold, I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.” Christ lays upon them the responsibility of vigilance, of continual effort, and does not promise them a false escapism from trouble but of being “watched over” in it.

If righteousness prevails for a thousand years AFTER the Second Advent of Christ under the personal “rod or iron” rule of Christ sitting on an earthly throne in Jerusalem, where will the wicked “as the sand of the sea” (Revelation 20:8) come from?

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PETER

The apostle Peter also does not appear to have known anything about the Two-Stage theory, for he says nothing about such a concept in his gospel (the gospel of Mark), or in his sermons (in the book of Acts), or in his epistles (1 and 2 Peter). Note the order of prophetic events as found in II Peter 3: (1) The world will grow worse (vs. 3); (2) Christ will come (vs. 4); (3) The final (general) judgment follows at once (vs.7); (4) at which time the world and the works therein are to be burned up (vs.10,12); and (5) to be

followed at once by the New Heavens and New Earth (vs.13). The uniform testimony of Scripture is Christ's second Advent will usher in the ETERNAL state, and not a millennium of Jewish or Gentile supremacy in a world-wide kingdom maintained by force — the rod of iron rule — in a mixed state of mortals and immortals, the mortals living, dying, and begetting their kind for a thousand years plus a little season AFTER the Second Advent of Christ. THERE WILL BE NO MORE OPPORTUNITY OF SALVATION FOR JEW OR GENTILE AFTER THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST THAN THERE IS AFTER DEATH (Luke13:24-30).

IN CONCLUSION

There are two outstanding signs of Christ's Second Advent: (1) "... many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4); (2) "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). About all the false doctrines in the world can be summed up under two heads: (1) Some other way but Christ (John 14:6), and (2) Some other time than now (II Corinthians 6:2).

From the foregoing considerations, the so-called Two-Stage theory of the Second Coming of Christ to be followed by a thousand years of time plus a little season must be rejected as one of "the divers and STRANGE DOCTRINES" of the last days (Hebrews 13:9). They who preach it are preaching a false hope for Jews and a false escapism from tribulation for Christians. God grant that you, dear reader, shall be ready for Christ's glorious appearing (Matthew 25:13). Repent of sin by forsaking it (Proverbs 28:13), and receive Christ as your Lord and Savior (John 1:12; Romans 10:9, 10). confessing him before men (Mark 8:38; Matthew 10:32, 33). Beloved, the end of all things is at hand (I Peter 4:7); be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. Prepare to meet thy God (Amos 4:12).

CHAPTER SIX

THE COMING OF CHRIST

Jesus and Paul, the apostle, made special effort to warn us of deception concerning the coming of Christ. In spite of their warning, I fear it was in vain for most of our church world. Beyond doubt, much error exists today in this area of doctrine if we go by what the scriptures actually teach. Although this subject is touched on elsewhere, our purpose here is to bring out further scriptural evidence that exposes the error that exists.

THE TRUMPETS

One of the Bible keys used to open my understanding on this subject several years ago is found in the scripture references dealing with the trumpets.

The use of trump or trumpet in the scriptures denotes a message of warning. It symbolizes a divine message of warning to alarm, awaken and prepare God's people. The reason I specify God's people is because they only have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. This is brought out in Joel 2:1 where the Lord says, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand."

Please note, "Blow the trumpet in Zion ... sound an alarm in my holy mountain...." Zion and God's holy mountain certainly have reference to God's people or the Church. And, I believe, this time called the "day of the Lord" has reference to Christ's coming and God's judgment upon the world. The blowing of the trumpet in Zion is God's message of warning to awaken and prepare the Lord's people for that day.

The first mention of the trumpet or trump of God in the New Testament used in connection with Christ's coming is found in Matthew 24:31. "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

In I Thessalonians 4:13-17 the trump of God is sounded at the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead and the rapture of the saints. Let's notice verses 16 and 17 especially. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive

and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Some would contend that this passage of scripture only refers to the resurrection of the righteous dead with the wicked dead to be raised a thousand years-plus later on. But a careful study of the context will show that Paul was comforting the living saints concerning the dead in Christ. He did not want them to sorrow concerning those who had fallen asleep in Jesus. He wanted them to know that they would not be left out at Christ’s coming, but would indeed come with him. This is the only reason he made no specific reference to the resurrection of the wicked which will take place at the same time.

Although both these scriptures tell us of the sounding trumpet that heralds his coming and the gathering together of the elect, they do not specifically tell us which trump or trumpet they are. For the answer to that question let’s go to other scriptures.

THE LAST TRUMP

I Corinthians 15:51-53. “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” Read also verses 35-50 in this same chapter.

Once again the trumpet heralds the resurrection of the dead and the change of the living saints from mortality to immortality. This time there is no doubt as to which trump is sounded. **It is the last trump.**

Why is it called the last trump? It is the last trump because it is final: there will be no more. It heralds the end of the age, the coming of Christ, the resurrection of all the dead, and victory over death itself. Let’s remember I Corinthians 15:25-26 says, “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

THE LAST ENEMY

The coming of Christ heralds the climactic restitution of all things lost through the fall. Acts 3:20-21. With the lifting of the curse, death is automatically destroyed. This is the last enemy. There is no need for any more trumpets to sound after the last enemy is destroyed. It is all over.

The fact that his coming heralds the end is brought out very plainly in verses 22-24 of I Corinthians 15. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end,

when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

THE END

What could be any plainer than this? Christ is the firstfruits from the dead. Afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end. Please notice! It does not say, then cometh the great tribulation, a thousand years of peace on earth, and a little season for Satan to be turned loose again. It says, **“then cometh the end....”**

That part of the kingdom of God (the Church, God's people) that is still in the earth at Christ's coming will be lifted out. The earthly part of the kingdom will be forever united with the heavenly host already on the other side. Then comes the end. God's interest in those that are left will be over, even as it was in Noah's day. Matthew 24:37-39. Destruction of the wicked and the earth itself by fire seals the fate of the world when the saints are removed.

From Revelation 8 through 11 we have the sounding of seven trumpets depicting different aspects of God's judgment upon the earth before the coming of Christ. It seems these judgments are comparable to the judgments of God upon Egypt before the Lord took Israel out. These seven judgments are the prelude to the coming of Christ. Seven is the number of completeness. In this instance seven is used because it represents the final and complete judgments of God upon the earth before eternity is ushered in.

The first trumpet sounds in Revelation 8:7, and the seventh trumpet sounds in Revelation 11:15. There are no more. The seventh trumpet is the final and last trumpet. It is obvious this last trump heralds the end of the age, the resurrection and judgment of the dead, giving of rewards to the saints and destruction of the wicked. Let's notice exactly what takes place when the seventh angel sounds. (Revelation 11:15-18) “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come: because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.”

DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED

The fact that the wicked will be destroyed at the coming of Christ is brought out elsewhere in the scriptures. In Matthew 24:37-39 Jesus likens his coming to the days of Noah. "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

If the world of lost men is going to be destroyed at Christ's coming as it was in Noah's day by the flood, then who will be left to go through any supposed millennium?

SEPARATION OF RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED

In the parable of the ten virgins, Matthew 25:1-13, the emphasis of the Lord is for men to be ready for his coming. The whole purpose of this parable is to warn people to prepare for that day as the door will be shut and it will be too late after he comes. It is evident from verses 10-13 that men must be ready at his coming or be lost forever.

In Matthew 25:31-46 he is teaching that when he comes in his glory with all his holy angels, all nations will be gathered before him whom he will separate as a shepherd does his sheep from the goats. And he make it plain that the righteous will enter into life eternal and the unrighteous into everlasting punishment.

This same principle is taught in the parable of the wheat and the tares. Matthew 13:36-43. They are separated at the end of the age with the tares being burned up and the wheat gathered into the barn.

The same thing is taught by Paul in I Thessalonians 5:1-9. There will be salvation for the righteous and destruction for the wicked. And it will take place at his coming for the saints.

Perhaps one of the plainest scriptures teaching this principle of salvation for the righteous and destruction for the wicked at Christ's coming is found in II Thessalonians 1:7-10. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

There is no way an honest heart can make anything else out of this scripture. He's coming with his holy angels in flaming fire on them that

know not God, and that obey not the gospel. They will be punished with everlasting destruction when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.

In II Thessalonians 2:1-12 Paul warns us to not be deceived concerning the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto him. He said the falling away and the revealing of the man of sin must come first before the coming of the Lord. According to verse 8 this wicked one called the “man of sin” will be destroyed with the brightness of his coming. It is also evident from the rest of this chapter that the world of unbelieving men will share the same fate of delusion and damnation as the man of sin. This scripture certainly teaches salvation for the righteous and destruction for the wicked at Christ’s coming.

Another scripture that cannot be interpreted any other way is II Peter 3 where the question of Christ’s coming is being dealt with by the apostle Peter. Giving the reason for the delay of Christ’s coming as the longsuffering of God, Peter tells us exactly what will happen when he does finally come. II Peter 3:10, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

ALL THE DEAD

Another scripture that teaches the righteous and the wicked being judged and separated at the same time is Revelation 20:11-15. “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away: and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Although this great white throne judgment is said to be different and separate by more than a thousand years from the judgment seat of Christ, I believe they are one and the same.

Let’s notice that John said the dead, small and great, would stand before God. If he did not mean all the dead, but only the wicked dead, why did he say, “the dead small and great”? It is quite evident John used this expression because all the dead would be there. This certainly is confirmed by Jesus’

own words in John 5:28-29. “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

All that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth when that last trumpet sounds. They that have done good will come forth unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. Does this sound like there will be a thousand years between the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked?

THE LAST DAY

The fact that the resurrection of the righteous takes place at the last day is borne out by what Jesus said in John 6:39-40, 44 and 54. “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should **raise it up again at the last day**. And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up **at the last day**.” “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up **at the last day**.”

“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up **at the last day**.”

If the righteous are raised **at the last day** how can there be a thousand years plus a little season before the wicked are raised? The truth is both the righteous and the wicked are raised and judged at the last day. The same **last day** applied to the resurrection of the righteous is also applied to the judgment of the wicked. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” John 12:48.

This, beloved, is why the dead, small and great, come before God in that day. This is also why the books (plural) will be opened plus another book which is the book of life. The books (plural) no doubt are the records of God of the deeds done in the body. I believe they are the records of the righteous and the wicked inasmuch as they are judged by the things written in the books. Verse 12.

All scripture dealing with Christ’s coming warns us to be ready. There is no hint of another opportunity for man after his coming. In fact the scripture plainly teaches that his coming is salvation for the righteous and judgment for the wicked. All the parables of Christ dealing with this subject teach the same thing.

This idea of the conversion of the Jews after Christ’s coming and their becoming missionaries to the Gentile world for a thousand years is a

doctrine of deception. The sum total of this teaching is that man will have another chance after Christ comes. Certainly Satan and his evil host would like for all lost men, Jew and Gentile, to believe this.

God's day of mercy and grace is now. Even as his Spirit ceased to strive with man before the flood, Genesis 6:3, the same thing is happening today before the second coming of Christ. When the Church indwelt by God's Spirit is caught away there will be no means of convicting men of sin and showing them their need of Christ. With God's divine presence removed, neither Jew nor Gentile can be saved. This is why judgment falls at that time. When he comes for his own he will be through with this present world. This is why he will burn it up root and branch. Malachi 4:1.

II Peter 3:10-14. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE THOUSAND YEAR MYSTERY

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. Revelation 20:1-3.

Much of the Bible, Old Testament and New, uses symbolical language. This is especially true of the books of Daniel and Revelation. Many of the prophets and especially the Lord Jesus Christ purposely hid spiritual gold under the cloak of earthly stories called parables.

When the disciples asked the Lord about the parable of the sower, he told them, “... unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” Mark 4:11-12.

From this scripture it is evident that God purposely uses symbolical language to keep the natural man from understanding what He is saying. This is another reason there is so much difference of opinion and misunderstanding about the Bible. Most religious people trying to interpret the Bible are just natural men having never experienced the spiritual birth.

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” I Corinthians 2:14.

Although most Bible expositors recognize the book of Revelation as being highly symbolical, they interpret the thousand years of chapter twenty literally. They readily admit “the key,” “the bottomless pit” and “the great chain” are symbolical terms but when it comes to the thousand years they want to make that literal. I believe the “thousand years” is symbolical also.

THE KEY

The key to its meaning is found in II Peter 3 which deals principally with the unbelief of man concerning the coming of Christ and the faithfulness of God in keeping his promise. It is the eighth verse of this chapter that gives us the key to our mystery concerning the thousand years.

“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” According to this scripture a thousand years with God could be any period of time from one day to a thousand years.

Some, of course, would argue that this was just a figure of speech with the emphasis on God’s faithfulness to keep his promise whether it be one day or a thousand years. Although I agree this is true, I believe there was a secondary reason the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to use what I feel was more than a simple figure of speech. The Holy Spirit was infinitely wise and careful to choose such language. God knew the natural religious man would think of it only as a figure of speech, thus the key to a great mystery would be hidden.

Let’s remember this thousand years or one day was used in connection with the time period that precedes the coming of Christ and the destruction of the earth by fire. In fact, I believe it does represent this time period and is identical with the thousand years of Revelation twenty.

If a day with the Lord could be **as a thousand years** and a thousand years **as a day** then the literal time period is certainly indefinite and unknown: known to God but not to man.

Another reason I believe the thousand years to be symbolical and not literal is because it would allow man to pinpoint the end of the age. All scripture makes it plain that God alone knows the specified time element concerning these things. No man can know the day nor the hour. Matthew 24:36. Acts 1:7.

The Lord Jesus Christ, Peter, Paul and others warned us that Christ would come suddenly and without warning taking the world by complete surprise. Matthew 24:37-39. II Peter 3:10. I Thessalonians 5:1-3. God has not given us any mathematical formula whereby we can pinpoint these things. Only by the revelation of the Spirit through the word can we recognize the true signs of his coming and be prepared.

DAY OF GRACE

This thousand years is symbolical and represents a day of God’s dealing with man in a certain way. It is not a twenty-four hour day but a dispensational day. So far as the time element is concerned it is unknown

and indefinite. It is indeed “known to God but not to man.” This day or dispensation has come to be known by many as the day of grace.

I personally believe the figure “thousand” is used because it represents the full measure of time allotted to man during this day of grace. This is the day of divine restraint which holds back the forces of evil so man can hear the gospel message. It represents the Church age or that time period that reaches from Calvary to the end of the gospel age.

Although the mystery of iniquity has worked in this age it has been under divine restraint. This divine restraint was necessary for man to have a chance to hear the gospel. The unfettered activity of Satan and his demoniac host would have prevented this.

What men are still looking for out in the future has come and is, in fact, about over. Deceived religious teachers, by their doctrines, say there is still plenty of time and opportunity for men to be saved. According to their doctrines we have whatever time is left before the rapture plus the seven years tribulation, plus the millennium (1000 years), plus the little season at the end before the world is finally destroyed by fire.

How can man be concerned and prepared when he thinks he has so much time left? No wonder Peter said, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” II Peter 3:10.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE BINDING OF SATAN

The binding of Satan during the thousand years (day of grace) is also a mystery until the Lord opens the eyes of our understanding. Certainly we do not think Satan can be bound with a chain made of material substance. Being spirits without physical embodiment or confinement neither Satan nor his demoniac host can be bound by material substance. That which is spirit only responds to and is subject to spirit.

As long as we think of the binding of Satan as being absolute instead of relative we will not be able to understand this great mystery. The binding of Satan during this period can be likened to a vicious animal securely tied to a tree with a twenty-foot chain. Although he is bound by the chain and confined to an area forty feet in diameter, he can still attack anything that comes within a twenty-foot radius of the tree.

If Satan had had unfettered access to man during this day of grace he would have banished God and his people from the earth. He would have already set up his own kingdom and openly blasphemed the God of heaven.

What Satan had done has been under divine restraint. This is the meaning of II Thessalonians 2:7 which says, “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” Other translations of the last part of this verse translate it thusly:

“... only, he who checks it now will be able to check it, until he is removed from the enemy’s path.” Knox.

“... but its activities are restricted until what I have called the ‘restraining power’ is removed.” Phillips.

“... but the evil work is held in check and will be held back until the time when he who now restrains will be set aside.” Narlie.

It is plainly evident from these translations that Satan has been restrained and held in check during this entire day of grace. It is also evident that God will remove the restraint and permit the manifestation of Satan to come forth before the coming of Christ and our gathering together unto him.

Since Satan is not bound by a literal chain of material substance during this day of grace, we need to know how this is accomplished.

THE CROSS

Satan's binding begins with the cross. This is where the blow was struck. Every student of the Bible knows that Calvary was the beginning of the end for Satan and his demoniac host.

Although the work of the cross provided the means of completely binding and defeating Satan, this has to be implemented by a knowledge of the truth. The destroyer can only work where there is a lack of knowledge. According to our faith be it unto us. Hosea 4:6. Matthew 9:29.

The Hebrew name "Abaddon" and the Greek name "Apollyon" both mean destroyer.

"They have over them as king the messenger of the abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon (Destroyer) and in the Greek he hath for name Destroyer." Rotherham.

"They have as their king the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew, 'Abaddon,' while in Greek, his name is 'Apollyon' (the Destroyer)." The Twentieth Century New Testament. Revelation 9:11.

Man without a knowledge of God is preyed upon and destroyed by the adversary.

It is truth (true knowledge of God) that sets men free from the bondage of Satan. John 8:32.

Truth that sets man free also puts the chain around Satan. As man is set free Satan is bound. Needless to say, Satan's freedom means bondage for man.

POWER OF THE CROSS

The word gospel means "good news" or "glad tidings." It is simply the true knowledge of God with the cross at the center. The heart of the gospel is the cross. This is why Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Romans 1:16.

What is God's power? It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Who has it? Everyone that believeth. This is also why Paul said, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." I Corinthians 1:18.

Hallelujah! No wonder Satan, above all things, hates the message of the cross and the shed blood. He knows what happened at Calvary whether man does or not. Take the cross out of the gospel and you have nothing.

This is what it means in Colossians 2:14-15: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross: And having spoiled

principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

The fifteenth verse particularly has reference to the victory over Satan and his host at Calvary. Let’s note the translation of this passage by Conybeare.

“And he disarmed the principalities and powers (which fought against him) ... and put them to open shame leading them captive in the triumph of Christ.”

Please notice the thought brought out in this passage by Conybeare. He disarmed the enemy and took him captive. If this isn’t the binding of Satan please tell me what it means.

And although this is what happened at Calvary, man’s response is necessary to implement the work of the cross. When men love not the truth that they might be saved the way is prepared for Satan to possess them through strong delusion. II Thessalonians 2:10-12.

With the cross at the center of God’s plan for the redemption of man, all truth and knowledge are related. I might add that everything in God’s universe, visible and invisible, is related to and affected by the cross. This includes angels, men, demons and all creation.

This being true, the binding and loosing of Satan is a complex work affecting all these things with much time involved. As long as we think of it as something that is done quickly or in a few moments of time we will never understand how it is accomplished.

The first advent of Christ ushered in the day of grace for mankind. It was the beginning of the gospel to all the world. Up until that time salvation was to the Jew while the rest of the world groped in darkness.

With Calvary, divine machinery was set in motion to cause the gospel to be preached to every creature. This had never happened before. John 4:20-23. Acts 1:8.

The power and influence of the gospel had far reaching effect. It was God’s power at work against the kingdom of darkness to free man. The ministry of the Church, Angels and the Holy Spirit had tremendous effect upon the world. Empires and nations recognizing the power of Christianity bowed before its influence.

Even the Bible became a textbook for the legislation of laws. Constituted authority of all nations came to recognize the Church and its right to exist.

The impact of Christ and the gospel upon the world became a mighty deterrent to the kingdom of darkness. Beyond a doubt Satan and his demoniac host were halted in their quest for complete world dominion.

This was the binding of Satan. And although the mystery of iniquity continued to operate in varying degrees, a day of grace was given for the proclamation of the gospel. After this gospel age Satan will be loosed again to deceive the nations and bring them in a final united effort against Jerusalem (the Church). Hebrews 12:22-24. Galatians 4:25:26. Revelation 20:7-9.

CHAPTER NINE

THE REIGN OF CHRIST

Much is said about the millennial reign of Christ. Of course those who speak of it have reference to the doctrine which says Christ will reign a literal thousand years on the earth with Jerusalem as the religious center.

They do not understand that Christ's kingdom is not of this world and he is now reigning from his Father's throne in Jerusalem which is above. Revelation 3:21 says, "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

Christ's earthly sojourn is finished forever. John 17:4. Never again will God's beloved Son have to live on this cursed earth, even during a supposed golden millennium.

Hebrews 10:12-13 says, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool."

Please notice he has "forever sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." He has met the enemy and triumphed over him. He has overcome the world and entered into his glory which he had with the Father before the world was. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15 was fulfilled at Calvary: Satan's head was bruised. Christ's day of condescending humility and sacrifice is over. He is once again at the right hand of the Father ruling and reigning over all the host of heaven. Matthew 4:1-11. John 16:33. Colossians 2:14-15. Hebrews 2:14. I John 3:8. Joshua 5:13-15. Matthew 26:53. Hebrews 12:22-24.

Christ will reign till the Church, by faith, enters into the victory of Calvary. In the mind of God, the battle is the Lord's and it's already won. The victory of the Church is as sure as Christ's victory. This is because the Church is his body, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. In the mind of God, Christ and his church are one. The victory of the head over Satan also belongs to the body. Romans 8:37-39. I John 4:4, 5:4-5.

Beyond the veil of earth from the Jerusalem which is above, Christ is now ruling and reigning. Under his glad command is a mighty host of angels and just men made perfect. Hebrews 12:22-24.

Most of God's redeemed are already on the other side. Only a remnant Church remains. It is this remnant Church that must overcome the enemy

and be without spot or blemish at his coming. Ephesians 5:27. Revelation 19:7-8.

Those who have crossed the great divide between time and eternity already know as they are known. No longer is the victory of Calvary a mystery to them. Only a lack of knowledge on the part of the Church has kept her from the realization of the victory that was wrought through the precious blood of Christ.

REIGNING SAINTS

Those who have suffered with Christ are also reigning with him. II Timothy 2:12. There is no difficulty in recognizing this when we see that Christ is indeed reigning now. Once we see the thousand years as symbolical and now instead of in the future it becomes obvious that some have been ruling and reigning with him during this day of grace.

In Revelation 4:4 we see twenty-four elders sitting upon thrones, clothed in white with crowns of gold on their heads. This scene is in heaven according to verse 2 and although symbolical language is used here, crowns and thrones certainly mean authority and rule. This is also true of those who sit upon thrones and some who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus in Revelation 20:4.

In Revelation 19:10, John falls down in reverence before one whom he would have worshipped as deity. But he was told, "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

It is evident that this one appearing to John on the Isle of Patmos was from the other realm. And although he was a fellow servant and of the brethren, it certainly seems he was ruling and reigning with Christ. In Revelation 22:8-9, another, appearing to John as an angel, said he was "... of thy brethren the prophets... ."

These scriptures mean some are now fulfilling their calling as priests and kings from beyond the veil. Even before Calvary, Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus on the mount and talked with him concerning his decease. Surely they were operating from that dimension that belongs to God, the angels, and eternity. I see no reason for having to wait for a supposed millennium to rule and reign with Christ.

Perhaps another difficulty in understanding this question can be cleared up if we know what is meant by ruling and reigning with Christ. Some think of this only as a place of honor and rulership where they will sit as a great monarch upon a throne with others bowing before them. Surely some, by virtue of their call and faithfulness, have been accorded places of honor and glory not only in eternity but on the present earth also. This, no doubt, will

also be true of the new heavens and the new earth after the present ones are destroyed by fire.

REIGNING ON EARTH

However, there is another aspect to ruling and reigning with Christ that is perhaps more important than some celestial throne. This ruling and reigning with Christ begins in the new birth here in this life and will continue with Christ in the world to come.

The ruling and reigning that we need to share in has to do with the flesh, the devil and the world. Here is where the enemy is that we need to overcome. This is the battlefield. And though I believe that there are places of honor and glory in eternity, here in this earth is where God's children begin to rule and reign.

With the new birth we are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. Through his precious blood we defeat the enemy and become a citizen of Christ's eternal kingdom. Colossians 1:13-14. The kingdom of darkness, its citizens, its king (Satan), and its laws have no more hold on us. I John 4:4, 5:4-5. Romans 8:2.

Revelation 5:8-10 says, "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

Note that they said, "... made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." How was this accomplished? Through the Lamb that was slain, who alone was able to take the book and loose the seven seals. The closed book with the seven seals represents the complete knowledge and wisdom of God. Only the Lamb in the midst of the throne (Christ Exalted) could take the book out of the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

It was after his crucifixion and resurrection that Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matthew 28:18. As the monarch of heaven and earth he could say that and commission the Church to go into all the world with the gospel.

The word gospel means good news or glad tidings. The good news is that Jesus has prevailed (over Satan) and we can share the victory with him.

This is what happens when we become one with Christ. Through his death we conquer Satan, who had the power of death. Hebrews 2:14.

Through his resurrection we enter the throne room of heaven to rule and reign with him. Ephesians 2:6.

Because of the lack of the renewing of our minds, Romans 12:2, Satan, the usurper, takes advantage of us to deceive. It is still true God's people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge. To the degree we have believed, we have ruled and reigned with him. According to our faith be it unto us.

However, our failure to grasp the truth and confess it does not destroy our position in Christ. It is appointed of God and will stand. What is true in the mind of God is true and our apprehension of it is just a matter of time. Romans 5:17, says, "For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

This reigning in life by Jesus Christ should be the practical portion and lot of every child of God. The instant Christ comes into our heart we become overcomers because of the one who lives in us.

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." I John 4:4.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." I John 5:4.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things: Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Romans 8:32-37.

This is the ruling and reigning that proves we have been born of God and are in union with his Son, Jesus Christ. It is this ruling and reigning that powers and principalities (Satan and host) have to bow before. It is also this ruling and reigning on the earth by the saints that prove the Lord Jesus Christ is now ruling and reigning from the right hand of the Father on high.

CHAPTER TEN

THE MYSTERY OF THE KINGDOM

“And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” Mark 4:10-12.

There are numerous things referred to as a mystery in the Bible, including the kingdom of God. The purpose of speaking in parables was that those without might hear and yet not understand, “... lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”

Because of those who think of the kingdom of God as the re-establishment of the Jewish nation in Palestine, let it be pointed out that the kingdom was purposely hidden to those without to keep them from being converted. It was not an earthly kingdom to be established anywhere in this world.

The mystery of the kingdom had to do with conversion and forgiveness of sins. This kingdom is entered by repentance and faith. Matthew 3:3. Mark 10:17-24. I Corinthians 6:9-11. Only by the spiritual birth can men see or enter this kingdom. John 3:1-5.

COMES NOT WITH OBSERVATION

“And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:20-21.

It is evident from the scriptures above that the Jews did not understand the true nature of the kingdom of God. Like those today who believe in the millennium, they thought it was going to be established in the earth with earthly Jerusalem as the center. Even the disciples were blind to the true nature of the kingdom before Pentecost. John 3:3, 4:20. Acts 1:6.

Jesus said it did not come with observation. It wasn't a visible, material kingdom to be seen with carnal eyes. Even though it was in their midst, they would never be able to say, “Lo here! or lo there!”

KINGDOM SPIRITUAL

Not being materialistic or visible, the kingdom of God could only be seen by the revelation of God's Spirit. The truth is, God's kingdom belongs to another realm which is spiritual and eternal. This is why Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3.

John the Baptist heralded the kingdom by preaching repentance "... and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 3:2. In the person of Jesus Christ the kingdom was introduced to man.

By the Spirit of God, Jesus Christ was God's earthly manifestation of his eternal kingdom. Jesus said to the Jews, "If I by the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you." Luke 11:20. Matthew 9:35. says, "... Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom...."

Likewise the disciples were commissioned to do the same. Luke 10: 1-9. Yet Jesus told Pilate, "... my kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." John 18:36.

Being spiritual, the kingdom of God is more of a state of being than it is a place located somewhere in God's universe. Someone has rightly said, "an unregenerate sinner would be wretchedly miserable in heaven." Romans 14:17 says, "for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Because we are carnal, God has used much language known and understood by the natural man when speaking of the kingdom. This is true of the Old Testament as well as the New. Literal interpretation of such passages can only lead to much error and belief in an earthly, materialistic kingdom.

For example, let us consider some verses of Isaiah chapter two, which many say will be literally fulfilled during the supposed millennium. Verses 2 and 3 say, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

By literal interpretation, these verses are taken to mean that God's kingdom will be established in the earth with the Jews' return to Palestine and Jerusalem's becoming the religious capital of the world. And, of course, all nations will have to bow before this kingdom and go up to Jerusalem if they receive anything from God.

Most of the language here is a type that points to a spiritual reality fulfilled in the Church and God's eternal kingdom.

The mountain of the Lord's house that is to be established in the top of the mountains with all nations flowing unto it is Mount Zion, the Church of the firstborn and the heavenly Jerusalem referred to in Hebrews 12:22-23. "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

It will be noticed that Paul told these Hebrew converts they had "... come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, ... church of the firstborn" This wasn't something for the future but was a present day reality. Read also Galatians 4:25-26 which gives the true contrast between earthly Jerusalem and heavenly Jerusalem.

Earthly Jerusalem was simply a type of the true Holy Jerusalem which John saw "... coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Revelation 21:1-2.

The "all nations" of Isaiah 2:2 that flow into the Lord's house are the nations of them which are saved that walk in the light of the holy city of Revelation 21:24-26. Only the redeemed whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will get into this Jerusalem. This is also the true Church in the earth today which is an extension of God's eternal kingdom.

The "house of the God of Jacob" of Isaiah 2:3 is God's spiritual house, the Church. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are framed together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2:19-22. Read also Hebrews 3:1-6.

The true Church is God's house or dwelling place because he, by the Spirit, lives in it. This is also where men will have to come and be taught the ways of the Lord. The mountain of the Lord, house of God, Zion and Jerusalem of Isaiah 2:3 are types pointing to God's spiritual house.

The belief that Isaiah 2:4 will be literally fulfilled during the millennium with all the nations of the world beating their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks is another clumsy effort of literal interpretation that can't possibly be fulfilled.

In the first place modern man doesn't use the primitive weapons of swords and spears mentioned here. This has to be a type pointing to the warlike nature that God takes out of his people when they are saved by his

grace. Hate, which breeds war and violence, is replaced with God's love when he saves us. I John 4:7-12.

In the second place these nations of people will not learn war any more. The work that is done in them is permanent and eternal. According to those who believe in the millennium, Satan will be loosed for a little season at the end of the thousand years and will go forth to deceive the nations once more. They will learn war again and come against Jerusalem. As is seen from this, a literal interpretation of this scripture would contradict their own doctrine.

Isaiah 2:2-5 is a picture of God's kingdom, the Church, and the day of grace in which he has judged among the nations and rebuked many people. This has been and is being done by the Spirit of God through the Gospel. This was the purpose of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." John 16:7-11.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent." Revelation 3:19.

KINGDOM IS ETERNAL

God's kingdom is neither materialistic nor temporal, but it is spiritual and eternal. After this earth is destroyed by fire at Christ's coming, he will create new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. II Peter 3:10-13. This is where new Jerusalem, the holy city, will be located. Revelation 21:1-4.

The earthly Jerusalem of Palestine is still in bondage with her children as well as the rest of this world. They have no part nor lot in God's eternal kingdom of which heavenly Jerusalem is the capital. Galatians 4:25-26. This kingdom is still in our midst, but those that are without cannot see it.

THE JEW

The Jewish hope of an earthly kingdom is not the kingdom that Christ came to establish in the hearts of men. This is what Jesus meant when he said to the woman at Jacob's well, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father ... But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." John 4:21, 23.

The return of the natural Jew to Palestine has nothing to do with the fulfillment of the scriptures. There is no scriptural basis for belief in a national conversion of Israel nor a Jewish millennium with all nations going up to Jerusalem to learn the ways of the Lord.

The much ado about Israel and the regathering Jew is, I believe, part of Satan's great conspiracy to deceive the religious world, lest it be prepared for the coming of the Lord and the end of the age. Satan would much rather men believe there is a thousand years plus a little season before this world is destroyed by fire. He would also like for the natural Jew to believe his Messiah is still to come and restore the kingdom to Israel.

Israel, as a nation, has had her opportunity. The first advent of Christ was God's last overture to her as a nation. The lament of Christ over Jerusalem marked the end of his dealings with her as a chosen people.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Matthew 23:37-38. Read also Luke 19:41-44.

Jesus summed it up in these words, "... Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes: Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matthew 21:42-43.

The answer of who this nation is that the kingdom has been given to is found in I Peter 2:9. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

This holy nation is the Church called out of all nations by the gospel. It is made up of Jew and Gentile. Ephesians 2:14-18.

The hope for national conversion of the Jew is false. As an individual he can be saved through the same gospel that saves a Gentile. He will be grafted back into his own olive tree when he repents and believes the gospel. Romans 11:20-24.

Romans 10:12. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

"For through him (Jesus) we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Ephesians 2:18.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WHO IS A JEW?

BY PHIL ENLOW

The question of who is a Jew is one of great importance in this hour to those who desire to walk with God and to understand His Word. Even in the natural realm this question is one of great debate among those who are gathering in Palestine. There is often sharp disagreement over the proper criteria by which to establish whether one claiming to be a Jew is one in reality or not. But in the spiritual realm the question is infinitely more important.

Peter spoke in Acts 3:20-21 of the coming of Christ in connection with “the times of restitution (restoration) of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” We know that the Old Testament prophets prophesied many great things concerning the restoration of Israel and the many glorious things involved. But who is the Israel to whom these promises are made?

There are many who widely proclaim over radio, in camps, in conferences, and in various publications that they were made to the natural descendants of Abraham and that the assembling of many Jews in Palestine today is a direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. There are many others who, while equally Bible-believers, do not hold this teaching, but believe that these promises were made to Spiritual Israel, The Church, and that we ought, therefore, to expect a great restoration of the Church.

Though it is perhaps very tempting in seeking an answer to this question to rest our case in the hands of “tradition,” Dr. So-and-so, or our Bible footnotes, what we really need to do is to consult the Word itself. Many would begin such a search in the Old Testament, but the New Testament writers indicate that the Old Testament prophets themselves did not really understand the full significance of the things they were prophesying (I Peter 1:10-12, Colossians 1:26, Ephesians 3:1-11). And not only did the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ day fail to understand their own scriptures (II Corinthians 3:14-15, Matthew 15:14), but even Jesus’ own followers were very ignorant of their true content (Luke 24:25-27, 44-45) and required the Master himself to personally open their understanding. It would therefore seem reasonable that our search should be conducted primarily in the

greater light of the New Testament wherein are contained insights withheld from the writers of the Old Testament (Daniel 12:9).

ABRAHAM'S SEED

In observing the promises to Abraham, we note that they were made to him and to his seed. Paul gives us a key in Galatians 3:16 where he says, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." The promises made to Abraham's seed were actually made to Christ! Down in verse 29 he says, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." The promises, then, are extended through Christ to all those who are "in Christ." Verse 7 says, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Romans 4:11 says, "And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: **that he might be the father of all them that believe**, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also."

Also in Romans 9:6-8 we find these key words, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is **they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.**" Galatians 4:28 says, "Now we, brethren," (Gentile believers) "as Isaac was, are **the children of promise.**" In Romans 2:28-29 Paul says, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly: ... But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly." It is very evident from these scriptures that the true seed of Abraham to whom the promises were made are those who are **in Christ**. Is it any wonder then, that Paul addresses Gentile believers in Galatians 6:16 as the "Israel of God?"

In addition to the scriptures already cited, it might be well to consider these as further confirmation. Jesus, in Revelation 2:9, and also in 3:9, spoke of the "synagogue of Satan" and of those "which say they are Jews and **are not.**" Jesus also indicated that the Jewish leaders, though naturally descended from Abraham, were not Abraham's children, but the Devil's (John 8:39-44). Yet on another occasion He pointed to a young Jew named Nathaniel and said, "Behold an Israelite, **indeed**, in whom is no guile" (John 1:47). John the Baptist warned those who would trust in the fact that they were descended from Abraham that only true repentance would do them any good (Matthew 3:9-12). Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). The sons of God are not those born of blood (John 1:12-13). In summary, then, the true seed of Abraham to whom the promises were made consists of Christ and those who are in Him.

JERUSALEM

Much is made of the city of Jerusalem in Palestine and of what is taking place there. But what Jerusalem is God concerned about? A key scripture is found in Hebrews 12:22. Speaking to Christians, the writer says, “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, **the heavenly Jerusalem**” — not that they were someday to go there, but they were already come to it! Another key passage occurs in Galatians 4:21-31. Verse 25 speaks of the natural city of Jerusalem as “Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.” The next verse says, “But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.” The Jerusalem that God is concerned about is His Church, the New Jerusalem, the City of God, the Bride of Christ.

Now note what Revelation 11:8 says about natural Jerusalem: “And their dead bodies (the two witnesses) shall lie in the street of the great city, which **spiritually** is called **Sodom** and **Egypt**, where also our Lord was crucified.” In God’s mind the Church is Jerusalem, and natural Jerusalem is “Sodom” and “Egypt” (See Isaiah 1:10)!

GOD’S CHOSEN NATION

In Exodus, God commanded Moses to speak these words (19:5-6): “Now therefore **if** ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” Note that this promise is **conditional**. In Matthew 21:45, Jesus spoke to the Jewish leaders and said: “The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

What nation is that? Peter wrote in I Peter 2:9-10 (to the Church), “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: **Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God:** which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” The Church, then has become God’s chosen nation, the nation bringing forth the fruits of the kingdom of God.

Of course it should be pointed out that “the Church” in God’s eyes consists **only** of the tiny remnant who have truly been born into His Kingdom and not the church world in general.

CIRCUMCISION

Paul wrote to Gentiles in Colossians 2:11-12 and said, “In whom” (Christ) “**ye are circumcised** with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:”

(how?) “Buried with him in **baptism**, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” Paul here indicates that true apostolic baptism (see past articles in MCM) is the true circumcision (made without hands) of which the Old Testament circumcision was a type. In Rom. 2:28-29 he says, “Neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but ... circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

In Philippians 3:1-3 Paul warns the believers of the Judaizers, who were trying to bring Gentile believers into bondage under the law, and then says, “For **we are the circumcision**, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” **True believers are, in God’s mind, the only ones who are circumcised, and hence in covenant relationship with Him.** While circumcision is widely practiced in our day for medical reasons, it has absolutely no spiritual significance: God is interested in people’s hearts.

NO DIFFERENCE

The New Testament clearly indicates that the natural Jew is in no better position in relation to God than is the Gentile. Romans 10-12 says, “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.” Ephesians 2:11-22 and 3:6 indicate that believing Gentiles and believing Jews have equal access to God through the cross, and thereby become “one new man,” “the household of God,” a “holy temple,” “of the same body.” There are many other scriptures, but these will suffice. The great gulf between Jew and Gentile was forever ended when the Old Covenant passed away.

NEW TESTAMENT USE OF OLD TESTAMENT

It is very interesting to notice the way in which the inspired writers of the New Testament interpret and use the Old Testament scriptures. A few examples ought to be noted. Jeremiah 31:31-34 prophesies of the new covenant to be made “with the house of **Israel**, and with the house of **Judah**.” Twice in the book of Hebrews (8:8-12 and 10:16-17) this prophecy is quoted and applied to the **Church**! Who is “Israel” and “Judah” in God’s eyes? Isaiah 28:16 speaks of the cornerstone to be laid in Zion, yet Peter applies this prophecy to Christ as the cornerstone of the Church, and thus calls the Church Zion (I Peter 2:6, see also Hebrews 12:22).

In the council of Jerusalem, called to consider whether Gentile believers ought to be required to keep the law, James uses Amos 9:11-12 in an interesting manner. (This passage has often been grossly twisted). In

Acts 15:13-17, after making the point that God was taking a people from the Gentiles for Himself, he quotes Amos **in support** of what he has just said (not as a prophecy yet to be fulfilled in natural Israel), and thereby indicates that the Church is the Tabernacle of David spoken of by Amos.

These interpretations by New Testament writers ought not to seem strange when we consider I Peter 1:10-12. This passage indicates that the prophets prophesied of the grace that should come unto “**you**” (Christians). He says that the Spirit of **Christ** (!) that was in them “testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and **the glory that should follow.**” Also, they did not minister these things unto themselves, but **unto us**. The “things” referred to are the things preached in the gospel.

The primary ministry of the prophets was actually **to the Church**. Many of their prophecies had some application to natural Israel in their time, but their complete fulfillment is in the Church. Many other scriptures could be cited which take Old Testament scriptures and apply them spiritually to the Church, but these are sufficient to give us pause before we blindly follow those who insist upon a “literal” interpretation of the Old Testament. We need to wait on God to find out what He meant — whether the words are meant to be understood literally or spiritually.

In addition to the many scriptures which we have cited, we ought to take special note of the fact that there is a complete lack of New Testament support for the theory that natural Israel is to be restored. Some would consider Acts 1:6 a straw worth grasping after. Here the disciples questioned Jesus concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. In the first place, we do not know what “Israel” the disciples had in mind. In the second place, Jesus did not answer their question, but only turned their minds away from seeking to know times and seasons. In the third place, even if they had meant natural Israel, Jesus had already answered the question in Luke 17:20-21, and knowing the Holy Spirit would soon descend to guide into all truth, simply let the error (if they were in error) pass to be corrected later. There is certainly not much foundation here for the doctrine that natural Israel is to be restored.

Many make much of God’s promise of the land of Canaan in Genesis 13:14-17. There God promises it to Abraham’s seed **forever**, and seemingly without condition (at least none is mentioned). To begin with, throughout the rest of the Old Testament, it is very evident that this promise was applied only **conditionally** to Abraham’s **physical** descendants. See Deuteronomy 30:15-20 for one example among many.

A very interesting key as to what lay in God’s mind in making that promise may be found in Romans 4:13: “For the promise, that **he should be heir of the world**, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but

through the righteousness of faith.” When we look back through the promises made to Abraham, we find no such promise recorded. It is evident that in God’s mind, the Canaan before Abraham was only a type of that which He had purposed to give His people, that is, the whole earth, and not this corrupt earth, but a “new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness” (II Peter 3:13). This is “according to his promise,” Peter says.

Hebrews 2:5-10 indicated that the world to come will be put in subjection to man and that those sons whom Jesus will bring to glory will be the ones to rule it. Surely a literal land of Canaan could never be an everlasting possession since it is on earth which itself will pass away! God’s purpose included something far grander than giving natural Jews a plot of terra firma! We who are in Christ will reign forever on a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness! Hallelujah!

Perhaps we ought to consider one more thing which may prove a stumbling block to some. Romans 11:25-26 says, “... blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved . . .” Many see in this a promise of restoration to natural Israel. To begin with, this cannot be understood apart from the point so clearly made in Romans 9:6-8 that “they are not all Israel which are of Israel.” This “all Israel” refers to an elect remnant (9:27, 11:5) who alone are true Israel out of the whole of natural Israel.

Then, too, 11:26 does not say, “And **then** all Israel shall be saved,” but, “And **so** all Israel shall be saved,” indicating the **manner** of salvation, **not the time**. To find what the manner is we have only to look back at verse 23: “And they also, **if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in.**” In 11:7 we read, “What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but **the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.**”

What is Paul saying in all of this? Simply this: during the time in which the fullness of the Gentiles is being gathered in, there is an elect remnant out of natural Israel which will believe and be grafted in. The rest of natural Israel will be blinded until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, at which time Christ will be revealed in His second coming and the blindness of all mankind (including the non-elect majority of natural Israel) will come to a cataclysmic end. Thus will “all Israel,” that is, the elect remnant, be saved. For a much greater development of these things see *The Abrahamic Covenant*, by Dr. George B. Fletcher.

Who is a Jew? If you are Christ’s **you** are the seed of Abraham and an heir according to the promise. To **you** the prophets ministered when they prophesied concerning the restoration of all things. The whole Bible belongs to the Church of Jesus Christ and God’s wonderful covenant may be seen in both the teachings of the New Testament and in the types,

shadows, and prophecies of the Old. Let us seek His face that He may unveil His whole Word to us and let us not be blinded and led astray by those who are glorying in the events in Palestine. I rejoice in Obadiah 17 which says, “But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions!”

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

There are many mysteries referred to in the bible — for example, the mystery of Christ, the mystery of the gospel, the mystery of the kingdom, and the mystery of iniquity. A mystery is something that is hidden. At least it is hidden until God sees fit to reveal it. Deuteronomy 29:29.

The Greek word for iniquity “*anomia*,” as used here by Paul, means illegality, violation of law, transgress, transgression of the law, wickedness, or unrighteousness. The root word “*anomas*” that “*anomia*” comes from means principally lawless, not subject to law, or without law.

From a study of the two words it is evident that “*anomia*” is used where the transgressor may be and often is working under the cloak of religion or good works. It is a subtle type of iniquity because it masquerades as good and often has the approval and the esteem of the world behind it. An example of this type of iniquity is found in Matthew 7:22-23.

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” From a study of Matthew 7 it is evident this worker of iniquity was connected with the false prophets that come in sheep’s clothing and the broad way that leads many to their destruction.

SATANIC CONSPIRACY

This work of iniquity or lawlessness is not just the rebellious nature of man in manifestation against authority. It is a calculated work of satanic wisdom working behind the facade of religion and good works. It is actually the age-old conspiracy of Lucifer and his wicked host to control the whole world system and eventually lead man into open rebellion against God.

Although it was held in check in Paul’s day it was already at work in the world. “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work:”

Let’s notice two other translations of this scripture. “For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work ...” (Williams). “Meanwhile, the conspiracy of revolt is already at work ...” (Knox).

Called the **secret power** of lawlessness, the power behind man’s rebellion against God is Satan and his demoniac host. Called a “conspiracy

of revolt” by Knox, the mystery of iniquity is simply the continuation of Lucifer’s original conspiracy of revolt against God.

Blinded by this power of lawlessness, man, for the most part, is completely ignorant of who his real enemy is. This is what Paul is talking about in Ephesians 6:12, where he says, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” It is also this same power that blinds man to the truth of the gospel. II Corinthians 4:3-4.

In both of the foregoing scriptures the revelation of God shows us the real power arrayed against God’s people. It likewise shows us the secret power that blinds the minds of men “lest the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

The most difficult thing in the world for man to see is that the whole world order including most of its religion is a giant conspiracy of Satan to keep man from the truth. Although some would admit to the baser expressions of lawlessness being inspired of the devil, very few can see the diabolical wisdom of Satan permeating the whole world system. This indeed is “... the mystery of iniquity....”

Behind the governments of the world, including the political and religious systems, are the unseen rulers of darkness headed up by Lucifer. There is not a government, political or religious philosophy in the world that has not been corrupted by Satan.

Our real enemy is not man but forces of evil, called powers, principalities, master spirits, world rulers, spirit forces, angelic rulers, angelic authorities and potentates. These are all living and operating from the supernatural, invisible realm of darkness. Webster defines the word “principality” as a prince of a territory. It is evident from these scriptures that Satan’s kingdom has many fallen angelic spirits of a very high order, called world rulers, master spirits, and princes who rule over vast territories.

We are prone to think of Satan’s emissaries as living only in a disembodied state, hovering around in space and whispering evil into our ears. It is true, there are literally billions of evil spirits living in the atmosphere around the earth, tempting, deceiving, harassing, and vexing mankind. But the devils that we need most to be on the alert for are those who are trying to influence us through man. This is where Satan through his demon host does his greatest damage in leading men to ruin.

Though we do not wish to minimize the need for guarding our minds against the enemy that whispers in our ears, we must also be on the alert against him deceiving us through man. This type of deception may be on a

much higher plane, but it is just as destructive and can lead into a morass of spiritual and moral corruption that brings forth death.

Demons' greatest work of deception and evil is accomplished as they project themselves through the life and personality of the person they indwell. Their evil spirit nature is actually imparted or ministered in this manner. Even as God's spirit is ministered to man through human vessels, so is the spirit of lawlessness ministered to man through human vessels. As the word of God is the vehicle or means through which God enters a human life. Satan's word, the lie, is the means used to enter and destroy man.

VARIOUS DOMAINS

Beyond doubt Satan's kingdom is a vast organized conspiracy with master spirits located in strategic places throughout the earth. It seems each earthly kingdom or domain is ruled over by these evil princes. God's messenger to Daniel was hindered from coming to Daniel for twenty-one days by the Prince of Persia who was evidently one of Satan's evil princes over this earthly kingdom. Daniel 10:1-13. Michael the Archangel, called "one of the chief princes" in God's kingdom, came and fought against the prince of Persia thus enabling the messenger to get through to Daniel.

It will also be noted from verse 20 that the prince of Grecia was expected to come after the messenger departed to fight with the prince of Persia. This prince of Grecia was no doubt another evil potentate probably indwelling the human king over Grecia who would come on the scene later. The thing we need to see from these scriptures is that human personalities under the control of evil master spirits were actually involved. The kings of Persia referred to in verse 13 were no doubt also men under the control of evil spirit personalities.

All this simply bears out the great truth that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but powers and principalities. Through often hiding under the cloak of human flesh it is evil spirit beings who are our real enemies. From this we also learn that God's princes among men and angels (Daniel and Michael) can expect to be bitterly opposed by Satan's princes. We also learn that Christ and his holy angels are working with God's people against Satan and his evil host. Above all we must begin to see that human personalities, high and low, are merely pawns of Satan in his battle against Christ and his kingdom.

Such evil potentates as these master spirits would not bother with some lowly individual. Spirits of lesser power and intelligence would be dispatched to take care of them. Under the jurisdiction of each of these master spirits there are millions of demons of every conceivable kind that

prey upon mankind. Some of these are vastly superior in strength and intelligence to others.

The stronger ones look with contempt upon the weaker spirits. The weaker spirits envy the stronger and wiser spirits. All recognize Lucifer as the supreme ruler and master. Though they all hate each other, including Lucifer their king, they respect authority and will help each other. When under attack they are obligated to rush to the aid and rescue of their fellow demons.

For this reason demons associate together to draw strength from each other. It is demon spirits that cause certain types of humanity to associate with others of the same spirit. Did you ever notice how town drunks or alcoholics like to get together, usually in a certain place known to all of them? This is also true of dope addicts, homosexuals, gamblers, criminals, harlots, and whoremongers. It is also this same principle (spirits) that binds people together in religious movements that close their minds to progressive revelation. John 8:31-32.

Although the mystery of iniquity has been held in check during this day of grace, unfettered freedom will be given to organize the nations into one diabolical whole before the coming of Christ. This has been Satan's purpose from the beginning. For a short time he will think his dream has come true as the whole world of unregenerate mankind embraces strong delusion.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE LOOSING OF SATAN

Revelation 20:1-3. “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

Only as we understand the thousand year mystery and the binding of Satan, can we understand what is meant by the loosing of Satan. As Satan’s binding was not absolute nor accomplished with a literal materialistic chain, neither is the loosing of Satan a physical or tangible act. As the binding of Satan is a process accomplished by numerous factors over a period of time, so is the loosing of Satan.

Until we recognize that much symbolism has been used to keep the natural man from prying into God’s secrets, we will never know what is meant by the loosing of Satan. I am persuaded the key, the great chain, the bottomless pit, the thousand years, and the binding and the loosing of Satan are figures of speech that were never meant to be understood by natural men. I Corinthians 2:14.

Being spirit, Satan and his demon forces cannot be confined nor influenced by that which is material. Spirit only responds to that which is spirit. This being true, the binding and the loosing of Satan is accomplished as man’s spirit is made to reject or receive the influence of evil. As God expresses himself through yielded human vessels, Satan is likewise expressed or loosed through humanity. To accomplish this it was necessary for man to first be led into bondage through the lusts of his own flesh.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

According to the scriptures this age will close out with man living to the lusts of his flesh. He will be lawless, proud and violent. He will be concerned about the good life here and totally unprepared for the coming of Christ. Luke 17:26-30. II Timothy 3:1-5.

Inspired by Satan and drawn by his own lusts, man has been led into a carnal, materialistic way of life where he has little time or disposition for

God. The over emphasis of sex, pleasure and material things to the exclusion of moral and spiritual values is part of the conspiracy of Satan to take control of man. Satan has cleverly used the power of these things to prepare man for this day and hour.

Although there is nothing intrinsically wrong in these things when they are made to serve man, they become idols when they begin to monopolize his life. Anything that binds man's will and puts him in bondage is evil. This is what Paul meant when he said, "... all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." I Corinthians 6:12.

WATCHMAN NEE

I was recently amazed and then greatly encouraged by the teaching of Watchman Nee which confirmed our own views on this subject.

Quoting from the book, "Love Not the World", pages 54 and 57, we found this interesting comment by Brother Nee:

"In Revelation 9 we read of a development which, to the author of that book, lay far in the future. 'The fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss. And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace ... And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads' (verses 1-4). This is figurative language, but the star falling from heaven obviously refers to Satan, and we know that the bottomless pit is his domain — his storehouse, we might say. Thus it appears that the end-time is to be marked by a special release of his resources, and men will find themselves up against a spiritual power with which they had not before had to contend.

"Surely this accords with conditions in our day. While it is true that sin and violence will be greater than ever at the close of this age, it is apparent from God's Word that it is not specifically these evils with which the Church will have to grapple then, but rather with the spiritual appeal of far more every-day things. 'As it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise even as

it came to pass in the day of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all' (Luke 17:26-29). The point being made here by Jesus is not that these things — food, marriage, trade, agriculture, engineering — were outstanding characteristics of Lot's and Noah's day, but that they will in a special way characterize the last days. 'After the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed' (verse 39): that is the point. For these things are not inherently sinful; they are simply things of the world. Have you ever in all your days paid such attention to the good life as now? Food and raiment are becoming the special burden of God's children today. What shall we wear? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For many these are almost the sole topics of conversation. There is a power that forces you to consider these matters: your very existence demands that you pay attention to them.

“And yet Scripture warns us that ‘the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness’ and so on. It bids us first of all seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and assures us that as we do so, all these things will be added to us. It bids us be carefree regarding matters of food and clothing, for if God cares for the flowers of the field and the birds of the air, will He not much rather care for us, His own? Yet to judge by our anxieties it would almost seem that they are cared for, but not we!

“Now here is the point that needs special emphasis. This condition of things is abnormal. The undue attention to eating and drinking, whether at the extremes of subsistence or luxury, that characterizes so many Christians these days is far from normal; it is supernatural. For it is not just a question of food and drink that we are meeting here; we are meeting demons. Satan conceived and now controls the world order, and is prepared to use demonic power through the things of the world to lure us into it. The present state of affairs cannot be accounted for apart from this. Oh that the children of God might awaken to this fact! In past days God's saints met all sorts of difficulties; yet, in the midst of pressure, they could look up and trust God. In the pressures of today, however, they are so confused and

bewildered that they seem unable to trust Him. Oh, let us realize the Satanic origin of all this pressure and confusion!

“The same is true in matrimonial affairs. Never have we met so many problems in this field as today. There is confusion abroad as young people break with old traditions but lack the guidance of any new ones to replace them. This fact is not to be accounted for naturally, but supernaturally. Marrying and giving in marriage are wholesome and normal in any age, but today there is an element breaking into these things that is unnatural.

“So it is with planting and building, and so too with buying and selling. All these things can be perfectly legitimate and beneficial, but today the power behind them presses upon men until they are bewildered and lose their balance. The evil force that energizes the world system has precipitated a condition today where we see two extremes; the one extreme of utter inability to make ends meet, and the other extreme of unusual opportunity to amass wealth. On the one hand many Christians find themselves in unprecedented economic difficulties: on the other hand many are faced with no less unprecedented opportunities of enriching themselves. Both of these conditions are abnormal.

“Enter any home these days and listen in on the conversation. You will hear remarks such as these: ‘Last week I bought such-and-such goods at such-and-such a figure, and I have thereby saved so much.’ ‘Happily I purchased that a year ago, otherwise I would have lost badly,’ ‘If you want to sell, sell now while the market is good.’ Have you not noticed the way people are rushing hither and thither, feverishly making business deals? Doctors are stocking up with flour, cloth-manufacturers are selling paper, men and women who have never touched such things before are being swept off their feet by the current of speculation. They are caught up in a marketing maelstrom that is whirling them madly around. Do you not realize that this state of affair is not natural? Do you not see that there is a power here which is captivating men? People are not acting sanely; they are beside themselves. Today’s buying and selling spree is not just a question of making a little money — or losing it. It is a question of touching a Satanic system. We are living in the end-time, a time when a special

power has been let loose which is driving men on, whether they will or no.”

It is quite obvious from Brother Nee’s writing that he saw the loosing of Satan and the demoniac kingdom behind man’s great bondage in these last days.

HELD IN CHECK

II Thessalonians 2:7 tells us of the mystery of iniquity working in Paul’s day but held in check until the falling away when the restraint would be removed. The falling away is simply man turning away from God in rebellion. The loosing of Satan is God by his Spirit removing the forces that hold Satan in check until that day. With divine restraint removed Satan takes control of rebellious man through whom he (Satan) begins to manifest his wrath.

Let’s note some other translations of the last part of verse seven.

“... only, he who checks it now will be able to check it, until he is removed from the enemy’s path.” (Knox).

“... But its activities are restricted until what I have called the ‘restraining power’ is removed.” (Phillips).

“... But the evil work is held in check and will be held back until the time when He who now restrains will be set aside.” (Norlie).

The fact that Satanic power was restrained or held in check in Paul’s day is made very plain by these translations. The only question needing an answer is how this restraint was imposed upon the forces of evil. If we know how Satan was bound it is simple to know how he is loosed.

TRADITIONAL TEACHING

Popular teaching is that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit. And the way the restraint is removed is when the Church is raptured. The catching away of the Church with the indwelling Spirit will, they say, allow Satan to come forth in great power. This, they say, results in the tribulation which will be followed by the millennial reign of Christ and then the final loosing of Satan. This false teaching is part of the conspiracy of Lucifer to lull men to sleep so they won’t recognize the final loosing of Satan before the coming of Christ.

Certainly we recognize that the Holy Spirit in the Church is one of the great deterrent forces that holds Satan in check. The Church’s influence in the legislating of laws, the proclamation of the gospel and its very presence in the earth has served to curb the forces of evil. The presence of the Holy Angels battling against the unseen forces of evil have also been a great factor in holding Satan in check.

But what happens when the Lord of hosts calls his people and the angels out of places where they have been holding back the forces of evil? The answer is simple, the demoniac kingdom will take over. When this happens, authority is overthrown, law and order is despised, anarchy and rebellion are condoned. This is accomplished as wicked spirits (master spirits) in high places of influence begin to reshape the thinking of the people. Judges, lawyers, educators, politicians, civil rights leaders, and preachers under the influence of these master spirits all make their contribution to the conspiracy.

BABYLON

Babylon used symbolically in Revelation, chapters 14 through 19, represents the whole world system of government, commerce, and religion. It is the natural man in all of his earthly endeavors without God. According to Revelation 18:2, Babylon becomes "... the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

Other translations state it thusly:

"She has become a resort for demons; a fort for every unclean spirit; a refuge for every filthy and detestable bird." (Berkeley Version)

"She has become an abode of demons; a stronghold of every foul and hateful bird." (The Twentieth Century New Testament).

Notice the words used in these translations to describe Babylon as the dwelling place of demons: Habitation, hold, cage, resort, fort, refuge, abode, and stronghold. One thing becomes evident as we study these various translations. Babylon or the world system is completely taken over by the demoniac kingdom as this age comes to a close. It is obvious this complete possession didn't always exist. It is at this point of complete dominion and control by the Satanic kingdom that God calls his people to "... come out ..."

Even as he removed Lot from Sodom before he destroyed it with fire and brimstone, the Lord will call his people out of Babylon before he destroys it with fire. Revelation 18:1-8.

In the founding of governments and the legislation of laws, God has overshadowed and influenced men in spite of their lack of knowledge of him. Angels sent from the presence of God have stood by while constitutions were framed and governments formed. Although not aware of what was being done, men have cooperated with God in the establishment of a lawful society that served to hold back the forces of evil until the purpose of God had been accomplished.

Although overshadowed and influenced by God, Babylon is, nevertheless, a substitute for God's kingdom in the earth.

In the same sense the law of Moses was given, God has decreed conditions during this day of grace that would hold back the forces of evil and permit the propagation of the gospel. As the law of Moses served to hold back lawlessness and protect the righteous until the promised seed (Christ) came, God has through organized society preserved and protected his Church during this gospel age. Galatians 3:19 says, “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.”

Although the mystery of iniquity has been allowed to work, it has been under the restraint of a God-influenced society held together by law and order. This plus the ministry of the Church and the Holy Angels has been the means used of God to hold back Satan and his evil host.

Even though the power of darkness has been held in check, man as a whole remains basically the same. Given freedom of expression, evil will and has come forth in every generation. The fear of apprehension and punishment does not change the heart but it does restrain. Lawlessness is a condition of the heart that waits for its day of opportunity to manifest itself.

As is brought out elsewhere, the best definition of iniquity as is used in II Thessalonians 2:7, is lawlessness. The revealing or the manifestation of the man of sin, II Thessalonians 2:3, is simply what takes place when divine restraint is removed and the spirit of lawlessness is allowed freedom of expression. This is the way Satan is being loosed.

RELATIVE

Another great hindrance to understanding the mystery of the loosing of Satan is the mistake of thinking of it as something that is absolute rather than relative. This is also true of the binding of Satan. Because of the depravity of man’s heart, evil has been present in every age to corrupt governments and the various alliances of human society. This is also true of the Church dispensation. Satan’s binding hasn’t resulted in the absolute banishment of evil from the earth. Neither will the loosing of Satan result in the banishment of righteousness from the earth.

It will be noticed from Revelation 20, verses 3 and 8 that the loosing of Satan has to do with the deceiving of the nations. From verses 8 and 9 it is seen that the result of this loosing is a world gathering of the nations against the camp of the saints and the beloved city (the Church). Verse nine says they went up on the breadth of the earth. Breadth of the earth means the whole earth. The breadth of anything is its width. This coming against the Church will be the result of universal rebellion and hatred against Christ.

The nations and their governments will be so completely taken over by Satan until they will openly come against God in this final great rebellion.

This rebellion against God is different from all other rebellions because it has the sanction and approval of the organized society of nations. Although evil has always been present and coming forth in varying degrees, this will be a concerted and united world's official rejection of God and righteousness.

MANY ASPECTS

There are actually many aspects to the loosing of Satan. One of these will be a manifestation of lawlessness on a worldwide scale such as man has never experienced. Out of desperation man will be forced into a world union of government under the headship of Anti-Christ. It will be in this final form of Anti-Christ union that man and Satan will come against the Church to destroy it. This is also when the Lord will rain fire from heaven and destroy rebellious man.

The lawless aspect of the loosing of Satan before the coming of Christ is being accomplished through sin-blinded man as he ignorantly gives himself over to varied forces of evil. With divine restraint being removed, the world is being literally flooded by Satanically-inspired issues. Revelation 12:15. These issues, coming in many forms are simply the front behind which Satan and his evil host are working.

Being an intelligent creature, man must have something to believe in to justify his rebellion. Knowing this, Satan cleverly supplies him with many causes. These causes are carefully chosen to suit the person's own political, religious, and racial bias. Through these causes man becomes the channel through which Satan is loosed. Suspicion, prejudice, hatred, and violence are becoming a way of life to this generation. It is common today to be working and fighting for or against something.

It is my conviction that this first phase of the loosing of Satan has begun. We can expect man in general to become more violent and revolutionary as Satan's wrath increases. The wrath of man expressed toward his fellowman is the manifestation of Satan's wrath. John expressed it in these words: "... woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Revelation 12:12.

This same time of trouble and distress caused by Satan's wrath is also referred to by Daniel, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul. Let's consider them in the order given.

Daniel 12:1. "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of

trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”

This time of trouble was to exceed anything that had ever come before. It is also the time of deliverance for God’s people whose names are written in the book. It will also be noticed from verse 2 of Daniel 12 that the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked follows this time of great trouble.

In Jesus’ reference to this time of trouble spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, he confirmed Daniel’s prophecy by saying there would be great tribulation such as there never was before nor would ever be again. Matthew 24:15-22. It is also made plain by Jesus’ teaching that his coming with power and great glory would be immediately after the tribulation of those days. Matthew 24:29-31.

THE GREAT REBELLION

This teaching of Jesus, Daniel, and John is exactly what the Apostle Paul is teaching in II Thessalonians 2:1-12. Called the falling away by Paul, actually it is man in final revolt against God and righteousness. As man rejects God and righteousness, he becomes the vessel of Satan. Lucifer himself has no power apart from yielded human vessels. He must have a body through which he can manifest himself.

Let’s notice that Paul emphatically says, that Christ’s coming and our gathering together unto him must be preceded by the falling away and the manifestation of the man of sin. Other translations of this passage of scripture are real eye-openers as to what Paul meant by the falling away. Let’s notice several of them.

“... It will not come till the rebellion takes place first of all ...” (Moffatt).

“... for that cannot take place until the great revolt occurs ...” (Williams).

“...For that day will not come until two things happen: first, there will be a time of great rebellion against God ...” (Taylor).

“... That day will not come before there arises a definite rejection of God ...” (Phillips).

“... That day cannot come before the final rebellion against God ...” (The New English Bible: New Testament).

One thing is made very plain from these various translations. This falling (*apostasia*, Gr.) away is something uniquely different from all other times of rebellion. Notice the emphasis of the various translators. “The

rebellion,” “the great revolt,” “a time of great rebellion against God,” “a definite rejection of God,” “the final rebellion against God.”

This time of rebellion is different from all others because it is the final and most universal rebellion of unregenerate man against God. It is the same day that Jesus and Daniel spoke of — a time of great trouble or tribulation such as the world has never experienced. It is the final loosing of Satan before the coming of Christ and the destruction of this world by fire.

God, in longsuffering mercy, has restrained the mystery of iniquity to give man his day of grace. This restraining hand of God, which was actually the binding of Satan, has been accomplished by many deterrent forces that are now being removed. As God’s hand is removed Satan takes over. As this age comes to a close, more and more of the masses of humanity will be abandoned by God. Whole cities will be turned over to demoniac forces of evil as God calls his little elect remnant out. Matthew 11:20-24. Mark 8:22-26.

Evidence of this loosing of Satan is seen on every hand as humanity manifests more and more rebellion and violence. Not aware of the power that inspires and rules him, man is giving himself to many satanic causes in this hour.

The rebellion of children and today’s youth is certainly a manifestation of the loosing of Satan. We have never witnessed such an attitude toward parents and society in general. They riot without provocation taking pleasure in burning the flag, calling the police pigs, and destroying public and private property. Angry mobs of youth on school campuses and the streets of our cities looting, burning, and sometimes killing are not uncommon.

Other signs of the loosing of Satan is the hippie movement, free sex, the insane craze for rock music and increasing drug abuse. Every segment of society including grade school children are being influenced by violent and demoralizing forces of evil. Having been fed a diet of sex and violence through the movies, TV and trashy literature, today’s generation of young adults have been well educated as children to be taken over by Satan.

Without the strength of moral conviction and aided by the use of drugs, many children and young people have been possessed by seducing spirits that make them violent and rebellious. This accounts for the hatred of authority and the terrible acts of violence that are becoming almost commonplace. A case in point is the eight year old boy with a companion who were caught stealing money out of the cash drawer at a filling station in Miami, Florida. Upon being caught by the attendant, he grabbed a gun and tried to kill the attendant. When questioned by the police he showed no sign

of remorse but rather boasted and said that he wished he only had one hand with a hook on the other hand so he could kill people with it.

Another case that has been widely publicized is Charles Manson and his deluded followers on the West Coast who were charged with wantonly murdering movie actress Sharon Tate and several other people. While being tried, Manson and his girl followers showed nothing but contempt for the court and the presiding judge. Cursing and condemning the judge and the officers, Manson's mouth had to be taped shut so that the court could carry on. Even today after being convicted of the crime, it is reported that they show no sign of remorse for brutally murdering people who were begging them for mercy.

Still another case of obvious demon possession is the Zodiac killer in California. This modern day Jack-the-Ripper laughs as he murders his helpless victims. He also takes great delight in taunting the police in their efforts to catch him. Calling by phone and laughingly describing his crime, he gives them information that they alone have so they will know he is the killer. On one occasion he seemed to remorsefully recognize his condition and asked for help before he murdered someone else. He spoke of something inside of him that literally drove him to kill saying he didn't know how much longer he could keep this thing under control.

Eight young nurses were slaughtered in Chicago, twelve people were killed on the University of Texas campus by a berserk student, and legion are the accounts of multiple murders where whole families are wiped out. Added to these accounts of wanton killings is the still more recent murder of twenty-five itinerant farm workers, also on the West Coast.

Our cities have long been jungles of violence with crime statistics continuing to climb. Fear stalks the streets of America and the cities of the world. At the time of this writing, prison riots are alarming the nation. The Attica prison uprising that resulted in forty-two deaths is one of many recent prison riots that have resulted in bloodshed.

WORLDWIDE PROBLEM

A special article in the September 28, 1970 issue of the U.S. News and World Report says, "Violence is a worldwide problem." This report goes on to say that bombings, kidnapping, assassination, and terroristic violence are becoming a way of life all over the world. Many accounts of strife, civil war, and violence are given, not only from the United States, but also from Europe, Canada, Asia, South America, and Africa.

Although there has been some manifestation of hatred and violence in the world since Cain killed Abel, this last day expression of Satan's wrath will exceed anything the world has ever witnessed.

GREAT UNREST

Great unrest prevails in the world today. The terrible prejudice and hatred between the races that has resulted in so much strife and violence is definitely the work of Satan and his evil host. More and more a man's enemy is black or white, Protestant or Catholic, Jew or Arab, or "that other group."

Even the women are in rebellion against divine order. The so-called women's liberation movement designed to free womanhood from the shackles of masculine prejudice is just another sign of the loosing of Satan. This movement supposedly is to free the woman and make her equal with the man in the home, industry, politics, and the world. What an affront to Almighty God this must be, who says the woman is the weaker vessel whose place is in the home under the headship of her husband. I Peter 3:1-7. I Corinthians 11:3. Ephesians 5:22-23. Titus 2:3-5.

Another great evidence of the loosing of Satan is the change in attitude of the courts with respect to criminal activity. Under the cloak of civil rights, the criminal is being favored today and often turned loose to continue preying upon society. The laxity of the courts plus public apathy and censure make the policeman's job almost impossible. In some instances of rioting and looting they are actually forbidden to make arrests. Those who are arrested are usually turned loose to appease the demands of the rioters.

Muggings, holdups, murder and rape are often ignored by an apathetic public who do not want to get involved. Public sentiment is such that capital punishment is being stricken from the law books of the land. In those few states that still have capital punishment, death row is filled with men, some who have been there for years awaiting execution because no one wants to carry out the sentence of the courts. The spirit of the age is to condone the crime and not punish the criminal. Crime statistics continue to spiral with fewer arrests and fewer convictions of those who are arrested.

Hijackers brazenly hijack huge airliners and boldly force them to fly to various parts of the world. Some demand ransom or release of criminal associates. Often as not, the government or authority involved will agree to the demands of the criminals.

All of this is symptomatic of an evil force at work to destroy man. I believe it is the final loosing of Satan.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

BABYLON

“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” Genesis 11:4.

The city and tower of Babel was the beginning of Babylon. It was typical of the spirit of Anti-Christ at work in the earth trying to unite all mankind into one body over which Satan could become lord. The proposed unity would have given men exceeding great power and nothing would have been restrained from them. In order to circumvent this, God confounded their language, making it impossible to communicate and thus to fulfill their plans. This confusion of tongues, verse 7, is typical of the divine restraint that has always hindered this ultimate objective of man without God.

“Build us a city and a tower and make us a name.” Ponder the spirit behind this first effort of Lucifer to unite all mankind and build himself a world kingdom. How clever he was in appealing to the vanity of man and using fear as a weapon: “... make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad.”

Had this unholy union succeeded the man of sin would have come forth in that day. Satan would have banished God from the earth and destroyed the righteous. If the Lord had not intervened nothing would have been restrained from them. Satan would have become absolute master of all men and would have demanded worship as God. The same spirit that motivated the building of the tower of Babel has motivated every effort to build succeeding world empires. This is the spirit behind every unholy alliance that has brought men together for selfish purposes that resulted in man’s glory rather than God’s. This includes religious empires as well as political.

When one world power runs its course and dies, the spirit behind it simply brings together another group of men and starts all over again. The human principals that head up such an empire die and pass off the scene but Satan and his demoniac host continue on from generation to generation.

The spirit of Anti-Christ does not die and as long as there is one depraved human being left that can be influenced, Satan will be trying to build himself a kingdom.

POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS

The tower of Babel was both political and religious. The building of the city represents the political aspect of world kingdom building and the tower that would reach unto heaven represents religion. The same spirit motivates the whole of Babylon, whether political or religious. It is selfish man in his sin-blinded condition cooperating with Satan in building a world order without God.

The principle word (Babel) for Babylon in the Old Testament means confusion and is used both literally and figuratively. Literally it has reference to the capital city of the kingdom of Babylon. Believed to be built on or near the original site of the tower of Babel in the plain of Shinar, it became an apt symbol for the world system. Beyond doubt the greater use of the word has reference to the world order or system that is Anti-Christ and Anti-God at its source.

In the book of Revelation it is used symbolically of the whole complex world system: political, religious, and economic. Chapter 14, 18 and 19. Because of the power to attract and seduce mankind, Babylon is pictured as a beautiful immoral woman. She is called "... Mystery Babylon The Great ..." because of the hidden principle of darkness that inspires and enables her to influence the whole world. Revelation 17:5 and 18:3.

In Revelation 17:1 she is called the "... great whore ..." because of her spiritual intercourse with the power of darkness. Masquerading as the embodiment of good, she is evil and treacherous. She is the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth because she brings forth according to her own adulterous nature. The curse of God is upon Babylon and his people are commanded to come out of her lest they be partakers of her sins and receive of her plagues.

A SYSTEM

Babylon is a system devised by man to promote his own interest. It covers the whole sphere of human existence including government, religion and commerce. It is a system based upon selfish human expedience rather than right principles. However, due to expedience and the influence of moral forces in the earth, Babylon is a system of law and order without which there would have been utter chaos. Man in his most primitive state wisely recognizes the need of some form of law and order.

There are many forms and facets of Babylon. Some are primitive and backward and some are civilized and highly advanced. At its zenith of power and glory Babylon displays magnificent splendor. It is the natural man using all his talents and God-given wisdom to build a civilization of beauty, elegance and power. Conceived and designed to capture the mind

and fancy of the natural man, Babylon, to say the least, is very impressive. However its glory is a fading flower to those who can see beyond its facade of vanity.

With the coming of Christ and the impact of Christianity upon the world, Babylon found it necessary to give public recognition to the Church by becoming her protector and advocate. The merger of Rome and Christianity under Constantine (313 AD) was simply another tower of Babel that led to another confusion of tongues.

The effect upon religion resulting from this merger was the forming of Protestantism. Similarly, the breaking up of the Roman empire into many countries with divergent forms of government was the political side of Babel.

BABYLON TODAY

Babylon today, both political and religious, is seeing the need of union again if she is to survive. She is being shaken to her very foundations. Once again expedience is saying, "Let's all get together and be one. Our world has become so small and the liability of annihilation so great we must get together. What we need is one government, one religion, and one world with everything in common."

The ecumenical movement of today to bring all churches together in one body is the same spirit that motivated the people at the tower of Babel. The purpose of the United Nations to have one super world-governing body is the other half of today's tower of Babel.

Lesser expressions of this spirit are at work on every hand to eliminate all barriers to the oneness that the spirit of Anti-Christ must have to set up his kingdom. The real purpose behind world union is that Satan might become head and absolute ruler over all of God's creation.

SERVED A PURPOSE

The leavening effect of Rome's merger with Christianity has served a purpose in God's infinite and wise plan. Because of this, the organized church lost its distinctiveness or separation from the world. In the process, the living stones of the true Church, within the confines of the whole, were hidden from the world focus until God's purpose and plan could be consummated. The parable of the wheat and the tares growing together until the harvest (Matthew 13:24-30) is a picture of this truth.

Even as Daniel and the Hebrew children, who were carried away into Babylon, were kept and blessed, God has watched over and blessed his people in the world system. Israel in Egypt is another type of God's elect kept and provided for in an alien land. Though she can never inherit the eternal blessings of God, Babylon has been blessed when she blessed the

people of God. Although it is a place of bondage, its government of laws enacted to protect itself has served to protect the seed of God also. Even as Ishmael, a product of the flesh, could never inherit the promises of God, neither can Babylon. When God made his covenant with Abraham, he said, "... I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" Gen. 12:3.

Many nations and people have been blessed by Almighty God because they showed favor to God's elect. Some have been used of God unknowingly, like Egypt and Babylon itself, to preserve and protect the seed of the righteous. And though most of them will never inherit the eternal blessings of God, they have been a participant in the covenant of Abraham.

Likewise the leavening effect of Christianity upon the civilized world has served as a deterrent to the forces of evil during this day of grace. However the true nature and spirit of Babylon has not been changed by the advent of Christianity into the world. Putting on the outward dress of righteousness does not change the heart.

And like all reformation the true nature and spirit will manifest itself in the end. Although there have been seasons of respite and tolerance toward God's true elect, Babylon (religious and political) still remains the persecutor of the righteous. As a rule the more the true Church has manifested the life and power of Christ, the more she has suffered at the hands of Babylon. Galatians 4:22-31. Revelation 17:6.

In the end Babylon always turns on those who will not bow the knee to her idols. In the end the true remnant has to always come out and start anew. As the children of Israel were forced to leave Egypt in the end because of the persecution of Pharaoh, God has a way of moving his people when the time comes.

Today the yoke of the world system is getting heavier and heavier upon the neck of God's people. The outward show and glittering splendor of our modern civilization is leaving our hearts cold and empty. In spite of social security, Medicare, and push-button luxury, there is a sense of futility and insecurity. Likewise religious Babylon, though rich and increased with goods, is spiritually destitute and without any real answers.

The sea of humanity is being blown about by many winds of adversity. Great unrest is increasing as hatred, suspicion and fear grip the hearts of men. All of this is symptomatic of the failure and fall of Babylon. She has about reached the end of her course. Although she has been exalted to high heaven, she must come down to the dust. God's people must begin to read the handwriting on the wall and get out while they have time and opportunity. Revelation 18:4.

The confusion of tongues imposed upon man at the tower of Babel is symbolical of the judgment of God that has always hindered the work of Satan to build a world kingdom in the earth. From that day until this the world system has been a babel of confusion that is always trying to come back from judgment and build again. Although God has granted much liberty and even blessed Babylon up to a point, he has never let her prevail in this area.

God's eternal decree of judgment upon world kingdom builders is pictured in Malachi 1:4. "Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever."

Satan knows the power of unity and constantly seeks to bring into being a one-world order through which he can exercise his will over man. Lack of complete world unity is the one thing that had hindered him from achieving his goal. Jesus confirmed this principle when he said, "... Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." Matthew 12:25.

Although God will, at the very close of this day of grace, allow Satan a temporary success he has never experienced before, his last great effort will fail also. From the ashes of this last desolation there will be no resurgence. This will be the final destruction of the world system called Babylon. Revelation 18:20-21.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE MAN OF SIN

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” II Thessalonians 2:3-4.

This scripture is generally interpreted as having reference to some world tyrant who will be Satan personified. Called the Anti-Christ by many, he is thought by some to be a Jew who is an apostate from Christianity. This line of interpretation fits in with the belief that the Jews will return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. Of course it is there that the man of sin is supposed to exalt himself as God.

SON OF PERDITION

Because Judas Iscariot is called the son of perdition, John 17:12, some teach that the man of sin will be Judas resurrected or reincarnated. The fact that the man of sin is called the son of perdition simply means it is humanity completely and eternally turned away from God. Judas was a type of such humanity. Lucifer himself was the original son of perdition followed by Cain and all who love not the truth that they might be saved.

The word perdition (Greek — *apoleia*) means utter ruin, loss or damnation. Wherever it is used it pictures man in an utterly ruinous and lost estate. It is man who rejects light and chooses darkness. It is a final state of reprobation from which there is no hope of deliverance. John 17:12, Romans 1:28, Philippians 1:28, I Timothy 6:9, Hebrews 10:39, II Peter 3:7 and Revelation 17:8.

Others think the man of sin was the rise of the papacy. The blasphemous claims of the man of sin as to being God (verse 4), they say, is fulfilled in the titles ascribed to the pope. “Deus alter in terra,” another God on earth; “Idem est dominium Dei et papa,” the dominion of God and the pope is the same. “Dominus Deus noster papa,” our Lord, God the pope.

Although there are, no doubt, many who would qualify as men of sin, I feel this is something uniquely different. This man of sin is a type of humanity that as a whole reaches a place of delusive presumption and diabolical wisdom such as has never been manifested before.

It is doubtful that the man of sin, as is popularly characterized, will be some world figure at all. Such a person exalting himself as God in a rebuilt temple at Jerusalem with great false signs would not fool anyone. How could such an obvious fraud deceive most of the world? There may be many world figures that are actually men of sin but those believing in and following them will not recognize them as such. No sane person would follow such a worker of iniquity if he knew it.

GOD'S TEMPLE

According to verse four, the man of sin will so exalt himself that he will sit in the temple of God, actually taking the place of God. Many think this temple is an earthly building made with human hands. The dispensationalist idea that the temple will be rebuilt at Jerusalem from where Anti-Christ or the man of sin will sit and proclaim himself as God is, I believe, the carnal reasoning of man. This can't be true because no earthly temple built at Jerusalem or any where else can qualify as God's temple. According to the Bible, God dwells not in temples made with hands. Isaiah 66:1-2. Acts 7:48-50. Acts 17:24.

If, then, the temple of God is not an earthly temple made with human hands, what is it? There is no room for doubt on this question if we go by what the Bible teaches. When Jesus said, "destroy this temple and I will raise it up again in three days," (John 2:19) he was not talking about the temple at Jerusalem. Everyone knows he had reference to his physical body that was raised from the dead after three days in the tomb.

In I Corinthians 6:10-20 and II Corinthians 6:16 Paul tells us our body is the temple of God and that he would dwell in us, walk in us and be our God and we would be his people. This is also what Jesus meant when he taught the disciples that he and the Father would come and dwell in them thus making their bodies the temple of God. John 14:16-23, 16:7-14.

Paul taught in many places that the Church was the body of Christ. I Corinthians 12:12-31. Ephesians 1:22-23, 5:29-32. In Ephesians 2:19-22 he likened the Church to a building fitly framed together and said it was growing unto an holy temple in the Lord. From these and other scriptures it is plainly evident the temple of God is not some earthly building but humanity that God has purposed to dwell in.

The temple that the man of sin sits as God is likewise humanity. Made in the image and likeness of God, man was intended to be God's dwelling place. This dwelling place of the man of sin, called the son of perdition, is apostate humanity completely given over to the evil principle that all men are born with. Ephesians 2:2-3. The man of sin is Adam — the rebel, with

the restraining grace of God removed allowing Satan to exalt himself in humanity like never before.

The man of sin is spoken of in the singular (as one man) because finally Satan gains sufficient control of incorrigible man to exalt himself above all that is called God. The union of unregenerate man and Satan simply becomes one whole. Becoming self-sufficient and independent, man thinks he is master of his own destiny, thus taking the place of God. The man of sin and the subsequent rebellion against all righteousness is the climax of the work of Satan and his evil host to bring together into one an unholy union of humanity through which he can take the place of God. Revelation 18:8 says, "And all that dwell upon the face of the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

MAN OF SIN REVEALED

The man of sin revealed is iniquity coming to its fullest fruition in man's age-long rebellion against a holy God. So given over to Satan and exalted in his mind, he assumes the place of God. This was Satan's dream of delusion in the beginning when he said, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High." Isaiah 14:14.

From the time of his original rebellion against God until this day, Satan has been hindered and frustrated in his desire to exalt himself above God. Nevertheless, he has worked under cover and behind the scenes of human history. The mystery of iniquity has always worked and involved man to the degree he deemed expedient for his own cause. II Thessalonians 2:7.

Because of divine restraint in the earth and his fear of exposure, Satan and his evil forces have been held in check until this day. With unregenerate man completely given over to him, he will, at last, openly come forth in man. This will be the man of sin revealed. Man without God has always been a rebel on the inside. Only the institution of law in some form has kept him from open rebellion against God. The man of sin will be Satan and man united in their rebellion. However, even in this, only the elect of God will be able to see what is taking place. The world, as a whole, will be blinded by strong delusion. They will in fact partake of the spirit that inspires the man of sin.

A STATE

Seeing then that the man of sin is a type or state that rebellious mankind will come to in the end, we need to know how to recognize him. As already stated, he will not be recognized as such. On the contrary he will be believed in and followed by most of the world. Only the elect of God will be able to recognize what is taking place.

Many who will be following and believing in this manifestation of evil will be fundamental Bible believers who think they know all about “the man of sin.” Like most of the Jews who knew all about the Messiah and how he would come, they will be blind to the real thing. Looking for some super world figure who comes forth with great lying signs and wonders, they will not recognize the lying signs as such nor the man of sin.

The man of sin will be of super intellect and convinced in his own mind that he has the answer to the world’s ills. He will embrace a combination of religion and political ideology based upon the concept of one world. The ideological approach will capture the minds of those who do not believe in God and the religious approach will get those who supposedly do.

Notice the description of the two beasts (symbolical) of Revelation 13 and the man of sin in II Thessalonians 2:3-10. These two beasts represent world powers headed up by many. They are called beasts because they are ruled by the animal nature of man rather than God. It is a type of the natural or earthly qualities of humanity coming to full development and expression in the earth. They, along with the man of sin, are exalted blasphemers who deceive mankind through great signs and wonders. With their power coming from Satan, they are human expressions of the spirit of Anti-Christ.

The man of sin and the second beast that comes up out of the earth are, I believe, identical. Both exercise power and influence over the whole of lost mankind. The number of the second beast, 666, is said to be the number of a man. Six is the number of man and seven is the number of God. These three sixes are a type of man reaching the zenith of human development in the three major areas of human endeavor. Although it is man at his best it is man without God.

One six represents man coming up with a religion that is supposed to be the answer to all religious division. It is a one-world super church that embraces all religion. The second six represents man’s answer to the many divisions of politics and government. It is a one-world super government. The third six is man’s answer to the material needs of mankind. It is a on-world economy based upon human need and equal distribution of wealth.

Some of the lying signs and wonders brought forth by the man of sin will not be in the field of religion at all. They will have to do with the world system itself which seemingly and at last solves the great problems of mankind. The world unity in government and religion will be considered miraculous. The scientific and economic achievement will also be hailed as great wonders. This is true even now of many things including man’s exploration of outer space.

It is my belief that the man of sin is just a type of humanity that comes to his zenith of glory and power without God. If indeed there will be a person fitting this description, he will simply be a figurehead for a single world system devised by man under the inspiration of Satan. The real master and lord will be Lucifer.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SIGN SEEKERS

“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.” Matthew 12:38-39.

Jesus’ indictment of the Jewish nation as a wicked and adulterous generation of sign seekers would certainly apply to much of today’s generation. From I Corinthians 1:22 it is obvious that this indictment had special reference to the Jews. The Greeks sought after wisdom but the Jews required a sign. Surely it is significant that both Jesus and Paul recognized this condition.

Sign seeking is the result of apostate belief. It is a people that reject God’s righteousness because they do not have God’s word abiding in them. John 5:38. It is a state of apostasy for which there is no redemption. When men reject the word and require a sign they have no faith and no approach to God. Hebrews 11:6.

WHOLE WORLD

What happened to the Jewish nation is being repeated with the Gentile world. As they rejected the prophets and finally the Lord himself, the Gentile world has rejected Christ. Acts 7:51. John 1:11. As their house was left unto them desolate, the same thing is happening to the Gentile world today. Matthew 23:37-39. The only difference this time is that the whole world is affected. Revelation 13:8.

Our present generation has perhaps heard more about supernatural phenomena than any previous one. This has been caused by a number of factors both good and bad. Beyond doubt a real wave of revival with genuine manifestations of the Holy Spirit started around the turn of the century. This came as a result of little bands of hungry Christians disenchanted with organized religion, sincerely seeking the face of God.

Being an opportunist, Satan quickly infiltrated this movement lest the revival do great harm to his kingdom. Through ambitious, unenlightened, and sometimes unscrupulous men he led it into unscriptural extremes and then into error. With the aid of modern news media and advertising, this

wrong and over-emphasis helped condition and produce today's sign seekers, divine healers, and would-be-miracle workers.

Man has to be prepared to receive anything from God or Satan. As God's word rightly divided prepares him to receive the unsearchable riches of Christ, Satan corrupts the word through falsehood and over-emphasis to prepare him to receive the manifestation of evil. This is the state that makes mankind today ready for strong delusion which is now coming forth in the form of lying signs and wonders. II Thessalonians 2:9-12.

MANY SEEKERS

The natural man is prone to be attracted to the supernatural for several reasons. Made in the image and likeness of God (not physical but spiritual) man has a capacity for and wants to believe in the supernatural. The creation itself speaks to him and says, "there is something or someone greater than all this." Psalm 19:1-3.

The reality of death and the hope of another existence beyond this life draws many toward the supernatural. This belief is shared by most of mankind. Even the uncivilized heathen believe in a life beyond the grave and practice some form of religion. The American Indian prayed to the Great Spirit and looked forward to going to his happy hunting ground when he died.

Living in the hour of a great spiritual vacuum many today are turning to supernatural sources for various reasons. Sick in mind and body, some desire deliverance and healing. Many who are disenchanted and despondent over the hopelessness of world conditions are turning to the supernatural for a ray of hope. Still others, like those who experiment with drugs, start out looking for a thrill and end up getting hooked on some form of delusion.

There is another group like Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-23) who desire the supernatural that they might exercise power and influence over people. Beyond a doubt this is what motivates many who follow the supposed miracle workers and desire spiritual gifts. Jesus himself had some who wanted this power that they might do the works of God. They didn't believe in nor desire to follow Christ, but they wanted his power to be a miracle worker. John 6:28-30.

Others, blindly filled with greed, hate and unbelief, turn to the supernatural in witchcraft, spiritualism, astrology, fortune telling and religion for various selfish purposes. It is surprising how many people, desiring supernatural help but not God's righteousness, religiously consult the fortune teller, astrology and other mystical sources for guidance and counsel. At one time only the ignorant and superstitious were thought to do

this. Not so today as the higher echelons of society turn to such sources for wisdom. The rise of Jeanne Dixon as a seeress whose counsel and advice is sought by presidents and world dignitaries is an example.

Consulting the power of darkness can only lead men into spiritual delusion and damnation. Man's motive must be right if he finds God and true spiritual reality. James 4:3. John 7:17. We have personally dealt with people who were demon possessed because they turned to such sources for help rather than God. One poor woman went to a fortune teller to get aid in a love affair. Another went to a practitioner of witchcraft to pronounce a curse upon someone she hated. Both of these women became devil possessed.

BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF

Sign seeking is the result of man being out of touch with God and filled with unbelief. Man, filled with unbelief, seeks something he can see, hear or feel that assures him of supernatural help and spiritual reality. In this condition he runs after those who supposedly operate in the supernatural realm. A good example of this is Saul seeking help from the witch of Endor. I Samuel 28:7-20.

The religious sign seeker would be the last person on earth to confess his unbelief. The fact is he thinks he has faith and takes great pride in saying he believes in the power of God. Many today who profess great faith in the Holy Ghost and the power of God are sign seekers and not aware of it. Legion is the number of these people who require a sign in the form of experience or manifestation who think they have faith.

In spite of all the great claims of the supernatural in the supposedly charismatic revival, the so-called healing and soul-winning crusades, today's generation is further away from God than ever before. This is evidenced by the general falling away and the tremendous revival of interest in the occult science.

The movies, television, and magazines are capitalizing on this intense interest in the supernatural and are doing their part in educating the masses in that direction. Anything of a supernatural nature is eagerly sought after by people today. Libraries report that their shelves stay empty of books on this subject. Instead of turning to the Lord and seeking him through truth, men are actually seeking help from devils. All sign seeking, whether it be in religion, spiritualism, or witchcraft, is man seeking to bypass God and his word.

Strange as it may seem, faith will produce genuine signs. Signs will follow them that believe. Mark 16:16-20. True signs are God's response to faith. Apart from faith God will not manifest himself to man. Faith is man's only ground of approach to God. "But without faith it is impossible to please

him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Hebrews 11:6.

Having no faith, the sign seeker knows little of the rest that comes through the power of the cross. I Corinthians 1:18. This is why they start seeking assurance through a sign. The sign may be in the form of feelings or experiences which register in the sensual being that continually have to be renewed by another sign or another wonder. Without the rest of faith that comes through the power of the cross, they are governed by their emotions. Living in this realm they have no inward strength and little defense against the enemy. The Bible calls them empty clouds or wells. II Peter 2:17 and Jude 12.

FALSE GOSPEL

Wherever there is a spiritual vacuum Satan is eager to move in with his gospel. Through wrong and over-emphasis of signs and other phenomena, sign seekers are begotten. Everything must bring forth after its own kind. This kind of gospel, which is not the true gospel is borne out by the scriptures. Galatians 1:6-9. II Corinthians 11:3-4. Although the Bible may be used as a basis for this supposed gospel, it does not produce genuine faith in the hearers. The way it is used it actually opens the human spirit to receive demons under the guise of the Holy Spirit. Peter spoke of some who were unlearned and unstable who wrest the scriptures to their own destruction. II Peter 3:16-18.

Beyond doubt, devil power is responsible for much that is coming forth under the guise of the power of God. This includes religious manifestations, the black arts and many new philosophies. The dragon is literally sending out a flood of false doctrine, ideology and philosophy accompanied by many lying signs and wonders. Revelation 12:15. I believe we are witnessing the last generation of humanity being turned over to strong delusion that seals them to damnation. II Thessalonians 2:10-12.

This last day work of the kingdom of darkness is so cleverly camouflaged until the very elect would be deceived if it were possible. Matthew 24:24. Thank God it is not possible. The elect walk by faith and not by sight. God’s word means more to them than the sign or wonder.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

MIRACULOUS LYING SIGNS AND WONDERS

“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” Matthew 24:24.

“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.” II Thessalonians 2:9.

Lying signs and wonders are never what men really think they are. To those who are deceived by them, they are true signs or evidences that portend certain conclusions. A lying sign or wonder could be a cleverly conceived substitute for a true sign or wonder. The lying sign not only leads astray, but it serves to confirm man in error and thus keeps him from truth that would set him free.

Many people think of lying signs and wonders as something of a miraculous or phenomenal nature. By virtue of the words used (signs and wonders (most people immediately think of something that transcends the natural and is obviously supernatural. Although this has always been true of some of the work of Satan to deceive man, the greater lying signs and wonders may not be considered miraculous at all. Regardless of its appearance, though, there is a supernatural power hiding behind the facade of the entire world system.

The word sign as used in the scriptures does often have reference to the miraculous. The Greek word *semeion* means a sign, token, miracle or something that indicates. However it is obvious from the way it is used that the sign could be many things. In fact it could be anything that becomes the criterion that strongly excites or influences men.

MANY FALSE SIGNS

The criteria or means that Satan uses to deceive one group will not always work with another. Satan knows man’s vulnerable weaknesses and makes that his ground of approach. Never think for a moment that Lucifer doesn’t know what it takes to tempt and deceive unenlightened humanity. For this reason the Master of Deception uses many false signs to deceive

mankind; from the ignorant and superstitious to the educated intellectual, he has an approach.

In Matthew 16:2 & 3 Jesus said, "... When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye Hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

It is quite evident that Jesus meant something other than a miracle or supernatural manifestation. By "the signs of the times" Jesus meant many things that should have enabled Israel to recognize their day of visitation, even as we, today, should recognize certain things as signs of the end of the age. However by this we do not necessarily mean a miracle or supernatural manifestation.

In Acts 2:22 Peter said to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." Let it be noted that Peter referred to miracles, wonders and signs, thus making a distinction between three different words that are generally thought of as being the same. It is evident from this that a sign doesn't have to be a miracle or wonder.

The Greek word for wonder, *teras*, means prodigy or omen. Prodigy means so unusual or out of the ordinary that it excites wonder. Omen is something that is looked upon as a sign or witness of a favorable or unfavorable issue. It doesn't have to be in itself phenomenal.

From this complex definition it is seen there is much latitude for Satan to come forth with lying signs and wonders without man being able to recognize them as such. The truth is, only those whose eyes are anointed with eye salve will be able to see. Revelation 3:18. Let's remember that Jesus said, these signs would be so great that if it were possible they would deceive the very elect.

CHARISMATIC REVIVAL

Today's so-called charismatic revival, hailed as a great move of the Spirit, is, I believe, a lying sign. It is for the most part, I fear, the result of unbelief and sign seeking. The report of great numbers from all denominations experiencing the baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in other tongues as the evidence is, I believe, a false revival. The lack of spiritual depth and transformation is very manifest among the thousands who claim this experience.

We have personally observed many who were strangers to the new birth but who had supposedly been led into this experience. Some later, under the convicting power of the Word of God, were genuinely converted and

entered into spiritual rest. We have also found many who had received evil spirits (demons) under the guise of receiving the Holy Spirit.

These spirits not only had entered these people at the time they thought they were receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but they would manifest their presence by speaking in other tongues when stirred up. One poor woman, who had a husband and seven children, and who thought that God had a work for her to do, had received such a spirit and was cursing God unknowingly. This spirit was received in a meeting where people were being encouraged to receive the Holy Spirit. When she received and began to speak in tongues and sway under the power, they rejoiced and told her, “You’ve got it! You’ve got it! You’ve got it!”

In addition to this case and others which we personally know about, there are many who have received religious spirits under the guise of receiving the Spirit of God. This, of course, is also true of millions who have joined other religious movements that don’t emphasize or believe in this particular manifestation. Whatever spirit is being ministered is what people receive, whether it be true or false. Everything must bring forth after its own kind. This is the law of the spiritual as well as the natural. When a person is deceived by an evil spirit-induced experience, that experience becomes a lying sign to the one deceived.

The first thing a religious spirit does after entering a human vessel is to convince the person he now has God living inside of him and that he must convert others to his doctrine or experience. Satan is an evangelist who works very diligently to gain converts to his religion, philosophy or experience. This accounts for the phenomenal growth of many religious movements.

RELIGIOUS BABYLON

But regardless of the zeal and industry of some, the many names, divergent doctrines and experiences of religious Babylon are mute testimony of their true source of inspiration. If the scripture is true, and God is not the author of confusion (I Corinthians 14:33), then devils have fathered much of it. I believe we are seeing today the fulfillment of Revelation 18:2, which says, “Babylon ... is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit....”

Many things are cleverly substituted in religion for Christ. Any experience or doctrine that men glory in more than Christ is suspect. Wrong or over-emphasis of anything may indicate a wrong spirit. If Satan can’t lead us into outright deception, he will lead us into some extreme first and then into error to justify our extreme. As Paul expressed to the church at Corinth, man can be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Many

today have received another Jesus, another spirit, another gospel and they know it not. II Corinthians 11:3-4.

The tongues movement of today, which indeed has made inroads into practically every denomination including the Catholic Church, is, I believe, one of Satan's lying signs. The modern day phenomenon called the Charismatic Revival with tongues at the center has become the common denominator for many. They come together in spiritual bliss and fellowship around this experience. All other differences are forgotten, as long as they have had this experience. Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics, Pentecostals and others all become one big, happy family glorying together in their baptism.

It was the spirit of idolatry that caused the Pentecostal movement to begin glorying in the manifestation of tongues to begin with. Becoming the epitome of spirituality to them, they began to try to get everyone to speak in tongues. This led to wrong and over-emphasis which led to error. In order to justify themselves they invented the doctrine that tongues is the initial evidence of having received the Holy Ghost.

Since the scripture set forth tongues as one of nine manifestations of the one Spirit (I Corinthians 12:7-11) which all do not speak in (I Corinthians 12:28-31), they came up with the idea that there are two different types of tongues. These are, supposedly, the evidence variety, which all should manifest when they receive the Holy Spirit and the gift variety which all do not have. Satan, through this false teaching, helped prepare this generation for today's phenomenon of tongues and thus it has become one of his lying signs and wonders.

Although tongues as a sign united the Pentecostal movement in its beginning, God hated the pride of some that caused them to glory in this manifestation and began to confound, confuse, and divide them. This was God's way of showing us they had become a part of religious Babylon. In spite of the fact they split up over many other issues, they held on to their belief of tongues as the sign of having received the Holy Spirit.

In their beginning they also took a strong stand for what became known as holiness in matters of dress, long hair, abstinence from tobacco, alcohol and various things considered worldly. Because of this they were loath to believe the denominational worldlings could receive the Holy Spirit unless they repented and embraced holiness. Scoffed and ridiculed by the rest of the Church world, they took a stand on these issues for a while. Finally their desire to get people into the baptism with tongues as the evidence overruled even this.

In today's movement short hair, painted faces and mini-skirts are welcome; all barriers are broken down. It makes no difference what you

believe or what church you go to. The only thing that matters is whether or not you have the baptism. One of their speakers was heard to say, "If you are a Presbyterian, be a Pentecostal Presbyterian. If you are a Baptist, be a Pentecostal Baptist."

NO SIGN TO BELIEVER

Tongues were not given as a sign to the believer. Saying that they are the initial evidence of the Holy Spirit makes them a sign to the believer. This insistence upon a sign rather than faith (Galatians 3:2-5) is actually a manifestation of unbelief and condemned by the word of God. Matthew 12:38-39. I Corinthians 1:22. Paul says, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe; but to them that believe not" I Corinthians 14:22.

The truth is God never intended any spiritual manifestation to be a witness or sign in itself that one has been indwelt by God's Spirit. This would destroy the principle of faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1.

SATANIC COUNTERFEITS

When God permits it, Satan can and does counterfeit the miraculous to purposely deceive unbelieving sign seekers. The wise men, sorcerers and magicians of Egypt were able to produce some of the same signs that God enabled Moses to do. Exodus 7:10-15, 8:1-7. The lying sign serves to give credence to that which is false.

From Matthew 24 and II Thessalonians 2 it is evident that strong delusion will be ministered to man through such lying signs before the coming of Christ. Strong delusion in any form, though brought forth by Satanic power, is actually sent by our great sovereign God when men love not the truth that they might be saved.

The late William Branham told of a people who drank human blood from a skull who spoke in tongues. Followers of Father Divine, who claimed to be God, spoke in tongues. Brother C. J. DuCille of Jamaica told of a group of devil worshippers in Jamaica, who practiced sexual orgies as part of their worship, who speak in tongues. In fact the way they know they have received the devil is by speaking in other tongues.

We personally know of many demon-possessed people who speak in tongues. Most of them take that as their sign that they have the Holy Spirit. One poor demon-possessed alcoholic who slashed his arms with a razor blade and threatened to murder his parents spoke freely in tongues by demon inspiration. A woman who had seven spirits in her, was bound by nicotine and guilty of adultery, spoke in tongues and danced in the spirit.

PROPHECY

In addition to this particular manifestation, demons have come forth in much of the so-called prophecy that has practically replaced the word of God among some groups. Prophecy and tongues with interpretation has just about taken the place of the Bible in these groups. Of course the prophecy usually confirms the doctrines, experiences and whims of the group or prophet.

It is not an uncommon thing to find poor, beguiled souls who have been prophesied out of their money or possessions. This is usually done by prophesying judgment if people don't give and blessing if they do. Some of the so-called great men of God have those conveniently present during the receiving of their offerings who get anointed to prophesy great blessings upon those who sacrificially give to the ministry of "Brother Tremendous," who is God's man of faith and power.

One group, in the state of Ohio, sold their homes, quit their jobs and moved "en masse" to Arizona where they went underground awaiting atomic destruction on the east coast. This was done on the strength of prophecy by the woman leader of the group. When the prophesied destruction did not come, she prophesied that God had canceled the judgment because of their obedience.

A young preacher, the son of a minister, married a young lady as a result of a prophecy that said they were meant for each other. The marriage ended in separation with little children the victims of a broken home.

Another result of prophecy going forth over men and women has been deluded people believing they had a call to ministry they did not possess. Some of these people we personally know, received evil spirits through such prophecy and ended up oppressed and condemned by these spirits because their so-called great ministry did not work out. Others became highly exalted and lifted up thinking they were apostles, prophets or manifested sons of God.

One man we personally know was prophesied over and told he was an apostle. He was instructed to quit his job, live by faith and give himself to diligent study of the scriptures. This supposedly was to be done in preparation for going out in ministry. With no money coming in and bills piling up, the man's wife had to get a job and go to work to support the family. The home life became so terrible with the wife working, the apostle loafing and the children shifting for themselves that eventually the home and marriage was broken up. One of the teenage girls ran away from home and became a hippie. The last I heard of the man he was divorced from his wife and had found his true spiritual mate and married her. They were traveling around together waiting on his apostolic ministry.

Legion are the number of people who have been led into doctrines of devils and various types of religious delusions through false prophecy. You will find prophecy, tongues, and other phenomena very prominent in groups believing in free love, universal salvation and other heresies. When men leave the word of God and begin to rely too much on any supposed manifestation they are in trouble.

FALSE ANOINTING

Recently I came into contact with a religious group that made me see the danger of Satan deceiving some people with a false anointing. The anointing may be soothing and sweet or it might be highly charged and emotional. When people come to believe and accept certain speech affectations or manifestations as the anointing of God, they are open to deception.

One group believes the minister should speak a few words in tongues every few sentences and shout “Glory!!” if he is truly anointed of God. Others believe the minister is truly anointed when he becomes so wrought up until his speech is a literal torrent of words punctuated only by gasps of breath. And some believe he is anointed when his delivery is in the form of a sing-song chant. Still others believe it is God when the preacher’s voice sounds like the combination of a ghost at a seance and a speaker at an undertaker’s convention.

Some groups have been so conditioned to look for these signs until Lucifer himself would be welcome among them if he had these manifestations. They would shout, “Glory,” and say, “He is one of us.”

I have heard people speak of their preacher and say, “Brother so-and-so was greatly anointed today: the words were coming to him so fast he couldn’t get them out.” Can you imagine the Holy Spirit working against himself in such a manner?

No doubt much of this speech affectation and manifestation has become traditional with some groups and is the result of human ignorance. Still others, I believe, are actually anointed by a spirit but not the Holy Spirit. Satan can anoint and inspire man as surely as God can. But his anointing and inspiration is false and it will deceive and lead men astray.

I know a man and his wife who were evidently baptized by an evil spirit while going through the line of a certain healing evangelist on what was billed as “double portion night”. He came to himself rolling in the sawdust and his wife was trying to climb a tent pole. Though temporarily deluded into believing they had received their double portion this couple ended up in a terrible gall of bitterness despising all things connected to religion.

Needless to say, Satan has counterfeited visions, angels, dreams, miracles, healing, supernatural knowledge and wisdom. The fact that some have the ability to tell you your name and address and certain other things supernaturally doesn't necessarily mean it is of God. Fortune tellers can do the same thing by demon inspiration. Acts 16:16-18. Even in Paul's day religious deception was at work through false apostles, false ministers and Satan who transformed himself into an angel of light. II Corinthians 11:13-15.

If that was true in Paul's time, how much more is it true today in the hour of the final loosing of Satan?

It is my conviction that evil spirits are ministered to many who do not really want Christ but rather his power or some other blessing. John 6:28-29. These spirits are ministered in religious meetings by ministers with a false anointing. Not only is the false anointing in the minister a lying sign but the evil spirit that is ministered to the person becomes a lying sign.

The Bible says of Christ who had the Spirit without measure, "... I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and a smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." Matthew 12:18-20.

Jesus often sat down and taught the people. Likewise Paul, though sincere and convincing, used a more or less conversational form of speech in his preaching. There are, no doubt, many today who wouldn't believe that Jesus or Paul had the Holy Spirit because of their lack of fleshly demonstration.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

NON-MIRACULOUS LYING SIGNS AND WONDERS

Those who are deceived by signs and wonders coming forth as religious phenomena may be very much in the minority compared to those who are deceived by a far more subtle form of lying signs and wonders. The fact is many in this group discount the miraculous for today saying these things passed away with the apostles and the early Church. Many belonging to this group have been taught to believe that only the ignorant and the superstitious believe in the miraculous for today.

Knowing these things, Satan's approach to these people is according to their own mental apprehension. The criteria or basis for their deception cannot be considered miraculous in the usual sense. The identity of these lying signs may come as a shock to many since they are not generally recognized as such. Some will utterly reject such charges thinking it is foolish and ridiculous to suggest such a thing. Truly they are lying signs and wonders.

SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY

The first lying sign that I wish to consider is false spiritual prosperity. Many believe that large numbers of church members, financial prosperity and great building programs are a sign of divine approval. To the Laodicean Church the Lord said, "Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Revelation 3:17.

Although many Bible scholars agree this scripture is typical of and points to much of the church world in our day, very few would apply it to their own church. I agree that it does apply to much of the present day church world and is a true picture of their spiritual destitution. Yet they are deceived by their apparent success into thinking they have need of nothing.

Their worldly affluence and success had become to the Laodicean Church a lying sign. Is this not true of many today who have put millions of dollars into beautiful buildings, gathered large affluent congregations, and think they are doing many wonderful works? It cannot be denied that this has come to be a criterion or sign to many that God is with them.

Once again we have a condition that has developed as a result of wrong and over-emphasis. The minds of the people have been well prepared for this deception through development of a false sense of spiritual value. Ambitious church leaders have brainwashed the people into believing that the sacrifice of their dollars, labor and lives to build great religious empires is man's sacred duty.

Recently I talked with members of two widely divergent groups and both of them pointed to their phenomenal growth and prosperity as proof positive that God was with them. Yet each of them considered the other as heretics. This is more or less typical of all religious bodies whose main goals are beautiful buildings and large numbers.

Success in these things is not a sign at all that God's blessings are upon a group. Further, it becomes a lying sign to those who believe in this instead of vital Christianity which is often poor and destitute materially by comparison. Hebrews 11:37. Worldly affluence and success is the hallmark of Babylon, the great whore. This is the way she glorifies herself in the eyes of the world. Revelation 18:7.

ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The worldwide sentiment for church union by all supposed Christian religious bodies is another great lying sign. The fact is there has been a merger already of several groups with millions of members and the effort continues. Even the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England are countenancing the movement. The Pope said on his visit to the United States that what the United Nations was trying to do in the field of government, the Roman Catholic Church was trying to do in the spiritual.

Many hail the ecumenical movement as the fulfillment of Christ's prayer. John 17:21. A casual reading of this chapter will plainly show that Christ's prayer had true believers in mind and not apostate religious organizations. Unbelievers, regardless of their lip confession of Christianity, have no part nor lot in Christ's prayer. Now, as always, there is only a remnant within the confines of the whole that are true blood-washed children of God. It is this remnant that Christ prayed might be made one even as he and the Father are one.

Most of humanity who make any claim to Christianity are still part of the world by spirit and by practice. Their profession hasn't changed their hearts. They are equally at home in their religious organizations or the world. Jesus' prayer in John 17 is not for these professors of Christianity. Notice verses 6 and 9. Jesus specifically said he was not praying for the world but for those the Father gave him out of the world. "... I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me; for they are thine."

It is my belief there is a true move of the Spirit based upon the Word of God that is at work to bring together out of the many divisions of religious Babylon this true remnant of God's elect. Revelation 18:4. Jesus' prayer will be answered concerning this true elect number. However, the labor and activity of the apostate ecumenical movement cannot be correlated with the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer.

This move of apostate Christianity getting together is, in fact, confirmed by the Bible itself. Although many scriptures point to this false move of the Spirit, Isaiah 4:1 pictures this union in symbolical but plain language. "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach."

These seven women represent the whole of apostate Christendom. Seven is the number of completeness. Woman is a type of the church. In this instance it is the false church because of the obvious spiritual state of these seven women. In their divided condition they realize they are a reproach in the eyes of the world. This is also true of the present day ecumenical movement. There is no justification for division within the Church of Jesus Christ. The desire of the seven women for union was to take away this reproach. There was, however, a condition to this unity — they would continue to eat their own bread and wear their own apparel. The bread speaks of doctrine and the apparel is a type of righteousness. In this case it meant their doctrine and their righteousness, not God's.

These seven women had no real desire for true inward change. They were completely satisfied with their bread and apparel. They wanted the respect and honor of outward union under the one name, but cared not for truth, nor Christ's righteousness. This is also true of the apostate ecumenical movement today. Of course the one they will take hold of in quest for honor and respectability is supposed to represent Christ. This is the name they supposedly unite under. But instead of taking hold of Christ it will be Anti-Christ. This, I believe, is what the scriptures teach will happen concerning apostate Christianity before the coming of Christ. It is taking place now and those who are part of it think it is wonderful. It is another lying sign and wonder that millions believe in with all their heart.

RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

The belief in and apparent fulfillment of many scriptures supposedly relative to the restoration of Israel is, I believe, one of Satan's masterpieces of deception. Most of the organized church world accept without question the contention that the Bible is now being fulfilled in the restoration of the nation Israel. If this belief in the return of the natural Jew to Palestine is not

what they say the scriptures teach for these last days, then what we are observing and hearing about truly is a lying sign.

None can deny this is looked upon as a sign by most of the church world. I dare say millions of books, magazines and articles are written and sermons preached pointing to this as the sign of the soon coming of Jesus Christ. Old and New Testament scriptures are interpreted as having reference to the return of the Jew. If this is not the sign they say it is then it is indeed a lying sign.

It is true this doctrine was believed and taught many years before its supposed fulfillment today in the return of the Jew to Palestine. But it is also true that God often permits Satan to confirm his false doctrine, which in itself becomes a lying sign. As brought out elsewhere, we have been warned about being deceived on this very issue of Christ's coming.

The corrupted desire of a man for a carnal, materialistic fulfillment of a mythical golden age is, no doubt, the spiritual force that begot this doctrine to begin with. Literalization and misapplication of scriptures that have its fulfillment in spiritual Israel, the Church, rather than the natural Jew became the basis for some of this teaching. I believe it is simply another expression of the spirit that was manifested at the tower of Babel. Dr. George B. Fletcher has this interesting comment on its origin:

THE ORIGIN OF PREMILLENNIALISM

In many nations and religions there appears the idea, in some form or other, of a golden age. This expectation is due to God's Revelation, for as soon as sin had come into the world, hope was given in the promise of ultimate victory (Genesis 3:15). In the various religions of the pagan world there seems to be an echo of this hope. But there is something very interesting about this golden-age expectation; namely that the farther men get away from God's truth, the more carnal and materialistic this hope becomes. The history of Israel as a nation also illustrated this fact. After centuries of servitude in Egypt and forty years of wandering in the wilderness, they looked upon Canaan as the land of rest and promise. From Hebrews 4 that appears as a mistake. That was not the rest promised to God's people. Only those who were of faith within the nation looked for a city whose builder and maker was God, and desired a better country, that is, an heavenly (Hebrews 11:10, 16). Later after seventy years of captivity, the captives in Babylon cry, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I

prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy” (Psalm 137:5, 6). The earthly Jerusalem had plainly become their chief joy, and the hope of Israel had become the restoration of their land, city, and temple.

Chiliasm, or premillennialism in its simple form originated in the Jewish Apocalyptic writings of the inter-Biblical period, of which the following quotation is a sample from the Apocalypse of Baruch:

“The earth will yield its fruit ten-thousand fold, on each vine there will be a thousand branches, and each branch will produce a thousand grapes, each grape will produce a cor of wine, and those that have hungered will rejoice” (XXIX: 4-6).

The idea of a millennial reign on earth proceeded from Judaism, for “among the Jews the representation was growing, that the Messiah would reign a thousand years upon earth. Such products of Jewish imagination passed over into Christianity” (Neander’s, “*History of Christian Dogmas*,” Vol 1, P. 248.) (*The Millennium, What it is Not and What it Is*, Dr. George B. Fletcher).

Although Jesus referred to numerous things that will take place and precede his coming he makes no mention of Israel being restored. The teaching that the fig tree in the parable of Matthew 24:32-33 has reference to Israel’s restoration is ridiculous in view of Luke’s reference which adds all trees to the parable. Luke 21:29-33. If the budding of the fig tree is Israel being restored then “all trees” would mean all nations are going to be restored. Of course, this line of reasoning would be rejected by those who say the fig tree represents Israel.

A casual study of these scriptures and their context will show that it was false Christs, false prophets, false signs and wonders and the great tribulation to be followed immediately by darkened sun and moon that Jesus was talking about. As the budding leaves of the fig and all trees herald the coming of summer, these signs herald the coming of Christ. This is what Jesus was teaching. There are no scriptures dealing with Christ’s coming that point to the restoration of Israel as a sign.

Both Jesus and the Apostle Paul taught the same thing relative to Christ’s coming. Matthew 24 and II Thessalonians 2. Both warned us about false signs and wonders and being deceived by false prophets. Neither points to Israel restored as a sign. I believe this regathering of the Jew to earthly Jerusalem is one of Satan’s greatest lying signs and wonders.

WORLD UNION

The world today is a restless sea of troubled humanity that defies solution. More and more the spirit of the age is toward world union. World leaders say we must get together or perish. This new manifestation is simply an expression of the same spirit of Anti-Christ that has come forth in all previous world powers that tried to make the world one.

Whereas many previous world powers tried to make the world one by military conquest, this last effort will be done by political genius. With the threat of annihilation by nuclear power, the argument for world union is more convincing than ever before. Surely the handwriting is on the wall and world leaders know this. Another war between the major powers would be a world catastrophe. To man without God, world union seems to be the only answer.

After World War I, there was a move in the direction of world union through the League of Nations. This eventually failed as the memory of that war grew dimmer and the nations got busy with their own domestic affairs. After World War II the spirit of world union was revived and came forth again in its present form called the United Nations. At the present time there are over one hundred nations belonging to the United Nations. All the major powers except Red China belong and sentiment for Red China's admission is growing every year. *[Since the writing of this article, as every one knows, Red China has been admitted to the United Nations.]* The United Nations could very well become the super world government that will cause all the world to wonder after the beast and say, "... Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" Revelation 13:3-4.

The hope of a united world under one system of government is, I believe, another lying sign. It is just another hopeless illusion that unbelieving man is turning to instead of God. Although it will temporarily succeed and be hailed as the world's saviour it will fail in the end as all other world empires have.

The spirit behind world union is the same spirit motivating church union. They will, in fact, be joined together again even as Imperial Rome married the apostate church under the reign of Constantine. I believe this is what we have in Revelation 17, where the great whore is seen riding upon the back of the scarlet colored beast.

The reason world union will be such a great lying sign is because the whole world will be affected in its desperate search for peace. Although mankind does not want the Prince of Peace, he desires peace and safety from war, famine and disease. In his carnal materialistic-oriented way of life these are the things that seem important to him. When at long last he thinks he has succeeded through world union he will indeed be deceived by

earth's greatest lying sign. This is why the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." I Thessalonians 5:2-3.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

NEW HEAVENS

II PETER 3:1-17

This age will end with the coming of Christ and the destruction of the entire created universe (heavens) including the earth itself. The elements which will melt with a fervent heat has reference to the many celestial bodies in this great universe. According to verse 13, they will be replaced with new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

The Old Testament likewise confirms the destruction of the heavens and the earth. “Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.” Isaiah 51:6. Read also Psalm 102:25-26.

HEAVENS AND EARTH DEFILED

In our carnal imagination we simply think of heaven as some beautiful place where the righteous will live forever after this life. Our saying that heaven is more of a state than it is a place does not set well with those who have been taught to think in terms of streets of gold and gates of pearl. But the truth is, all of God’s universe, including the heavens, has been affected by the fall. It’s going to take the fire of God’s eternal judgment to purge, purify, and destroy the evil that has contaminated the whole creation.

Even in the heavenly realm (heavenlies) there is a warfare going on between forces of good and evil. Although Satan’s head was bruised at Calvary, most of mankind is still ignorant of the victory that was wrought there. Colossians 2:15. It will be the preaching of the cross by a revived and rejuvenated church that will spell Satan’s final defeat. I Corinthians 1:18. Our Lord, the head of the Church, has already triumphed over Satan and the time is near for the Church, his body, to do likewise.

AS A THIEF

We do not know the day nor the hour of his coming which will be like a thief in the night for most of the world. I Thessalonians 5:1-4. “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the

night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.”

Because we are so time-oriented, eternity seems far away in a dim vague future. But the truth is, it is just a step beyond us. We will soon be marveling that we lived so much for time and so little for eternity.

In the new creation it will be time that will grow dim and fade from our memories. Isaiah 65:17 says, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”

MAN’S GREATEST REGRET

However there will be a time of heartrending remorse and regret when those living in unbelief realize at last their opportunity for eternal life is gone forever. Matthew 13:40-43 says, “As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth will be the awful result of grim reality that eternity has dawned at last and all hope of salvation is gone. Not only will the lost face eternity with terrible regret but the saved will also stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

The certainty of judgment for all mankind is brought out in many scriptures. Matthew 12:36-37. Romans 2:2-6. Romans 14:10-12. I Corinthians 4:5. Perhaps Revelation 20:11-15 gives us the most vivid picture of the saved and the lost standing before God on that last great day of judgment. This is the day when all men will face the record of their earthly lives.

Those whose names are not found in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. The other books, no doubt, contain the records of the works done in the flesh. Although the righteous are saved from eternal damnation in the lake of fire, many of them will suffer loss. I Corinthians 3:12-15. What we do or fail to do in this life will certainly affect our rewards and our position in eternity. Revelation 22:12. Matthew 25:14-30.

CURSE LIFTED FOREVER

Though we do not as yet know God’s great plan for the ages to come, we can rejoice knowing that the curse will be lifted forever. And greatest of all,

the cross will forever stand between the redeemed and the fall such as Adam experienced.

Revelation 21:3-8. “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful, And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

According to II Peter 3 the world as a whole will not be looking for nor anticipating the coming of Christ. I believe this also includes most of the professors of Christianity as well as the non-professors. No doubt this will be the result of unbelief in general and misinterpretation of the scriptures.

Since we have already dealt with the question of the great deception that surely will and even now exists concerning the coming of Christ, very little more can be said here. However, I might add that many scriptures generally believed to be fulfilled in some far distant future have already been fulfilled and they knew it not. As also stated elsewhere, many scriptures looking to be fulfilled concerning the Jew and Israel have already been fulfilled in the first coming of Christ and the birth of the Church at Pentecost.

Recently a brother asked me, “What about that nation that will be born in a day?” He was simply repeating the popular notion that Isaiah 66:8 had reference to the Jew being restored as the nation Israel in the earth. I told him this was what took place at Pentecost when the Church was born.

I Peter 2:9 says, “ But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:”

According to the scripture above we, the Church, the spiritual Jew, are that “holy nation.” This is the nation that was born in a day. And that day was Pentecost.

Another example of this misinterpretation of scripture is the belief in the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem prior to the supposed millennial reign of Christ on earth. It is very evident from a casual study of Peter’s explanation of this scripture in Acts 15:13-17 that the tabernacle of David

referred to here was merely a type which pointed to and was fulfilled in the Church.

One thing I am sure of: our world today, though much of it is very religious, is in just as great a darkness as the Jews were at his first coming.

How much scripture is yet to be fulfilled, I certainly do not know. Perhaps far less than we realize. One thing is certain, God is speaking to a little remnant that has ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. It has always been this way. Most religionists are either looking back at what has been or looking forward to what is supposed to be. Blinded by their denominational creeds, doctrines and religious programs they are never able to hear or see what God is doing now.

May I conclude this last chapter, which is a feeble effort to share some of the things we believe to be of God, by quoting Paul in II Corinthians 6:1-2. “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)”

CHAPTER TWENTY

1995 UPDATE

BY PHIL ENLOW

This article, written in 1995, is intended to be an update, a new last chapter to the book, “Lying Signs and Wonders.” The book is a collection of articles on deception in the end of the age, most of them written roughly twenty-five years ago. What was written then continues to prove true today. The book has gone to many parts of the earth and continues to bless and enlighten God’s people.

Spiritually, conditions are far worse than they were then. More and more people have crossed the line to where God will no longer speak or strive with them.

Powerful winds of spiritual darkness and deception have been embraced as if they were breezes from heaven. Truly the earth (natural man — often religious) is opening her mouth to swallow the flood that is going forth out of the mouth of the dragon. Rev. 12:16.

Men and women who, when light came, refused to walk in it, are now walking in darkness and do not know where they are going. Worse, they aren’t even aware that they don’t know.

This is the state Paul warned of in II Thess. 2:10-12, a state of strong delusion God sends upon those who “received not the love of the truth that they might be saved.”

The truth God sends is an expression of His love. Man, by nature hates and fears the light of that truth. It exposes his true condition before God and demands that he repent and bow the knee to Jesus Christ. It demands that he prostrate himself upon the mercy of God as the helpless sinner he is.

When men, full of the darkness of sin, rebellion and pride, reject the light of truth, they are rejecting the love of God expressed through that truth. Truth and love are inseparable. What kind of love is it that would not tell us the truth?

The result is not simply delusion, but strong delusion, an irreversible condition in which the lie of Lucifer is embraced as truth.

Prov. 1:20-33 contains a sober warning from God of the need to recognize and bow to truth when it comes and the awful consequences of not doing so.

Verse 23 contains a great promise: “Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.”

Verse 24 begins the warning: “Because I have called, and ye refused ... I will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh ... Then shall they call upon me but I will not answer ... they despised all my reproof ... therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way....”

A GENERATION OF DECLINE

Approximately a generation has passed since the Lord so clearly revealed to us the loosing of Satan that was taking place. We see everywhere the fruit of that as violence and evil increase and morality declines.

In about a generation we have seen TV degenerate from “I Love Lucy” and “Father Knows Best” to “Roseanne” and “Married With Children.” The public drinks up all the sex and violence Hollywood can put out and clamors for more and worse. What entertains man’s lusts today is boring tomorrow.

Perverted sex has left the closet and now marches in the streets demanding respect. The lie that people are born that way has been repeated so often that I dare say a majority of society now believes it even if it doesn’t make them exactly comfortable.

Men are blind to the hordes of demons that have been loosed upon them to find expression for their evil nature through human flesh. Man, having an evil nature of his own to begin with, has been mentally, spiritually and often physically conditioned to become a home for devils. Evil thoughts and impulses originating in devils are received by people as if they were their own. Psychologists and psychiatrists stand ready to “help” them if they should find that difficult.

A generation ago in our schools the concerns were chewing gum in class and smoking in the bathroom. Today they include drug trafficking and carrying guns. Classroom discipline is largely gone. Rebellion is the order of the day.

The spirit of rebellion is glorified in movies and on TV. Sex of all kinds, unrestrained by moral concerns, is portrayed as the norm.

Commitment and permanence in marriage are a joke. It is common today for couples to “marry” with an agreement already signed spelling out what each will get when they split up.

The fear of God is no longer a factor in either people’s thoughts or in their behavior. About the only restraint on most people is what others think and say about them. Otherwise they pursue their own personal pleasure as they see fit.

A NEW WORLD ORDER

One thing that has come out into the open is man's desire and plan to remake the world without God. This expectation of a "new age" has pervaded every segment of society. In one way or another, the influential people of our day have embraced this "hope" and are busy planning for it and promoting its ideas in every possible way.

This includes not only the occultism of the so-called "New Age" movement but the plans and ideas of scientists, educators, philosophers and politicians as well. It is common to hear references to a "new world order" or to "remaking society." Of course, in this new order, neither the one true God nor His Son will be needed. Man will be his own god.

Part of the preparation for a new order is a doctrine being heavily promoted in education called multiculturalism. Taking note of the fact that American society in particular is composed of people from many different cultural backgrounds, this doctrine promotes the idea that the various beliefs and practices of these different cultures are all equally valid and deserving of respect. Various ethnic minorities are all but glorified in the attempt to drive the point home.

Under the guise of promoting harmony, tolerance and understanding, a generation is being brainwashed to believe that there are no "right" and "wrong" beliefs, only different ones. Whatever belief system suits the individual is fine so long as he is tolerant of others and doesn't believe that he is right and others are wrong.

It is not difficult to see that the devil's main target in promoting multiculturalism is Biblical Christianity. The idea that men are saved or lost, that Christ alone is the way, the truth and the life, that men must bow the knee to Him or be damned is especially hated.

In practice, multiculturalism, far from promoting all beliefs equally, teaches an intolerance of any belief that is considered to be intolerant! Hence it is not unusual for Biblical Christianity to be held up to scorn and ridicule even as other religions are portrayed sympathetically.

Apostate Christianity has in fact been guilty at times of promoting hatred and intolerance. However, we know that in Christ, true believers are free to love all men with His love, to proclaim the truth without compromise, and then to give men liberty to do what they will with that truth. Satan, however, lumps us all together that he might discredit the truth that he so hates and fears.

THE APOSTASY

The apostasy of professing Christianity has gathered a frightening momentum. In the absence of the living presence of Christ in most

churches, devils have stepped in and taken over. Whole movements have arisen that draw huge crowds by catering to the natural man.

A major television news special was broadcast several months ago concerning some of these movements. The broadcast was entitled, “In the Name of God.” We might add “In the Name of Jesus Christ” to that as well. Each movement believed that they were representing Him. Matt. 7:21-23.

Some were depicted as using marketing consultants to teach them how to compete in the “marketplace” for crowds. Some have resorted to various forms of slick entertainment. Others, in their drive to offer what the news commentator called “emotional therapy,” have opened themselves up to all sorts of spirits offering a wide variety of “experiences” and manifestations.

LYING SIGNS

The major thrust of this book has been to identify falsehood employed by Satan to deceive men in the end time. As has been established, a lying sign is a kind of lie that serves to point to and confirm another lie. It is like a road sign that says you are entering “The Promised Land” when in fact you are about to drive off a cliff!

Virtually all of the lying signs referred to earlier continue to be employed and more so. A few deserve particular mention.

The explosion in knowledge and technology continues to amaze men and serves to confirm the proud belief that man can solve his own problems — anything is possible. Knowledge has probably doubled several times over since this book was written! Of course Daniel knew of this long ago (Daniel 12:4).

There is an element of truth in this particular lie. In Gen. 11, when God confounded men’s language at the Tower of Babel, He observed (verse 6) “... this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do.” Left to himself today, man would continue to learn and would eventually travel to the stars.

However, God has a different plan and regardless of what He may allow man in his rebellion to achieve, his day will come to a sudden fiery end. Isaiah 2:10-22 is a passage which particularly warns against trusting in man and also warns of divine judgment on human pride.

Another area of great deception is the pursuit of peace. A lot has happened in 25 years — the dramatic decline of communism, the end of the cold war, the decline in the threat of nuclear war, various treaties involving Israel — all of these things signaling to many that peace is achievable.

There are still terrible conflicts going on yet they seem to be **civil wars**, wars between different ethnic groups **within** nations. The last time one nation invaded and conquered another — when Iraq invaded Kuwait — an

unprecedented coalition of nations led by an awesome display of U.S. military technology sent the conqueror home in defeat to lick his wounds.

The euphoria that followed signaled more than the simple joy of victory. There was also the feeling that a decisive message had been sent to any similar would-be aggressor that he risked the wrath of the United Nations.

Do you suppose there might be any significance to Rev. 13:4 where men say “Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” I believe it would be profitable to read Bro. Thomas’s thought-provoking article, first published almost 40 years ago, entitled, “Is The United Nations the Beast of Daniel and Revelation?”

On the subject of man’s hope of peace in this world the word of God is crystal clear: “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” I Thess. 5:3.

Do not be swept along with the world as it pursues a course of trusting in man and grasps at anything that seemingly confirms their hope in what man can do.

THE OCCULT

Interest and belief in the occult has grown tremendously in the last 25 years. In a real sense it has become “mainstream.” We’ve seen intelligent and famous people openly promote their occult beliefs and experiences. We now even have a popular TV program called “Psychic Friends.”

God’s people need to be aware that the devil has real supernatural power and avoid the temptation to toy with the occult even a little. Things as seemingly innocent as ouija boards and horoscopes have been used by demons to bring people into terrible bondage. In Christ we have access to all the knowledge and wisdom we need.

There is a terrible spiritual void in men’s minds and hearts today. They cry out for answers, for something to believe in, to hope for. Satan is going all out to fill that void.

He has always propped up his lies and evil doctrines with supernatural signs. In today’s spiritual climate these lying signs are convincing ever-greater numbers of sin-blinded men.

More and more people are convinced about such things as reincarnation and psychic knowledge unaware that the memories of “other lives” and the knowledge are being supplied by demons through their current victims.

Until Philip came along with a true anointing from God, Simon the Sorcerer had the Samaritans bewitched into believing he was “the great

power of God.” Acts 8:5-25. He had genuine supernatural power, but its source was the realm of darkness.

Satan’s greatest means of bewitching mankind has always been religion, however, because religion comes under the guise of representing God and doing good.

STRONG DELUSION

This present religious generation is more prepared and ripe for strong delusion than any in the history of the world. It is a generation that cannot discern the true anointing, that equates the word of God with their understanding of the Bible and their tradition. God and His presence have been associated with a wide range of emotions and bodily sensations. The “word” people have heard has left them spiritually empty in the face of the stress of today’s world and the flood tide of deception that is engulfing mankind. Satan is not holding anything back because he knows his time is about to run out.

One movement sweeping through many groups today merits special mention. It is a movement marked by many manifestations described even by some of its followers as “bizarre.” These include: laughing uncontrollably; falling down, sometimes unable to move for considerable periods of time; roaring like a lion; even barking like a dog; and other uncontrollable outbursts.

People come to believe that they are being “filled with the Spirit,” that they are entering into “the divine romance,” a relationship in which God “makes love” to His people.

Those who enter in are taught that their experience is repeatable and are encouraged to minister one to another as often as they feel inclined.

Not surprisingly many plausible ideas have been put forward to explain, justify and promote this “blessing.” As I said earlier, people have been prepared for this. Ideas planted in people’s minds, often years earlier, are “confirmed” as they encounter this phenomenon.

Taken all together — people prepared by Satan; the powerful emotions and sensations people experience; and the plausible rationale to explain it: this is, I believe, a diabolically clever deception.

People don’t stop to think that what makes deception so deceptive is how good it looks and how right it seems. They do not take adequately into account Satan’s ability to counterfeit the things of God.

Why would Jesus warn of deception so powerful that even the elect would almost be deceived if it were not so? Matt. 24:24. That has to apply to real people in real situations — maybe to people you and I know.

Most religious people are just that — religious — and certainly cannot be considered God’s people. Yet increasing numbers of these gullible souls are falling under the spell of a warm, gooey, touchy-feely “god” who stirs their inward emotions with feelings of unconditional love and acceptance. Noticeably absent is a spirit of deep conviction of sin and repentance. This spirit loves and receives everyone. “Just As I Am, Without One Plea,” has become, “Just As I Am,” **period!**

Uncontrollable laughter, often disorderly and inappropriate, is said to be “the joy of the Lord.” Considering the stress of living in today’s world, any spirit that stirs up a deep laughter will most certainly bring about an emotional release that makes people feel better.

REASONINGS

Following are a few of the reasonings I have encountered along with some comments.

“We need to believe in God’s desire to bless us more than we fear Satan’s power to deceive us.” That sounds good and is designed to disarm someone who would rightly be concerned about deception.

On the one hand, the Bible clearly states that we are to beware — or to be concerned — about deception. Col. 2:8, I Tim. 4:1-6, I John 4:1, Matt. 24:4.

On the other hand, this statement assumes that it is God’s desire that His people live on a perpetual mountaintop of feeling and experience and that what they are experiencing is, in fact, God.

There is nothing in the New Testament to suggest that the Christian life in this world is like this. Paul certainly knew nothing of this. Although he experienced great revelations (II Cor. 12:7), his general experience was one of death that God’s life would come forth (II Cor. 4:7-12). Note some of the emotions and experiences that were Paul’s lot in this passage alone: trouble, perplexity, persecution, being cast down, always delivered unto death. He said “... death worketh in us ...” (verse 12). Other passages describing his experiences include: II Cor. 1:4-10, II Cor. 6:4-10, II Cor. 11:23-33.

The Lord even declined to deliver Paul from being buffeted by a demon, but rather told him, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Paul’s response was, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” II Cor. 12:9.

Folks today don’t want the cross, the way of death-to-self. They despise the living word that would search them out that they might be delivered and transformed. They would much rather have a “god” who loves, assures and receives them as they are and who gives them what they need through an

experience apart from the word. Any “word” involved is pretty much after the fact and selectively uses scripture to seemingly support the experience.

The same Bible that speaks of love and joy also warns of a spiritual condition people can get into when God sends light and they reject it in favor of their own way. I am persuaded that this is what has happened to this generation in a general sense.

In John 12:35 Jesus said, “Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.”

Isaiah 66:3-4 portrays a people that outwardly appeared to be walking in Moses’ law, doing all the right things. Yet God saw through the outward and compared their apparently righteous acts to abominable disgusting things. The consequence of this condition is in verse 4: “I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them: because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.”

Remember the warning in Prov. 1:20-32. It is a terrible thing to not walk in light, to be abandoned to darkness and delusion. Delusion is a condition in which people are absolutely sure they are right — but they’re wrong!

If perchance someone reads this to whom it applies, you will not recognize yourself. You will resent or pity me and go on as you are. God has a remnant capable of turning their hearts and minds to Him, however. This is to them.

Another idea put forward is to point to the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22-23 — including love and joy — and then to note that it says, “... against such there is no law.”

This is taken to mean that if you see someone in the throes of some spiritual experience he seems to be enjoying, you’re not to interfere or to question it. If the manifestation seems strange we’re to realize that God’s ways are above ours, that He’s God and we’re not to question how He does things.

The devil delights in that sort of reasoning. It contains a measure of truth that makes it sound good, but it is truth misapplied and distorted. The Lord never intended that we drop our spiritual defenses in the face of every mysterious supernatural manifestation claiming and appearing to be of God. I do not object to “letting God be God,” as some say; I do strongly object, however, to letting the devil pretend to be God!

Closely related is the argument that points to the fruit of this experience. People are “happier, freer, loving each other, praising God, etc.” The reasoning follows: “Surely Satan wouldn’t cause people to praise God.”

This argument is powerfully convincing to those who look “on the outward appearance.” I Samuel 16:7.

As to the fruit, I believe that people are being seduced by the sweet-smelling fragrance of blossoms. I fear that the real fruit is yet to come.

TAKE AWAY THE NOISE

Imagine two people side by side. One is moving in God’s Spirit, genuinely worshipping God from the heart. The second is outwardly doing all that the first is, yet the inspiration behind it is not God at all, but a religious spirit, a demon.

You say, “Why would a devil praise God?” The answer is that a devil can appear to praise God as part of his strategy to deceive. Remember, Satan doesn’t appear as a devil of darkness but as an “angel of light” (II Cor. 11:14).

The question is not one of appearance. We are all too easily deceived by that, but how does God see a thing? What is its true nature? Would God recognize and receive the “praise” of the second person in our example above?

Amos 5:21-23 is another picture of apostate Israel outwardly serving God, walking in the law, singing and worshipping God. In verse 23, God says, “Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.”

The truth is that people can be very emotional and sincere in expressing their religious feelings and beliefs and be dead wrong. Most of the Pharisees went to their graves absolutely convinced that they had served the cause of God by instigating Christ’s crucifixion. They were very emotional about it and also about what they considered to be Stephen’s blasphemy (Acts 6:8-7:60). Until God intervened, Paul, then known as Saul, agreed with them (Acts 8:1).

Only when our hearts are genuinely turned to the Lord can we begin to see past the outward appearance and recognize the inspiration behind a thing. Just remember, however, that God’s Spirit is not given to equip us to walk alone but to fitly join us together (Eph. 4:16).

CUTENESS

One thing I’ve observed, not only in this movement, but also in many others is a real lightness, a casual flippancy, in the way they speak of God and the things of God. Judging from the “flavor” of many things I’ve heard said, a lot of folks think of God almost as their “great buddy in the sky,” someone “really neat” to know.

I've heard people use the word "awesome" concerning God in virtually the same way they might use the word to describe a slam dunk in a basketball game. "Awesome" without any true awe!

I've heard more than one person's strong experience spoken of as God "blasting" them (ha ha) as though God were playing games with people and they found it amusing.

If such expressions make you cringe, good! This religious generation has lost all fear of God. If they knew Him they could not speak of Him as they do. What is called "the fear of God" is a human sentimentality taught by the precept of men (Isaiah 29:13).

Neither Job nor Isaiah were what we would think of as "sinners," that is, they were among the more godly men of their respective generations. Yet hear their words upon a genuine personal encounter with the presence of God: "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6); "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." Isaiah 6:5.

Contrast their words with a T-shirt I saw recently on which Gabriel was portrayed as "the original Bugle Boy!" A lot of religious people today get a real kick out of seeing how clever and "cute" they can be about God. In reality devils are mocking God through the very people who profess to be His followers.

CAN YOU IMAGINE?

Imagine the following if you can. Jesus is sitting on a hillside teaching the people. Suddenly He is overcome by a fit of laughter and falls to the ground whooping uncontrollably. Peter quickly steps forward and says, "Not to worry, folks, He's just being blessed and filled with the Spirit. See how happy He is. You can be filled too: just let us pray for you. Some may laugh, some weep, and some may feel weak and fall down under the power. Don't worry, though, we'll have 'catchers' assigned to help you when you fall."

Pretty soon the hillside is littered with people laid out like cord wood, some giggling, some laughing out loud, most just immobile "under the power."

If you can find such a scene believable you might as well stop reading! Yet folks believe that this same Jesus is today responsible for similar scenes!

Another argument put forward is that these manifestations are not unique but that they were experienced in historical revivals. Rather than

causing me to believe in what's happening now, this causes me to question some things that happened back then!

I can say from personal observation that whenever God's Spirit is genuinely moving, the devil will try his best to plant his people and manifest a counterfeit to corrupt and confuse. Just because strange manifestations may have attended genuine revival doesn't guarantee that they are of God.

One thing this experience does is to seemingly offer people a spiritual shortcut. As we indicated earlier, folks are supposedly getting it all through an experience: no need for repentance, the Word, learning patience through tribulation, being disciples of those God anoints to minister the Word. Our flesh hates all of those things — the very things God has ordained to deliver and transform us — yet we love experiences! They feed our egos and deliver us from the need for faith.

One characteristic that afflicts great numbers of religious people is a spirit that aspires to be and do something they consider to be spiritually important. An experience such as this is very appealing to these people. It offers a shortcut to ministry. The only qualification necessary to be able to lay hands on people and have phenomenal things happen is to first partake of this experience.

Jesus encountered such people in John 6:28. They wanted to know what they had to do to “work the works of God.” Verse 29 shows us what God wants: “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” What God wants is for us to recognize and receive both His messenger and His message.

People with all kinds of motives flock to see phenomenal manifestations who would not stay five minutes where they had to walk by faith and be disciples under the living word that “is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Heb. 4:12.

The manifestation of people falling down or being caused to fall down “under the power” has become a great sign to many of this present generation. When this “sign” appears in the context of sincerity, sympathetic sentiment, emotional arousal and some actual miracles it becomes powerfully convincing to empty, needy souls not grounded in the living word of God.

Jesus never used his anointing to knock people down! He didn't need “catchers.” There were cases where people fell down (Mark 9:17-27, Luke 4:33-36), but in every instance it was caused by demons. Jesus' response was to cast out the demons and to lift the people up.

A QUESTION

I'd like to pose a question concerning the deception Jesus referred to in Matt. 24:24 to anyone who claims to believe the Bible. He said it would involve "great signs and wonders" and would all but deceive "the very elect." What do you think that deception will be like? How would you recognize it if you encountered it?

The emphasis was not on how **false** it would be but on how **deceptive**. If you were the devil and were trying to deceive Bible-believers, you certainly would be very careful to do and say things that looked and sounded genuine. You would be a careful student of everything that professing Christians found convincing and then you would employ that knowledge to get them to receive lies along with a skillful counterfeit of what they believed.

THE HOLY GHOST

Another thing that needs commenting on concerns the continuing unscriptural emphasis on the Holy Ghost. I recently heard a message on TV by one of the leading "sign and wonder" preachers. His message was such a distortion of the truth that I almost could hear someone saying, "Well, praise the Holy Ghost! — and, by the way, thank you, Jesus, for your minor role."

Every false doctrine allows Satan to divide, confuse, and bring people into spiritual bondage. Truth, in every area of doctrine, brings understanding, faith, rest and deliverance. I believe that the Remnant Church will experience a great measure of deliverance and freedom as she begins to understand the truth concerning our great sovereign God and the Son He brought forth to be Creator and Lord of all as well as Savior and Elder Brother to the redeemed of all ages!

THE COMING OF CHRIST

One of the greatest areas of doctrinal deception continues to concern the coming of Christ. Even more so than twenty-five years ago the airwaves are filled with radio and TV preachers preaching some form of those teachings popularized by the footnotes in the Scofield Bible. I am persuaded that the Scofield Bible has long been one of Satan's greatest tools to pervert the understanding of professing Christians — including many who are genuinely part of God's remnant.

Let's play a game of "what if" for a moment. "What if" I were to tell you of a new understanding of the coming of Christ that is coming forth even as we speak? "What if" I were to tell you that the first appearance of this new understanding occurred about 40 years ago in the unpublished writings of a Spanish Jesuit Priest? "What if" I told you that his ideas, recently translated

into English, are now being enlarged upon in an unusual spiritual visitation in which people are supernaturally compelled to utter unpremeditated prophesyings, sometimes for as long as two hours at a time? “What if” I told you that these prophesyings, while warning of the imminent return of Christ, also are serving to establish many brand new doctrinal interpretations of the scriptures concerning the end of the age?

What do you suppose would be the reaction of today’s dispensational teachers were I to approach them with this information? Would they leap for joy? Would they rush to embrace these new ideas, believing that God was intervening to correct their theology?

You know as well as I do that these teachers would “lead the parade” in denouncing any new ideas that would arise in such a manner, especially if these ideas differed from their own, yet what I have described in our little game of “what if” would have been entirely accurate had I been writing in the year 1831! The Spanish Jesuit Priest was named Lacunza. The strange spiritual visitation occurred in the congregation of a minister named Edward Irving in England, who, coincidentally, was the translator of Lacunza’s manuscript.

The totally novel doctrine, never before suggested in the history of the church, was the two-stage theory of the second coming of Christ, the idea that Christ would first “rapture” believers out of the world, pour out judgments **for a period of time**, and then return for a “second” second coming to reign.

From this dubious beginning has evolved the popular dispensational teachings of today! Satan understands the power of tradition. He has spent two centuries establishing this system of falsehood and deception so that today’s generation would embrace it without question as time-honored truth.

The scheme of having it built into the footnotes of a popular edition of the Bible has proved a stroke of genius. It is much easier for people, preachers included, to consult these ready-made “answers” than it is to seek God and wait upon Him for true revelation. Take that fact and add several generations and it is easy to see how these ideas have become so enmeshed in people’s minds. When they read the Bible, they read it with “dispensational glasses.”

On top of this there have been a whole range of political developments, especially concerning Israel, that have strengthened the dispensational theories in people’s minds. In the light of the word, especially the New Testament, are these developments a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy or are they elaborate lying signs? If you are reading this apart from

the book, Lying Signs and Wonders, I hope you will get the book, read it with an honest heart and seek God about what you read.

There is apparently even some talk about plans to build a temple in Jerusalem. **If** this happens it could very well prove to be one of the greatest lying signs of all. In the light of the word, we can safely say that Christ will never reign there and that God will never sanction a return to bloody animal sacrifices for sin. That people can believe such stuff and claim to believe the word which says that Christ “offered one sacrifice forever,” (Heb. 10:12) is a pretty clear indication of the power of deception.

THE VOICE OF THE SON OF GOD

All of this preoccupation with world events and the supposed fulfillment of scripture has served to divert the attention of multitudes from the voice of the Son of God who is gathering His Remnant Church and teaching her in preparation for His return and the end of this present world.

A little over a year ago there was a special stirring in our midst as the Lord re-emphasized the nearness of Christ’s coming and the fiery end of the world. Also emphasized was the fact that we are in the tribulation **now** and religious tradition is blinding men to what is happening even as it did at Jesus’ first coming. Incidentally, this stirring began the day **before** the Los Angeles-Northridge earthquake.

I found it very significant that just at the time this was occurring in our midst, at least two prominent TV preachers went **out of their way** to pause and say, “One thing we know for certain: the world is **not** about to end!” The devil was very aware of the emphasis of God’s Spirit and made a special effort to counter His message. Of course the preachers said what they did because of their belief in a coming millennial reign of Christ.

These subjects have been well covered in earlier chapters, yet a few comments are in order.

Something rises up in me when I hear someone speak of how wonderful it will be when Christ finally returns to set up his kingdom and reign. Through this false doctrine Satan has not only held out a false hope of salvation after Christ’s coming but has subtly implied that Christ is **not** reigning now. He is supposedly in heaven somewhere biding His time, waiting for the opportunity to **begin** His reign.

I have news for you: **Christ’s reign is not about to begin; it is about to end.** Before He went to the cross He said, “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” John 12:31.

His reign began at the cross where He broke the power the devil had had over man through sin. It has continued nearly 2000 years as He has faithfully gathered an elect remnant from every nation through His word.

The climax of His reign will occur at earth's darkest hour. When the last of the elect is brought in and the work He has purposed to accomplish in this earth is complete, He will return to gather His elect to Himself, to destroy all else by fire, to preside over the final judgment and to hand over the Kingdom to His Father. Rom. 9:28, Matt. 24:29-31, II Thess. 1:7-10, II Peter 3:10-12, John 5:22, I Cor. 15:24.

Believers don't need to hear a fairy tale of some future reign. They need to know the simple truth that **Christ is reigning now!** He is actively in charge, carrying out His Father's will to prepare His brethren for the world to come.

What Lucifer does, he does by permission. He and his demon host have been loosed upon unbelieving man as never before in our day. This is simply a further sign of the end of this present age when, as it was in the days of Noah, God's Spirit will not always strive with man. Matt. 24:37. Gen. 6:3. Satan knows his time is short. Rev. 12:12.

Even as Satan's stranglehold upon lost mankind deepens, the light of God's truth grows brighter for the Remnant Church. She, with Christ's presence and leadership, is the ark of safety for God's people in the final flood of darkness.

At the very darkest hour, when it will appear that Satan has won, his kingdom will be utterly crushed by the sudden return of our Lord in power and great glory! II Thess. 2:8.

Are you ready?

OTHER BOOKS

The Sure Foundation, by C. Parker Thomas

A collection of four articles published in the early 1980's on the important subject of the foundation believers have in Christ. Suggested Price - \$3.00.

Delivered From Demons, by C. Parker Thomas

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