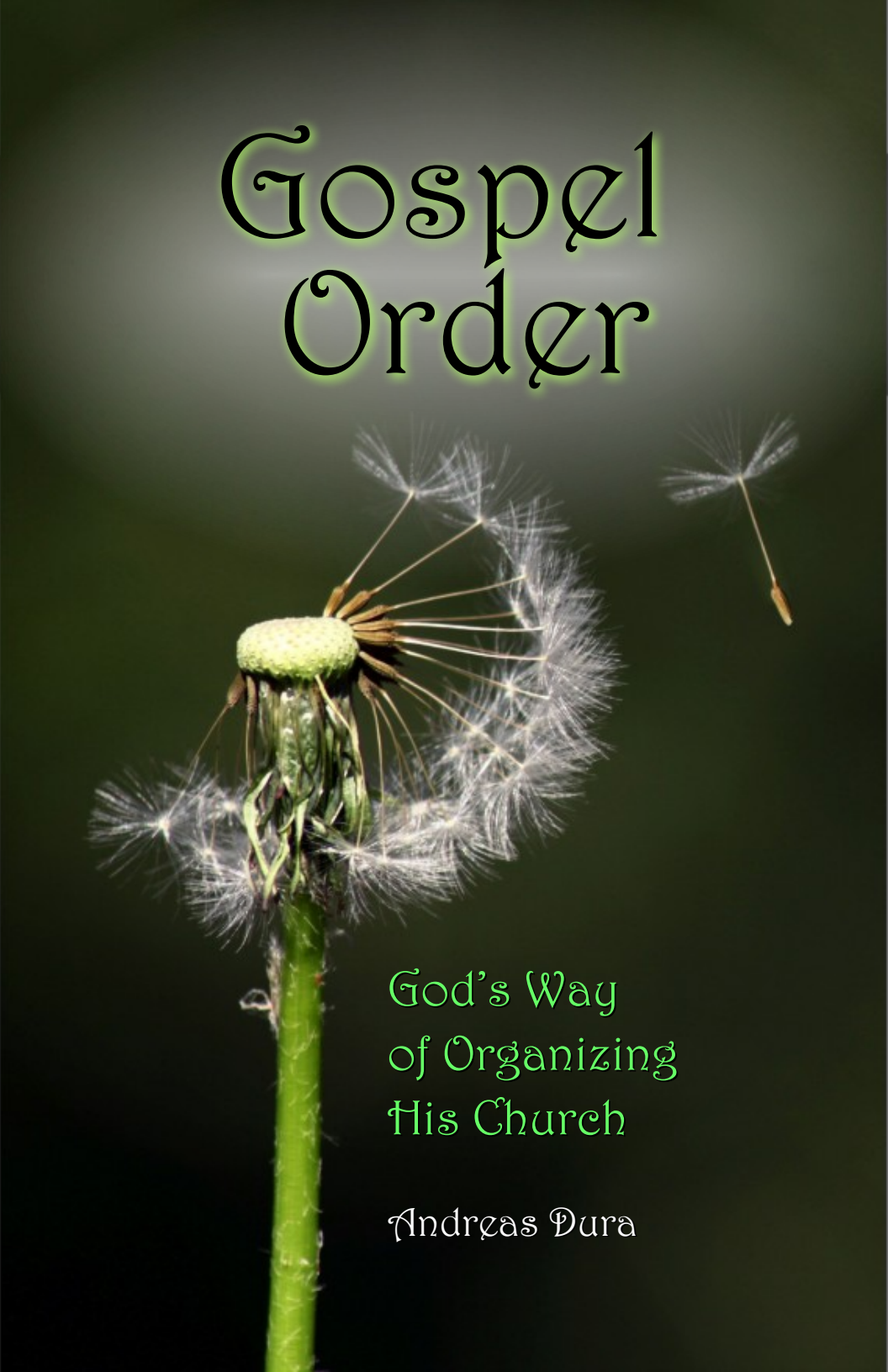
Gospel Order



God's Way of Organizing His Church

Andreas Dura

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Gospel Order

1989

1. Gospel Order Brings Unity

FOR three years now, the theme of our studies has been *Pray for the Latter Rain*. In 1986 the message was first heard that now is the time of the latter rain.

Zechariah 10
[1] Ask of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.

We applied this text to our situation. Because we had already learned about God's character,[1] Sabbath rest,[2] and many more important preparatory themes, we expected that if we now prayed earnestly for the latter rain power to proclaim these messages, the Lord would grant us this blessing.

But our expectation of seeing this mighty blessing so soon was disappointed. We then saw that there was yet more to learn. We had to learn more about the Science of Prayer—that we do not pray in order to change God, but we pray in order to change ourselves. Now we are going to study another message which shows us why the latter rain could not have come earlier.

A natural conclusion is that the conditions to be met for receiving the early rain are the same for the latter rain. So, let us look more closely at the condition of the church in the time of the early rain.

Acts 2
[1] When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
[2] And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
[3] And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

---

[1] See the book, *Behold Your God*.
[2] See the book, *God's Sabbath Rest*.

[4] And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Two Conditions for the Latter Rain

This is the record of how the disciples received the early rain, the partial fulfillment of *Joel* 2. There are two conditions mentioned in this record. First,

Acts 2

[1] ...the day of Pentecost was fully come.

The early rain came at the time of the feast of Pentecost, in fulfillment of the Old Testament type. What parallel to this do we have today? We are not in the day of Pentecost because that is past, but we can say that the day of the latter rain has come, for the Lord has told us this.

Zechariah 10

[1] Ask of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.

The time in this reference—that of the latter rain—is what caught our attention. We were specifically told by the Lord, that in the same way that the time of Pentecost had come to the apostles, the time of the latter rain has now come to us. But if it were only a matter of time, we would already have the latter rain. There is another condition.

Acts 2

[1] ...they were all with one accord in one place.

Here is another condition to be met—unity. Before the Lord can bless the church with the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we must come into unity of faith.

The Desire of Ages, p. 296:

The apostles differed widely in habits and disposition. There were the publican, Levi-Matthew, and the fiery zealot Simon, the uncompromising hater of the authority of Rome; the generous,

impulsive Peter, and the mean-spirited Judas; Thomas, true hearted, yet timid and fearful, Philip, slow of heart, and inclined to doubt, and the ambitious, outspoken sons of Zebedee, with their brethren. These were brought together, with their different faults, all with inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil; but in and through Christ they were to dwell in the family of God, learning to become one in faith, in doctrine, in spirit.

They would have their tests, their grievances, their differences of opinion; but while Christ was abiding in the heart, there could be no dissension. His love would lead to love for one another; the lessons of the Master would lead to the harmonizing of all differences, bringing the disciples into unity, till they would be of one mind and one judgment. Christ is the great center, and they would approach one another just in proportion as they approached the center.

Here we are told how Christ endeavored to make the disciples one. But why did He strive to bring them in unity?

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 20:

In these first disciples was presented marked diversity. They were to be the world's teachers, and they represented widely varied types of character. In order successfully to carry forward the work to which they had been called, these men, differing in natural characteristics and in habits of life, needed to come into unity of feeling, thought, and action.

This is the reason they needed to become one:

In order successfully to carry forward the work to which they had been called.

What is the work to which they, and we, have been called? To bring the gospel to all the world, as Jesus commanded in *Matthew* 24. Concerning this work we read,

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 20-21:

In order to carry forward this work, these men, needed to become one in feeling, thought, and action. This unity it was Christ's object to secure. To this end He sought to bring them

into unity with himself. The burden of His labor for them is expressed in His prayer to His Father,

> **John 17**
> [21] That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us;
> [23] That the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them, as You have loved me.

> His constant prayer for them was that they might be sanctified through the truth; and He prayed with assurance, knowing that an Almighty decree had been given before the world was made. He knew that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached to all nations for a witness; He knew that truth armed with the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, would conquer in the battle with evil, and that the bloodstained banner would one day wave triumphantly over His followers.

But none of this could be accomplished without the disciples becoming one in "feeling, thought, and action."

There is a tendency, at least in the world, to think that we do not need to become one in feeling, thought and action in order to be one. It is common to speak of "unity in diversity" in which everybody goes his own way, has his own ideas and does his own thinking. Yet, in spite of this, we think that we can work together, stay together and do the same things together.

But in the work of God, this is impossible. In order to successfully carry forward His work, we need to be one in "feeling, thought, and action."

One in Feeling, Thought and Action

What does it mean to be one in feeling? Feeling refers to the emotions. Ardor is an example of feeling. When we have the same feeling that Christ had about God's work, and the same desire to build it up, then we have unity of feeling.

John the Baptist did not fully understand some things about the nature of Christ's kingdom, and yet he did the right thing because his ardor,—his feelings,—were on the right side. People tend to go

in different directions in certain situations, unless they have a strict code by which they must abide. But when there is unity of feeling, people will go in the same direction even without a strict code.

However, unity in feeling is not enough, for we cannot depend on our feelings. There must also be unity in thought. What does that mean? It means thinking the same things, believing the same things, having the same doctrines. It also means that because we are really one in the message of present truth we evaluate things in the same way. This will affect the relationship of our faith to our actions, enabling us to cooperate harmoniously with one another. One is not going in one direction, while another is going in a different direction. There will be harmony of movement, unity of action.

These three elements belong together, and cannot be separated. We must be one in feeling, thought, and action. We should ask ourselves honestly:

> "Have we come to this point yet? Have we come to unity of feeling, thought, and action?"

As it was with the disciples, so it must be with us in order to successfully carry forward the work.

> **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 20-21:**
> In order successfully to carry forward the work to which they had been called, these men, differing in natural characteristics and in habits of life, needed to come into unity of feeling, thought and action. This unity it was Christ's object to secure.

We cannot be satisfied until we reach this aim.

The world has a different standard, in which, especially at the present time, we can also find unity. The borders have fallen, East and West are coming together, and there seems to be a tremendous feeling of unity prevailing with the people. Problems like these did not exist here in Australia, but in Europe, especially

during the time of the "cold war," there really was a strict separation between the peoples of the East and those of the West.

Now there is a tremendous feeling of unity, but not the kind of unity that Christ prayed for in *John* 17. It would be good for us to study *John* 17 again and again, because this chapter is Christ's prayer for His church, and we must do all that lies within our power to fulfill this prayer. We must not be satisfied unless we achieve this aim. This is essential for the receiving of the latter rain.

Approaching the Center

What is the difference between the unity we find in the world, and the unity that Christ prayed for? Imagine that we have two points: one here, and one there, with quite a distance between. When these points come nearer to the center, the distance gets smaller, doesn't it? When they come still nearer the distance decreases until they meet in the center. When that happens, the two points are then one. This is what we have read in the following two statements:

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 296:**
>
> His [Christ's] love would lead to love for one another; the lessons of the Master would lead to the harmonizing of all differences, bringing the disciples into unity, till they would be of one mind and one judgment. Christ is the great center, and they would approach one another just in proportion as they approached the center.

In other words, they would come nearer to each other as they came nearer to the center.

> **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 20:**
>
> In order successfully to carry forward the work to which they had been called, these men, differing in natural characteristics and in habits of life, needed to come into unity of feeling, thought, and action. This unity it was Christ's object to secure. To this end He sought to bring them into unity with himself.

This is the essential difference: in order to achieve unity among the disciples, He endeavored to bring them into unity with himself.

When people try to come into unity, they are far apart from each other and they make a conscious effort to try and come together. But the unity that is achieved in this way is not a unity based upon likeness of feeling, thought and action. It is a unity based on the points upon which they agree.

For example, the past rulers of the communist world might ally themselves with the West against a common enemy. In fighting they would come together and find themselves wonderfully unified, but this unity would last only until the next problem came, or perhaps not even that long if they began to fight for supremacy over each other.

There are many situations in which we need to become one. Marriage is a very significant example. There are situations when, in order to work together, we need to become one. An employer of a firm will try to get his employees to become one, at least in action, so that they can work together. How does he do this? Usually it is by force and by promise: promise of reward, and threat of disciplinary measures or firing. Then his employees will work together because they must work together.

But this is the wrong foundation for the unity which the church must have. It is a foundation upon which it is impossible to achieve unity of feeling, thought and action. These three things must come together completely, and we cannot be satisfied with unity that is anything less than this.

Unity will not mean that we all have the same tastes. We are all created differently, and individual differences in taste, preferences of color, and these sorts of things will remain. We need not concern ourselves with these because they do not present real hindrances to true unity. What we must concern ourselves with, rather, are character traits that would hinder unity.

Christ in Us

The principle of becoming unified in Christ must be understood in all aspects. In order to become one, we must become one in Christ. To be one in Christ, Christ must be in us—otherwise we cannot be in Christ.

> **Ephesians 2**
> [11] Wherefore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;
> [12] That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,...

In German the word *without* means *outside*, and in English the same meaning is implied. In other words, you former Gentiles have been outside. You were without Christ, or outside of Christ.

> [12] ...having no hope, and without God in the world:
> [13] But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Christ dwelling in us is the first condition for really being one.

> **John 14**
> [20] At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

> **John 17**
> [23] I in them, and You in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them, as You have loved me.

Christ must be in us, that we may be made perfect in one, that we may be in unity. He must be dwelling in our hearts. Each person goes through a struggle before they have this assurance. Some reach this assurance sooner than others, but for some it is a real struggle to know for certain that Christ is dwelling in them. Here we cannot be satisfied with a superficial work. It is not enough to go a few steps with a dedicated spirit and then assume

that we are born again. This is not the way in which Christ comes into our hearts.

We need true repentance for our sins, leading to an eradication of our sinful nature, after which we receive the nature of Christ. This is the very first step, and it would be good if every one of us could testify to having made a true covenant with God, with the assurance of being born again.

Growing into Unity

When we have the spirit of Christ, it is impossible to be very different from each other. The first step towards unity has now been taken, but at the same time we must not deceive ourselves by thinking that this is all that is necessary.

The example of the disciples shows that there is more to it than making a good beginning by having Christ in us, the hope of Glory. Christ was dwelling in His disciples and yet they were not fully one before Pentecost. He had to draw them closer to himself.

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 296:**
> These apostles differed widely in habits and disposition . . . . These were brought together, with their different faults, all with inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil; but in and through Christ they were to dwell in the family of God, learning to become one in faith, in doctrine, in spirit.

This experience we need to grow into, and Gospel Order is God's means at the present time to achieve this growth toward unity of faith. It is impossible to successfully do God's work unless this unity is achieved.

> **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 87:**
> The early church was made up of many classes of people, of various nationalities.

What do we usually find between peoples of varied nationalities? We find different customs and, therefore, tension. So, not surprisingly, it also says here that between some of these people,

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 87:

...there had long existed distrust and even antagonism.

However, in the next paragraph it goes on to say,

> The hearts of those who had been converted under the labors of the apostles, were softened and united by Christian love. Despite former prejudices, all were in harmony with one another.

We must not misunderstand this statement. Some people think that to be united in Christian love means that we get along well with others because in Christ's strength we are able to bear their differences. But this unity means more than just patient toleration. It means being really unified on the levels of feeling, thought and action—all three.

> Despite former prejudices, all were in harmony with one another.

They were not just tolerant of each other, but they were in harmony with one another.

> Satan knew that so long as this union continued to exist, he would be powerless to check the progress of gospel truth; and he sought to take advantage of former habits of thought, in the hope that thereby he might be able to introduce into the church elements of disunion.

Satan sought to attack their thoughts—the same thing he is doing to us today. He is trying to take advantage of our former habits of thought, and thereby try to hinder the gospel work. However, this will end as we become transformed by God's grace and learn to change our current of thought.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 90:

To the early church had been entrusted a constantly enlarging work—that of establishing centers of light and blessing wherever there were honest souls willing to give themselves to the service of Christ. The proclamation of the gospel was to be world-wide in its extent, and the messengers of the cross could not hope to fulfill their important mission unless they should remain united

in the bonds of Christian unity, and thus reveal to the world that they were one with Christ in God. Had not their divine Leader prayed to the Father,

John 17

[11] Keep through your own name those whom You have given me, that they may be one, as we are.

And had He not declared of His disciples,

[14] The world has hated them, because they are not of the world.

Had He not pleaded with the Father that they might be...

[23] ...made perfect in one,

[21] That the world may believe that You have sent me.

Their spiritual life and power was dependent on a close connection with the One by whom they had been commissioned to preach the gospel.

Jesus prayed,

John 17

[23] ...that they might be made perfect in one.

For what reason did He ask this? So...

[21] ...that the world may believe that You have sent me.

The world is waiting to see this witness in God's church; when it is given, they will have the testimony necessary to impress them with the truth and bring them to a true conversion.

Consider the experience of the early disciples again. Before they selected the seven deacons, there was contention among them, showing a lack of unity. Habits of thought must be constantly reformed in order to comply with present truth; but contention arose because Satan took advantage of their former habits of thought.

Gospel Order Brings Unity

Gospel Order is the special area where former habits of thought need to be reformed at the present time. Because we have not practiced Gospel Order in the past, there has been no true unity of faith.

Early Writings, p. 97:

The Lord has shown that Gospel Order has been too much feared and neglected. Formality should be shunned; but, in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in Heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon the earth, and after His departure order was strictly observed among His apostles.

And now in these last days, while God is bringing His children into the unity of the faith, there is more real need of order than ever before; for, as God unites His children, Satan and his evil angels are very busy to prevent this unity and to destroy it. Therefore men are hurried into the field who lack wisdom and judgment,...

What does it say that God is doing at the present time?

[He] is bringing His children into the unity of the faith...

And because of this,

...there is more real need of order than ever before.

Note that the "order" spoken of here is Gospel Order. This reveals the important connection between "unity of faith" and Gospel Order. Why is there more need of Gospel Order now than ever before? Because through it, God is bringing His people into the unity of the faith, which means unity in feeling, thought, and action.

Unity is absolutely essential in order to carry the work forward successfully, and this unity must reach a level much higher than a mere toleration of each other. The kind of unity which we find in the world is not enough—by far, not enough, for God's people to receive the latter rain.

This order, this unity, is something for which we need to strive. In *John* 17, Jesus prayed that His disciples be made one, even as He in the Father is one. This prayer is not self-fulfilling. Our cooperation is essential. If we are satisfied with a standard of unity

in which we just tolerate each other, then we will never fulfill the prayer of Jesus, and we will never receive the latter rain.

We are being called upon now to understand why this lack of unity exists. It exists because of our lack of understanding of true Gospel Order. There are two forces in action at this present time, just as there were at the time of the disciples.

On the one hand there are the forces of God, which are trying to bring us into the unity of faith. As we have seen, this means much more than just tolerance. It means real unity of feeling, thought and action; unity in doctrine, and in faith. On the other hand, we have the forces of Satan, which are trying to take advantage of former habits of thought, in order to cause disunity among God's children.

These two forces are fighting for supremacy among God's people at the present time. Do we want to permit Satan to continue to work disunity among us as he has in the past? Or, do we want to permit God to bring us into the perfect unity of the faith?

How does God want to bring us into the perfect unity of the faith? What is His way? It is, at the present time, Gospel Order. That is the way He has chosen and provided that we truly understand and accept this message, it will bring unity of faith.

2. A Deeper Repentance

TO WHAT EXTENT must Gospel Order become a part of us in order to bring us to the unity of faith? We can begin to get an idea of the answer to this question by considering the example of the apostle Paul.

Conversion at Damascus

At the gates of Damascus, he had a very dramatic experience and during his three days of blindness, received his rebirth. In meditating upon his past life, he saw that he had been persecuting Christ and this brought him to deep repentance. Then God sent Ananias to him in Damascus, bringing him the gospel and his eyesight. Paul learned a lot about the gospel within a tremendously short time.

> **Signs of the Times, July 20, 1904:**
> From a zealous persecutor of the followers of Christ, Paul became one of the Saviour's most effective and devoted workers. At the gate of Damascus, the vision of the Crucified One changed the whole current of his life. The *days* of darkness spent in solitude at Damascus were as *years* in his experience. The Old Testament scriptures stored in his memory were his study, and Christ his teacher.

He learned in a few days what it takes us years to learn. You might think that Paul was now a truly converted Christian. Was he truly converted? Did he have "Christ in him the hope of glory"?



A Sure Work of Repentance

Let us open to the chapter, "Days of Preparation." There it says that the opposition grew so fierce that Paul was not allowed to continue his labors in Damascus, so he went to the wilderness in Arabia where he found a safe retreat.

What did he do there?

> **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 125:**
> Here, in the solitude of the desert, Paul had ample opportunity for quiet study and meditation. He calmly reviewed his past experience and made sure work of repentance. He sought God with all his heart, resting not until he knew for a certainty that his repentance was accepted and his sin pardoned.

So was I wrong when I told you that he was converted at Damascus? We know that repentance comes before the rebirth experience. Therefore, we tend to think that when we receive this experience, we have no further need to repent of our past life. But we do not find this to be the case in the example of Paul. It says,

> **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 125:**
> Here, in the solitude of the desert, Paul had ample opportunity for quiet study and meditation. He calmly reviewed his past experience and made sure work of repentance.

We must first establish that Paul had actually experienced his rebirth while he was still in Damascus. The evidence we have is that he was baptized by Ananias at the command of the Lord. This would not have happened if he had not been born again, because baptism is a symbol of the rebirth. Therefore, he was definitely born again. Still, here it says,

> He calmly reviewed his past experience and made sure work of repentance.

What "past experience" is being spoken of here? It is his experience before he came to Damascus, for further on it says,

> He emptied his soul of the prejudices and traditions that had hitherto shaped his life, and received instruction from the Source of truth.

Do these words mean that Paul was doubting whether he had the forgiveness of Jesus for the past? No, Paul was not a doubter; but the work of repentance needed to continue, and these words indicate the direction which the work of repentance was taking

as it continued. In like manner, we also need the work to continue in us at the present time.

Paul and the Judaising Teachers

This is one difference between the apostle Paul and the other Pharisees who also became Christians. At the time of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early rain, many Jews converted to the Christian faith. Among these were also spiritual leaders, which today we would call "ministers." These ministers truly became dedicated to the Christian cause, and they loved Jesus. As Paul did, they accepted sacrifice.

Yet, there was a difference between Paul and these converts. These former Pharisees were later called the "Judaising teachers" in the church. They taught, for example, that one had to be circumcised in order to be saved. In *Acts* 15:1 we read that they came to Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas were preaching, and told the believers that unless they were circumcised according to the custom of Moses, they could not be saved.

Paul was never found teaching such a thing. Why not? Because Paul had not rested until he was sure that his repentance had been accepted and that his sin had been pardoned. As he reviewed his experience, he questioned all his past life, examining it in the light of present truth, and in the light of Christ. He threw everything out that was not in agreement with the present truth.

That was quite a work, because he stayed in Arabia for three years; and for those three years this is the work he did. During this time he did not do much missionary work in the sense of preaching to other people—at least not that we are told. So, in these three years he concentrated mostly on reviewing his past life and on making sure work of repentance.

Paul was a man of great intelligence, and undoubtedly could grasp things much more quickly than we can. If this time of contemplation was necessary for a person with such intelligence as Paul, then how much more necessary it is for us to do the same

work in our lives. To spend over three years in a course of concentrated repentance—that meant something. He did not rest until he knew for certain that he was really free from his past prejudices, as we read in this sentence:

> **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 125:**
> He emptied his soul of the prejudices and traditions that had hitherto shaped his life.

Our attitude of Gospel Disorder has also shaped our lives in the past. Because of this it is necessary for God to teach us Gospel Order, and we must not expect to learn it quickly. It will take longer than one day, or even one week, but we should not delay to make a good beginning.

We must expect that former prejudices and traditions, which have shaped our lives as they did the life of Paul, must be discovered and gotten rid of. To empty our souls of these things is hard work, and it will be helpful for us to meditate for a moment about the extent to which Gospel Order must become a part of us.

In order to do this, we must first really understand what Gospel Order is; then, we can benefit from reading some texts about it.

3. What Is Gospel Order?

WHAT is Gospel Order? It is God's way of building His kingdom; or, we could say that it is how God acts.

What explains to us how God acts? God's character does, for that is the basis for His actions. God's character is expressed in His word, and where in His word can His character be clearly seen? It can be seen most clearly in the life of Christ.

But it can also be seen in the Old Testament, and in the Law. In fact, we are told that the Law is an expression of God's character, so the Law explains God's dealings to us since He deals, or acts, according to His character. The Law is a description of the way in which God acts to build His kingdom. The Law shows us Gospel Order. Gospel order and the Law are the same thing.

Interestingly, the Cross of Calvary is also the expression of God's character, and for this reason, Gospel Order, the Law, and the Cross are all one and the same thing.

Our Meditation

Let us read some texts that show how Gospel Order must become deeply planted in us, for we need to get a very clear idea of this.

Psalm 119

97 Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.

These are the actual words in this *Psalm*, but since the Law and Gospel Order are the same thing, it could just as easily have read,

> "Oh! How I love your Gospel Order, it is my meditation all the day."

Anyone can say, "I love the law." Or, "I love the Lord." Or, "I love Jesus." Some people even put stickers on their cars that say this, but what does it really mean? The second part of this verse clarifies:

97 ...It is my meditation all the day.

It is the main point of my thought. The things that interest me most are the things that I think about most. And, likewise, the things that I think about most are the things that interest me the most. If cars are my great hobby, then I will be thinking about cars all the day long. If computers are my great hobby, I will think about computers all the day long. If problems are my hobby, I will think about problems all the day long, and so forth.

But David says here that Gospel Order was such a part of him that this was his theme all the day long. Every free minute he spent thinking about Gospel Order. Furthermore, he thought about Gospel Order even during his work, for he says it was his meditation "all the day long." Gospel Order had become a continual part of his thinking—an actual part of him, and we must experience nothing less.

Only when Gospel Order is our meditation all the day long will we truly become one. Be very honest and ask yourself this question:

> "Is Gospel Order my meditation all the day long?"

If the answer is "no," then what shall we do about it? Shall we say,

> "Okay, it is not my meditation all the day long, but there is nothing I can do about it."

And then leave it at that? No! That must not be our attitude. If that had been the attitude of Paul he would never have become the servant of God that he was. He would have been like all the other converted Pharisees—a Judaising teacher who still clung to former prejudices and habits of thought. But this, Paul was not. Rather, he was a person who worked very hard and diligently so that the gospel came to be his meditation all the day long, and, likewise, so must we. This deep and profound love of Gospel Order is also expressed in this statement:

The Desire of Ages, p. 668:

> All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.

The expression used here is "from the heart." This means that the obedience will come from the inward man. There will be no reluctance or fear in doing His service, but it will bring the highest delight. His will, His order, will be the language of our own hearts. That is my desire.

Think again of those things that are of such interest to so many people, like cars or computers, etc. Any pursuit that attracts our attention we do not find difficult to delight in. It is natural to delight in these things, but here it says,

> The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service.

In the same natural way, our lives will become lives of continual obedience.

> Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.

An appreciation of the character of Christ is not just an appreciation of the blessing of forgiveness for my past sins, or any other blessing, although it includes this. It is also an appreciation of the relationship that He came down to enable me to be a part of. He came to connect me to my heavenly Father through himself.

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 131:

Desire not merely His blessing, but himself....God is seeking you, and the very desire you feel to come to Him is but the drawing of His Spirit. Yield to that drawing. Christ is pleading the cause of the tempted, the erring, and the faithless. He is seeking to lift them into companionship with himself.

To appreciate something means that we recognize the value of that thing and try to make good use of it. We naturally experience feelings of appreciation more for things which we have very seldom because we more readily see the value of them. It is this deep appreciation that we should have for Christ and the privilege we have of being in companionship with Him. The only difference is that His companionship is something we can have all day, every day, and not just now and then, which makes it all the more valuable.

Our Science

Another text showing us how deeply Gospel Order must come into our hearts talks about the cross of Calvary.

The Desire of Ages, p. 19:

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,—God's thought made audible. In His prayer for His disciples He says,

John 17

[26] I have declared unto them your name,—

Exodus 34

[6] ...merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,—

John 17

[26] ...that the love wherewith You have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look,"[3] and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the un-

[3] *1 Peter* 1:12.

> fallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which "seeks not her own"[4] has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwells in the light which no man can approach unto.

Here we are told something about what interests the angels, the unfallen worlds, and the redeemed. What will be their great joy, their great interest, their great meditation all the day long? It will be the cross, and since the principle of the cross is Gospel Order, it is also correct to say that their great interest will be Gospel Order. We will see this in more detail as we go on in our study, but here it says, the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross—Gospel Order—their science and their song.

What does it mean when it says it will be their "science"? A science describes the laws governing some area of nature. Of necessity, it involves thinking and logic for it is a study of the principles found operating in these different areas. But, primarily, it means gathering a body of knowledge relating to these principles, and from this knowledge formulating procedures in order to apply these principles in an intelligent manner.

For example, when a professor says that his science is biology, then you know that he understands the laws of biology and he knows how to apply them; or he should. So, when we apply the term "science" to the cross as it relates to the angels, the unfallen beings, and the redeemed, it means:

- Principles that they come to know, appreciate, and are able to apply.
- Having a knowledge of the principles of God and His self-sacrificing love, and rejecting the ways of Satan and of self-serving.

[4] *1 Corinthians* 13:5.

- Hating these ways with all their hearts, and likewise, loving the ways of God with all their hearts.

That is science, and the cross will be their science—their theme of study, understanding and practice—throughout eternity.

Our Song

The cross is also their song. What does this mean? It means that they rejoice in it. When we are happy we often hum a hymn, don't we? When they are especially moved, composers can compose really wonderful songs.

Think, for example, of Handel and how he composed the Messiah. He was in deep discouragement when he received the text for this oratorio from a friend who requested that he compose the music for it. His circumstances were such at the time that there was less and less interest being manifested in his work. Having recovered successfully from a serious stroke a few years before, he had been wondering why God would "resurrect" him from this near death and then allow his career to seemingly die.

In his discouragement, the thought of composing a biblical piece of music had little appeal to him. But as he read through the text, which, as you know, is composed of many of the well-known passages of scripture which describe the character and work of the Messiah, the word of the Lord came to him in a personal way and took on a meaning for him that it had never had before. He caught a vision of the tenderness and mercy of Jesus and with this new perspective, he began to write.

He was so totally consumed by his work that his servant seriously wondered if he was losing his mind. He slept barely at all, and sandwiches brought to him were left untouched, or were sometimes unconsciously crumpled to crumbs in his hand as he continued to compose at a fast and furious pace. He finished the entire score in twenty four days, almost without eating or sleeping. That's inspiration, and consequently it is a very mighty work of music.

In like manner, the Israelites were highly inspired by their mighty deliverance when they came from the Red Sea, and it was natural that the first thing they did afterward was to compose and sing a song.

When we have something as our song, it means that something is so filling our hearts that it just has to flow out of our mouths in expression. A song expresses fullness of heart, and to have the cross—Gospel Order—as our song means that our hearts will be full of thanksgiving and praise for this.

Of the Highest Value

Gospel Order must be so much a part of us that it is our meditation all day long, and our constant practice, and the fullness in our hearts that inspires our songs. Let us envision this deep implantation of Gospel Order for ourselves and not be satisfied with achieving anything less than this.

Satan is very busy today, and is working very hard to prevent the unity of faith that will enable us to become one and to build God's kingdom exactly as God wants it. Knowing that the enemy is so diligent, we cannot rest for a moment, but we must continue striving to achieve this deep unity with Gospel Order. In order to receive Gospel Order so deeply into our hearts, the psalmist says:

> **Psalm 119**
> [33] Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.
> [34] Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law.

Our new understanding will now allow us to read the words "Gospel Order" in place of the word "law," so let us do this:

> [33] Teach me, O Lord, the way of your Gospel Order, and I shall keep it to the end.
> [34] Give me understanding, and I shall keep your Gospel Order; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart.
> [35] Make me to go in the path of your Gospel Order; for therein do I delight.

[36] Incline my heart unto your Gospel Order, and not to covetousness.
[37] Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in your way, [which is Gospel Order, the way of God's kingdom building,]
[40] Behold, I have longed after your Gospel Order: quicken me in your Gospel Order.

In each place where it says righteousness or precepts we can fill in the words "Gospel Order" for they are different words which all mean the same thing. Verse 37 says,

Psalm 119 [ESV]
[37] Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things.

That is what we really need. When we are revived in Gospel Order and our eyes are turned away from worthless things, then Gospel Order will have become so much a part of our lives that all the other things will seem worthless in comparison with it. This is the way it must be.

How perishable and how short-sighted men are! There are too many things in this world which have too much value in our sight, and one day we will see how valueless these things are. But even now we can begin to understand how to rightly evaluate things by becoming really established in true Gospel Order.

The message that God is sending us at the present time helps us to appreciate and understand the other messages better, and it will deepen our stand in all other truth that we have learned. So let us pray for God to turn our eyes away from worthless things, and to revive us in His ways. That is our great need.

4. Christ: The Rock

LET us now consider the foundation of Gospel Order. Jesus is the best example to start with because He lived out God's ways perfectly as a man among men. All the verses from the *Psalms* that we have read were truly prayed by Him. He was a person in whose heart Gospel Order was very firmly implanted. So firmly, in fact, that He never deviated from its principles and therefore, His life was totally successful. He did not experience one defeat by the enemy.

Christ taught Gospel Order to His disciples and so the gospels are full of His teaching on Gospel Order. However, there is one Scripture which shows us these principles in particular:

Matthew 16

[13] When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

Why do you think He asked this question? Didn't He know what the people thought of Him? If He did know what the people thought of Him, then why did He ask such a question? Asking questions is a means of schooling. That is the reason we also often ask questions. Questions keep the thoughts alive and help us think about things that we have not thought of before. So now, the whole context of that which we are about to read, from verses 13-20, is headlined by this question,

[13] Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

Building on the Rock

[14] And they said, Some say that You are John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.
[15] He said unto them, But whom do you say that I am?
[16] And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

[17] And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven.
[18] And I say also unto you, That you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
[19] And I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
[20] Then He charged his disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ.

When reading this, it is easy to get the impression that it says:

> "You are Peter and on you I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

But Peter was overcome by the gates of hell, because a short time later, he denied his Lord. The word "Peter" in Greek is *petros*, and *petros* means "stone" in English. Let us look at *John* 1:42 for a moment, where it is speaking about Andrew bringing Simon to Jesus:

John 1
[42] And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, You are Simon the son of Jona: you shall be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

The New Testament of our Bibles was originally written in Greek. The word quoted in this verse as being translated is *Cephas*, which is the Hebrew word for "stone." So, what it really says here is:

> "You shall be called *Cephas* which, translated into Greek, is *petros*, and which, translated into English, is *stone*."

So the name *Petros*, or *Cephas*, meant "stone." But upon what did Christ build His church? Was it upon the stone? No, it was upon the rock. The verse does not say,

"On this *stone* I will build my church,"

–but:

"On this *rock* I will build my church."

The Old Testament is full of texts which show God to be the rock, the foundation of His church. Jesus was speaking here of a very familiar figure when He said,

Matthew 16
[18] Upon this rock I will build my church.

It was very obvious that the rock He referred to was the rock of the Old Testament from which Israel received water. This is the Rock upon which God built His church.

The Desire of Ages, p. 412-413:
Jesus continued:

Matthew 16
[18] I say also unto you, That you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The word Peter signifies a stone,—a rolling stone. Peter was not the rock upon which the church was founded. The gates of hell did prevail against him when he denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. The church was built upon One against whom the gates of hell could not prevail.

Again, let us remember the special context of these verses, which is the question,

"Who is Jesus, the Son of Man?"

This question is the foundation of Gospel Order for He is the foundation upon which the Father builds His church.

Matthew 16
[18] Upon this rock [that is, upon Jesus Christ] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

When we build on the rock, the gates of hell will not prevail against us. We will be as successful as Jesus was. But if we do not build on the rock, the gates of hell will prevail against us.

Not with Outward Show

The question that brought forth the great theme on which we are dwelling now is,

> **Matthew 16**
> [13] Who do men say that I the Son of man am?

That question was answered in this way,

> [14] Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

These sound like very good answers. The people thought very highly of Jesus and this is commendable because a prophet is not usually honored in his own time, is he? A prophet is usually despised and not thought of very highly. Most of the time it is only after his death that he is honored, such as Jeremiah or John the Baptist. But even while Christ was living, the people were saying that He was like John the Baptist or Elijah. In the time of Jesus, Elijah was considered a very great man, just as he is today. He was a man who was powerful, who did the work of God without fearing the consequences. The people thought of Jesus in this same light. This was good, wasn't it?

The answer they gave to this question, flattering though it was, fell short of the real truth. To see nothing more in Christ than a John the Baptist or an Elijah was to miss the main message. Why is this answer not good enough? What else is the Son of Man, other than a great prophet? He was more than just a great prophet: He was also God—God and man at the same time. The people who compared Jesus with one of the great prophets had a wrong concept about these messengers. Consequently, they also had a wrong concept about Jesus.

When we consider those whom we today consider to have been great messengers, for example, Paul, what concepts do we have about him? Do you think of Paul as a tall man, or a strong man? Was he a small man, or was he timid? Was he healthy, or was he sick and feeble? We might be surprised to learn the true facts. One of these surprises is in *Galatians* 4; Paul is speaking to the Galatians about having been with them at a previous time:

> **Galatians 4**
> [12] Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as you are: you have not injured me at all.
> [13] You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.
> [14] And my temptation which was in my flesh you did not despise, nor reject; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

When Paul commends the believers here in Galatia for receiving him so gladly, even as an angel of God, or even as Jesus Christ, he says, in essence,

> "I marvel that you did this, because I came to you with weakness, in such a physical state that, normally, you would have despised and rejected me."

The world today is looking for great leaders. When a person becomes president, he must meet the expectations of the people by being a "leader" type of person. If he isn't, no matter how qualified he is, or how good a president he might be, he will not be elected. Paul was not at all physically attractive, and normally, people tend to reject a person who is not physically attractive. Yet they received him as an angel of God, or even as Jesus Christ himself.

Let us consider Jeremiah. In the view of the people living at the time of Jesus, Jeremiah was a very great prophet—someone who had a talent to give wonderful messages. But was he really such a person?

Jeremiah 1

[4] Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
[5] Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations.
[6] Then said I, Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.
[7] But the Lord said unto me, Do not say, I am a child: for you shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatsoever I command you, you shall speak.

This reveals the true condition of Jeremiah. He was not a greatly talented speaker when he was called by God. He was a youth, and this he used as a conclusive argument against his own calling, or so he thought. He said, in essence,

> "Look, I am not an able speaker; therefore you cannot call me. Look for someone else who is more able than I am."

He said this because he had the common concept that everybody has of a messenger: namely, that he must be a person who is well-experienced, an able speaker, with a talent in putting together very good studies which will catch the interest of his hearers. It is important to understand the Lord's answer to this objection so that we begin to form the right concept of a messenger of God. This concept stands in direct contrast to the false ideas which people usually have. And what is the Lord's answer?

> [7] Do not say, I am a child: for you shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatsoever I command you, you shall speak.

There are two points mentioned here. First of all, the Lord says that he should not say that he is not able to speak because he is too young. Why? Because he does not need to be an experienced speaker. Again, why? Because,...

> [7] ...whatsoever I command you, you shall speak.

In other words,

"Do not worry that you are not an able speaker, because what you speak will not be from yourself. You will not get something together to present to the people. You will only repeat what I tell you to say, which is very simple."

This is exactly what the disciples did when Jesus sent them out. They did nothing but repeat the words of Jesus and they were quite impressed with the reaction His message drew. The disciples did not put something together that they could go out and give the people. They just received the words that Jesus gave them and repeated these words to the people.

Likewise, the book of *Jeremiah* is not a book of Jeremiah's thoughts. The whole of the book is a revelation of what God told him to say. It is not our task to make plans for where we should go and the things we should speak about. We are to go only where He commands us to go, and say what He commands us to say. That is a very simple task, isn't it? It will be, provided that we hear God speaking to us, and that we do what He tells us.

It is very simple, but the human mind too often likes to be an inventor, somebody who is looked up to for his originality. Because of this, the concept of a true messenger is hardly understood by people today. The answer of the people who said Jesus was like John the Baptist, or Elijah, or Jeremiah, was an answer that reflected this false concept of what a messenger is. They looked at Jesus only as a person who was very talented and wonderful and for this reason, someone to be looked up to. In fact, Jesus was not such a person, and this was one reason He was rejected by His fellow men.

Isaiah 52

[13] Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

[14] As many were astonished at You; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.

So, what was the outward appearance of Jesus like? He was not a man one would be inclined to look up to, or to think of as lead-

ership material, but He was a man one would be inclined to look down to. His physical appearance was…

Isaiah 52
14 …marred more than any man.

Likewise,

14 …His form [was marred] more than the sons of men.

Isaiah 53
1 Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?
2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.
3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

In other words, we did not appreciate Him, or see what He really was. *Isaiah* 52 and 53 are prophecies which were fulfilled exactly in the time of Jesus. One story which illustrates this is the story of the Jewish nobleman.

The Desire of Ages, p. 196:
But the people of Nazareth did not believe on Him. For this reason, Jesus did not visit Nazareth on His way to Cana. The Saviour declared to His disciples that a prophet has no honor in his own country. Men estimate character by that which they themselves are capable of appreciating.

And what do they, for the most part, appreciate? Only the things that they can see.

The narrow and worldly-minded judged of Christ by His humble birth, His lowly garb, and daily toil.

And, we could also add, by His form, or "visage", as the Bible says.

The Desire of Ages, p. 196:

They could not appreciate the purity of that spirit upon which was no stain of sin.

When the Jewish nobleman saw Jesus,

The Desire of Ages, p. 197:

...he found a throng surrounding Jesus. With an anxious heart he pressed through to the Saviour's presence. His faith faltered when he saw only a plainly dressed man, dusty and worn with travel.

Jesus was ordinary, or even less than ordinary-looking, and when the disciples told Jesus that the people were saying that He was a John the Baptist, or an Elijah, or a Jeremiah, or another one of the prophets, I suppose they were giving the more positive side of the report. There would have been other opinions as well that were not as favorable. Yet this answer was not good enough because it showed a false concept of what Jesus, the messenger from God, actually was. Jesus then asked them,

Matthew 16

15 But who do you say that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Peter gave an answer that was inspired by the Holy Spirit although he did not really fully understand it. That answer contained the essential difference not contained in the answer of the others. It was the right concept of what Jesus is and also the right concept of what the true messenger of God is. It was the rock upon which God built His church, against which the gates of Hades shall not prevail—the truth that Christ was both. He was God coming into the flesh of the people He came to save.

The Mystery of God

This is the mystery which we need to understand. It is the mystery of godliness. Paul has much to say about this mystery. For example, He says that this is the eternal purpose of God:

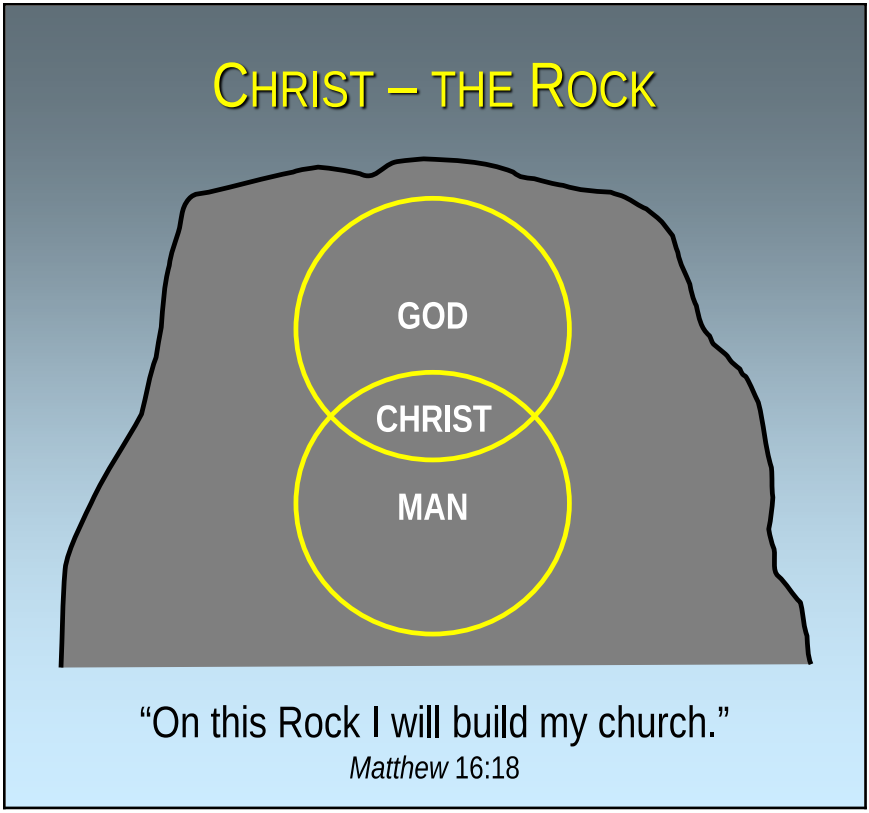
Ephesians 3
[8] Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
[9] And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:
[10] To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,
[11] According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 8 [ESV]
[6] Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

This is the mystery of God also, and this is the Rock upon which Christ builds His church. That God came into the flesh may seem to be a simple truth, but it is very deep and needs to be more thoroughly understood. We have often studied this in the past, and yet God constantly gives us fresh revelations about this wonderful truth. It really is the basic foundation upon which His church is built, and every principle we follow in building the kingdom of God, must be founded on this Rock, otherwise we do not build according to the way of God.

What we see in this Rock is the position of Jesus. Jesus is a being who is God and man at the same time, being, therefore, a perfect connector between God and man. As we have read in *Ephesians* 3:11, Jesus does not hold this position only for the sake of man, because by inspiration it is referred to here as:

Ephesians 3
[11] The eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.



So the bringing together of creatures and the Creator is not a limited purpose, or a purpose that remains for mankind only as long as they live on this earth, but it is an eternal purpose. How long is eternal? Eternal is without beginning and without end. Therefore, the moment that any creatures existed, not only humans, but any creatures whatsoever, whether they were angels or inhabitants of other worlds, then that moment also Christ must have held the position between them and God, being both God and creature at the same time.

The Mystery in Heaven

In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, there is a description of how God summoned the heavenly host and set forth the position of Jesus during Lucifer's rebellion. In this reference Jesus is called by the

name that He had as a man, and which He now has forevermore. He is called the "Son." A son is a person who is born from the union of two parents. If Jesus had been simply and only God in the same way that His Father was God, then the term Son would have been inappropriate. But it was not inappropriate, for in addition to being God, in every sense of the word, the way that His father was God, He was also creature, in every sense of the word, the way that His creatures were creatures.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36:

The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son and show the relation He sustained to all created beings. The Son of God shared the Father's throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both.

About the throne gathered the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng—"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (*Revelation* 5:11)...Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that none but Christ, the Only Begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes, and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of His will.

Here Christ is called the Son and the Only Begotten. We know that He was begotten as a man, but this refers to a time before He was a man, and even to a time before man was created. Therefore He was not only the great Connector between man and God, but He was also the great Connector between angels and God and between all the other creatures and God as well, including all the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds. This connection reveals two very important things:

1. The position of Jesus Christ is the key question of Gospel Order.
2. Christ was the only one who filled this position in heaven when it was questioned by Lucifer.

This means that all light which God gave to His creatures came through Christ. Every word that God ever spoke to any creature,

came through Christ. Every bit of life that ever flowed from God into any creature came through Christ. Nothing reached the creatures except through Christ. He was the only person through whom God spoke. There was not one single creature who could actually talk directly to God. Can you imagine this? So it was, and not only did no creature talk directly to God, but neither did the Father talk directly to any creature. Everything came through Christ, and this was exactly what Lucifer questioned—that everything had to come through Christ.

But didn't we just read that the Father summoned the heavenly host before Him after which He spoke to them? That seems contradictory, doesn't it? Before we answer this, let us read some of the evidences from the Bible that will make it very clear that God acted only through Jesus Christ. That was His only way to speak, to act and to give life. Whatever He did, He did through Jesus Christ.

John 1 [ESV]
[1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
[2] He was in the beginning with God.
[3] All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made.

Everything that we see that was created, was made through Jesus. We can develop this thought a little bit further by considering how God creates. What is His way of creating? He speaks a word and it is done. We read this in:

Psalms 33
[9] For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

When God creates something, He speaks it into existence. We can also say that when God speaks, the result of His word is that something is created. God never speaks without a purpose, and so when He speaks there is always something accomplished, something created. This is so whether the thing accomplished is visi-

ble, like the food that fed the multitude, or something invisible, like peace in the heart.

Isaiah 55
[10] For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater:
[11] So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

If something is always accomplished, or created, when God speaks, then who is the only person who can speak for God? He speaks only through Jesus, for Jesus is the Creator, the One who, by speaking, made all things. Jesus is the Word. Having this in mind, let us reread this text in our own words:

John 1 [ESV]
[1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
[2] He was in the beginning with God.
[3] All things were *spoken* through Him, and without Him was not anything *spoken* that was *spoken*.

We can read it this way because what was made had to be spoken. It is for this reason that Jesus is called the Word of God. He is not just *a* Word of God, but He is *the* Word of God.

[18] No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

According to this verse, there is no one existing who has ever seen God at any time except Jesus, the Son, who declares Him. Jesus himself expressed a parallel thought when He was talking to the Jews:

John 6
[46] Not that anyone has seen the Father, save He which is of God, He has seen the Father.

If no one has seen the Father, except Jesus, then it is also true that no one speaks with Him face to face, except Jesus, who then declares what He says to His creatures.

1 Corinthians 8

[6] But to us there is but one God,

Every Christian believes that there is only one God. But in the same way that we believe there is only one God, we must see that there is only one Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Connector, through whom He speaks all things, through whom all things are, and through whom we live. That Jesus fills such a position as the only spokesman for God is not an arbitrary act of God, but it comes about by sheer necessity. Christ is the only one to whom God is able to speak. And upon what basis does this ability rest? Upon the basis that Christ is both God and creature at the same time. There is no other creature in the universe who is this. For this reason, He is the only channel God can use to speak to His creatures.

We might wonder, since God is almighty, why He should be so restricted in this respect? There is a very good reason for it. It is true that God is almighty. He has a tremendous power outflow every moment. You can read this in the book, *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*, in the first few chapters, where it discusses Christ as the Connector and God as the Source. These chapters give a wonderful description of how God is upholding everything moment by moment.

When we consider what we know so far of the vastness of the universe and the tremendous power that is constantly needed to keep it alive, we begin to get a faint idea of the tremendous, unimaginable, unfathomable power that constantly flows out from God. It would be impossible for a single creature to endure such a tremendous outflow of power, so God must be shielded in order to be able to approach His creatures. And who is His shield? Jesus Christ is that shield.

Let us come back to the meeting in heaven:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36:

The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son and show the relation He sustained to all created beings.

Who is the King of the universe? God is, and it was He who summoned the heavenly host before Him. We have put forth evidences which show that when God spoke He was shielded from the people. So when God summoned the heavenly host before Him, how did He do it? He did it through Christ. And when He talked to the heavenly host, how did He do it? Again it was through Christ, His Word.

Nevertheless, it was very obvious that it was the Father who was speaking. The difference between the times when Jesus was speaking and the times when the Father was speaking could be seen very well. Both Jesus and the Father appealed to Lucifer to change. For example on page 35-36, we find Jesus appealing to Lucifer. The Father also appealed to Lucifer and let us note how they each appealed. Jesus said,

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 35:

In heavenly council the angels pleaded with Lucifer. The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. *God himself had established the order of heaven;* and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker and bring ruin upon himself. But the warning, given in infinite love and mercy, only aroused a spirit of resistance. Lucifer allowed his jealousy of Christ to prevail, and became the more determined.

And the Father said,

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36-37:

The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence *He might set forth the true position of His Son and show the relation He sustained to all created beings.* The Son of God shared the Father's throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both. About the throne gath-

ered the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng—"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (*Revelation* 5:11.), the most exalted angels, as ministers and subjects, rejoicing in the light that fell upon them from the presence of the Deity.

Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that *none but Christ, the Only Begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes, and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of His will.* The Son of God had wrought the Father's will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for himself contrary to God's plan, but would exalt the Father's glory and execute His purposes of beneficence and love.

The angels joyfully acknowledged the supremacy of Christ, and prostrating themselves before Him, poured out their love and adoration. Lucifer bowed with them, but in his heart there was a strange, fierce conflict. Truth, justice, and loyalty were struggling against envy and jealousy.

So we see Jesus pointing to God, and the Father pointing to Jesus; they upheld each other in their respective positions and in this way Lucifer received a mighty appeal to change his course and come in harmony with Gospel Order. Jesus did not defend His own position, but it was the Father who defended the position of His Son and upheld it.

5. Lucifer's Rebellion

GOD never speaks to His creatures except when He is shielded, and that shield is Jesus Christ. Therefore everything which He speaks comes through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, as the Son, upheld the position of the Father, while the Father upheld the position of the Son. Let us read again how Christ upheld the position of the Father in this struggle.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 35-36:

> Now the perfect harmony of heaven was broken. Lucifer's disposition to serve himself instead of his Creator aroused a feeling of apprehension when observed by those who considered that the glory of God should be supreme. In heavenly council the angels pleaded with Lucifer.
>
> The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. God himself had established the order of heaven; and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker and bring ruin upon himself.

In the speech that Christ gave to Lucifer, He upheld His Father before him. He told him that God had established this order and that he would dishonor Him in departing from it. On the other hand, the Father then upheld the position of the Son, as we read two paragraphs later.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36:

> The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son and show the relation He sustained to all created beings.

Remembering that this has to do with the mystery of God, let us read to see what information this paragraph gives about the foundation of the kingdom of God in heaven, for He has built this same foundation on earth. When God spoke to the host of heaven, He did so through His Word, and this was evident to all.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36:

> The King of the universe summoned the heavenly hosts before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son and show the relation He sustained to all created beings. The Son of God shared the Father's throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both. About the throne gathered the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng—"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," the most exalted angels, as ministers and subjects, rejoicing in the light that fell upon them from the presence of the Deity. Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that none but Christ, the Only Begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes...

It was this restriction about fully entering into the purposes of God that Lucifer could not handle. He thought that he was as entitled to fully enter into the purposes of God as the Only Begotten was. But now God explained to everybody, Lucifer included, that only Christ could do this; there was no other possibility. When He spoke of His "Only Begotten One," God was referring to the mystery that He has eternally put in heaven and upon the earth, and this mystery was Christ, who was, at the same time, fully God and fully an angel.

> The Son of God had wrought the Father's will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven...

Now the position of Christ is explained. What had Christ done? He had...

> ...wrought the Father's will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for himself contrary to God's plan, but would exalt the Father's glory and execute His purposes of beneficence and love.

When glory and honor were due to Christ, He did not exalt himself, but gave all the glory to His Father. How did Christ give glory to His Father in His position? By doing the Father's will.

Glorified by Submission

The next statement is speaking of Christ during the time He was upon this earth, but the same applied to Him while He was in heaven as well. There, He had the same relationship, or position, in relation to God and the angels, as He had to God and man upon this earth.

> **The Ministry of Healing, p. 19:**
> In all things He brought His wishes into strict abeyance to His mission. He glorified His life by making everything in it subordinate to the will of His Father.

By making everything in His life subordinate to His Father, Jesus glorified His life. This is foreign to most people's thinking. We tend to think that when we submit to somebody else, we do not glorify ourselves but, rather, humiliate ourselves, limit ourselves, and restrict ourselves. Isn't this how we think? But we find that Christ glorified His life by making everything in it subject to the will of His Father.

Here is another statement that explains how Jesus gave glory to His Father. The Pharisees had charged Jesus with blasphemy because He said that He and the Father were one.

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 208:**
> Jesus repelled the charge of blasphemy. My authority, He said, for doing the work of which you accuse me, is that I am the Son of God, one with Him in nature, in will, and in purpose.

Previously, we considered that in order to receive the latter rain we must become one in feeling, thought and action. Here, there is unity between the Father and the Son in nature, will, and purpose. There is a very close parallel between the unity of Jesus and His Father and the unity that is to be achieved among the believers.

The Desire of Ages, p. 208:

In all His works of creation and providence, I cooperate with God.

John 5

[19] The Son can do nothing of himself, but what He sees the Father do.

This is really humiliation, isn't it? But it is glorification at the same time. The Son can do nothing but what He sees the Father do. Theoretically the Son could have done a lot without the Father. For example, we are told that Jesus could have brought forth discoveries that would have stimulated the thoughts of great men until the end of time.

Education, p. 81:

He might have unlocked mysteries that would have required centuries of toil and study to penetrate. He might have made suggestions in scientific lines that, till the close of time, would have afforded, food for thought and stimulus for invention. But He did not do this.

Why didn't he do this? Why miss such an opportunity? Why not enrich the human race with these wonderful inventions? Because the Son of God can do nothing of himself but what He sees the Father do. That is the simple answer. It was not the Father's plan for Jesus to give these suggestions in scientific lines, and so He didn't. But when we stop to think what Jesus could have done, we begin to understand His submission and humility.

The Desire of Ages, p. 208:

The priests and rabbis were taking the Son of God to task for the very work He had been sent into the world to do. By their sins they had separated themselves from God, and in their pride were moving independently of Him.

They did not appear to be separated from God according to their confession or their intentions. They appeared to be very God-fearing men, according to what they said and what they seemed to want. But if they had possessed the intelligence of

Christ, they would have given this stimulation of thought and invention for their time, no doubt, and they, too, would have had great names like Galileo, or Einstein.

The Desire of Ages, p. 208:

By their sins they had separated themselves from God, and in their pride were moving independently of Him. But the Son of God was surrendered to the Father's will, and dependent upon His power. So utterly was Christ emptied of self that He made no plans for himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will.

Men, who have not the mind of Christ, try to do the things that Christ could have done, but which He did not do, because the Father did not lead Him to do so.

On Earth As It Is in Heaven

When we behold Jesus in His position as it was described by the Father in heaven, we see that it was exactly the same as it was later upon this earth.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36:

The Son of God had wrought the Father's will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven…Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for himself contrary to God's plan, but would exalt the Father's glory and execute His purposes of beneficence and love.

Christ would not, and would never, be executing His own purposes, but would always be executing the purposes of the Father. Here the Father was explaining the position of His Messenger, Christ. He was telling them,

"Look, He is the only one who can have this position, but whatever He does, He does in agreement with me or in execution of my will. What my Son does is only the simple outworking of my will and therefore, I want you to obey Him."

This explanation of the position of Christ was so powerful that the results were wonderful, at least at the beginning.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36-37:

The angels joyfully acknowledged the supremacy of Christ, and prostrating themselves before Him, poured out their love and adoration. Lucifer bowed with them, but in his heart there was a strange, fierce conflict. Truth, justice, and loyalty were struggling against envy and jealousy.

The influence of the holy angels seemed for a time to carry him with them. As songs of praise ascended in melodious strains, swelled by thousands of glad voices, the spirit of evil seemed vanquished; unutterable love thrilled his entire being; his soul went out, in harmony with the sinless worshipers, in love to the Father and the Son. But again he was filled with pride in his own glory.

The Central Pillar of Gospel Order

The major problem and issue of contention for Lucifer was the position of Jesus. Therefore, Gospel Order today also centers around this principle of the position of Christ.

Gospel order is that which has to do with how God orders His church on this earth, so you may wonder how it could have something to do with Christ. We will see that the same order that God made in heaven, He has also put upon this earth as a test for us. But first we must see that the position of Christ really was the issue of contention.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 973:

He [Satan] declares he cannot submit to be under Christ's command, that God's commands alone will he obey. Good angels weep to hear the words of Satan, and to see how he despises to follow the direction of Christ, their exalted and loving Commander.

Satan declares very clearly that he cannot accept the position of Christ; he will accept and obey God, but he will not be under Christ's command. That was the issue. Why should this be, when



Lucifer rejects the authority of Christ

Christ had the glory of the Father and that glory encircled both of them? In fact, how could Lucifer discriminate at all between

> "Well He is the Son, I won't obey Him; but He is the Father, and I will obey Him."

That seems difficult to understand when we view it like this, but when we consider what Christ was like upon the earth, then we can begin to understand. From the physical viewpoint, He was not a man pleasant to be looked at, or a man to be looked up to:

> **Isaiah 52**
> [14] As many were astonished at You; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.

Rather than being looked up to, He was looked down upon by many because of His physical appearance. In fact, He was so much like other men that there was no difference to be seen. Was there a difference then between Christ and the other prophets, or was their answer right when they said, "He is like John the Baptist"[5] and so on? No. There truly was something in Christ that was not in the others: He was God.

In an Earthen Vessel

Paul speaks of this principle, which was the principle of Christ:

> **2 Corinthians 4**
> [7] But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Picture in your mind a treasure contained in an earthen vessel, and let us apply this symbolism to Christ. The earthen vessel in the case of Christ is His human nature, His outward appearance, His physical form which was more marred than that of other men. But what is the treasure? That is His divine nature and this treasure was dwelling in the earthen vessel. The treasure was invisible to the naked eye, but not so the vessel.

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[5] *Matthew* 16:13-14.

This principle of having the treasure in an earthen vessel is the principle upon which God worked while Christ was upon this earth, and it is the same principle upon which God worked when Christ was in heaven. In heaven, Christ was an "earthen" vessel. He was actually an angelic vessel, but this was an application of the same principle. He was an "earthen" vessel in the sense that He was of the same nature as that of the other creatures, and in this vessel was the treasure, Divinity, and through which the truth was channeled to other creatures.

To see the earthen vessel was easy, but to see the treasure inside that vessel required more than just the ability of physical eyesight. It required faith and spiritual perception, and these Satan lost when envy arose in him. And so, when he looked at Christ, the only thing he saw was the outward vessel, and he questioned why this vessel should have supremacy over the other vessels. "This is not just," he thought, and therefore he rejected obedience to this principle, declaring that he would obey God alone.

God always works in this way—through earthen vessels:

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 296:**
> As His representatives among men, Christ does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save.

God could easily finish the work through angels. Wouldn't they do the work much better than we? They are much quicker, they would be much more obedient, they are much more beautiful, and wouldn't men be impressed by the glory of the angels? But God does not work this way.

> As His representatives among men, Christ does not choose angels.

Has an angel ever enlightened mankind when there was a messenger on this earth? Never. Yet angels do play a role in the giving of the message, and we will consider this role of the angels

later. We do not deny the work of the angels in our salvation, but when God chooses representatives to give a message to men, He never chooses angels, He chooses men.

A very good example of this is when Cornelius was visited by an angel, which is recorded in *Acts* chapter 10. The angel did not tell him about the gospel, but rather, he told him about a man in Joppa whose name was Peter, living in such and such a house on such and such a street. The angel's instruction to Cornelius was that he should send for Peter so that he could hear the gospel from him. Cornelius could have said,

> "Well, I would prefer to have an angel give me this wonderful message."

But he did not; he was satisfied with having the message come through Peter. We do not see God choosing angels as messengers among men. He always uses human messengers, except in cases where he directly leads men to an appointed messenger by an angel, as in Cornelius' case, or in the case of the shepherds when they were led to Christ.

The Desire of Ages, p. 296-297:

> As His representatives among men, Christ does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save. Christ took upon himself humanity, that He might reach humanity.

This was the principle operating when Christ took upon himself the earthen vessel: that the treasure might be brought to humanity.

> Divinity needed humanity; for it required both the divine and the human to bring salvation to the world. Divinity needed humanity, that humanity might afford a channel of communication between God and man.
>
> So with the servants and messengers of Christ. Man needs a power outside of and beyond himself, to restore him to the likeness of God, and enable him to do the work of God; but this does not make the human agency unessential. Humanity lays hold

upon divine power, Christ dwells in the heart by faith; and through cooperation with the divine, the power of man becomes efficient for good.

He who called the fishermen of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God.

Let us contemplate a little bit more now about the earthen vessel as it is on this earth. Earthen vessels are weak and fragile, aren't they? If you throw one down, it will break into a thousand pieces because it is such a fragile thing. Likewise, the vessel that God uses as a channel for messages He wants to give to man is a very fragile thing—even imperfect and sinful. But,

The Desire of Ages, p. 297:

However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God.

That is His way of working, He uses earthen vessels, and He prefers to use the most earthen of vessels so as to come as near as possible to man. God never speaks directly to His creatures except when He is shielded. Because of this, it seems that there must always be a big distance between God and His creatures. But God does not leave it like this. He does not want this big distance. He wants to come as near to us as possible—very near, and the more earthen the vessel He can use, the nearer He can come.

Let us imagine we see two earthen vessels: one "very earthen" vessel, and one "very shining" vessel. The very earthen vessel has been oft used, is discolored, and may even be chipped here and there. The shining one is bright, new, and perfect in every way. They are both earthen vessels, but the two do not match.

If we were to think of ourselves as being one of these two vessels, which one would most of us identify with? Most of us would identify with the very earthen vessel, because we do not see ourselves as perfect, and rightly so. We have faults, defects, scars—things that hinder us from perfectly fulfilling the purpose for which God made us.

But God loves us anyway, and wants to come as near to us as possible. So He uses the most earthen vessel possible to reach us, to commune with us as closely as He can with His creatures. And in order to do this, He does not use a vessel shining and perfect as we are *not*, but a vessel exactly like the very earthen vessels that we *are*—one that matches us in every way. That is His method here upon this earth, and that was His method in heaven as well.

The Desire of Ages, p. 297:

2 Corinthians 4 [RV]

[7] We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves.

This is why the preaching of the gospel was committed to erring men rather than to the angels. It is manifest that the power which works through the weakness of humanity is the power of God; and thus we are encouraged to believe that the power which can help others as weak as ourselves can help us.

And those who are themselves "compassed with infirmity" should be able to "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." *Hebrews* 5:2. Having been in peril themselves, they are acquainted with the dangers and difficulties of the way, and for this reason are called to reach out for others in like peril. There are souls perplexed with doubt, burdened with infirmities, weak in faith, and unable to grasp the Unseen; but a friend whom they can see, coming to them in Christ's stead, can be a connecting link to fasten their trembling faith upon Christ.

This is the principle that God uses, both on earth and in heaven. If a person doesn't have the faith to see the treasure in the vessel, he will not appreciate the vessel and neither will he appreciate the work that Christ is doing through that vessel. All he will be able to see is just another earthen vessel.

So it was with Lucifer in heaven, and that was where the great controversy began. It was a falling away from the order that God had structured in heaven, based upon the position of Christ. God not only built His church on earth upon this Rock, but He has built His church in heaven in the same way. Because He has done so, the question of the position of Christ is a question of the greatest importance. Everything revolves around Him. Just as He was the center in heaven, so He is for us, His church upon the earth.

A Fall from Gospel Order

Let us study a little more about the fall of Lucifer. We must see clearly that this was a fall away from Gospel Order.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 35:**
>
> Little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation. The Scripture says,
>
> > **Ezekiel 28**
> > [17] Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness.
> >
> > **Isaiah 14**
> > [13] You have said in your heart,...I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...
> > [14] ...I will be like the Most High.
>
> Though all his glory was from God, this mighty angel came to regard it as pertaining to himself. Not content with his position, though honored above the heavenly host, he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself. And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone. Now the perfect harmony of heaven was broken.

When we think about the fall of Lucifer, we tend to feel that this was a very obvious fall, and it seems to us as though it would have been an easy matter to decide on which side to stand. But with hindsight everything looks much easier than when you are

in the middle of the struggle. It is always like this.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 973:

He [Satan] declares he cannot submit to be under Christ's command, that God's commands alone will he obey.

If Satan said that he wanted to obey God's commands, we might think that surely this was a good start. The only thing that he wasn't satisfied with was the position of Christ, because Christ was exalted above all the others. But he was still obeying God, after all, so why the fuss about his not acknowledging Christ? He was acknowledging God, wasn't he? And if he was acknowledging God, then he would be saved.

But he did not really acknowledge God, because to reject Christ is to reject God. That is the actual fact, but that is not what it looked like to Lucifer, or to others. He believed that he had deep respect for God. In fact, according to his profession and thinking, he was very much a part of God's kingdom and very much subject to God, alone to whom he was willing to submit.

The Father decides the case of Satan, and declares that he must be turned out of heaven for his daring rebellion, and that all those who united with him in his rebellion should be turned out with him. Then there was war in heaven. Christ and His angels fought against Satan and his angels, for they were determined to remain in heaven with all their rebellion.

When somebody rebels against a system, he usually leaves that system. For example, if someone does not agree with a church anymore, he will leave that church. But here was something different; here was somebody who did not want to leave heaven to erect another kingdom, but, rather, who wanted to stay in the existing kingdom and restructure it. The great contention was over the position of Christ, and Satan wanted heaven restructured so that the position of Christ as well as his own would be different.

In this, Satan was contending for something which was not really so obviously wrong. After all, he deceived one third of the most intelligent angels. Even the other two thirds were confused

to a certain extent, although they did not follow him. But they were still puzzled by his arguments. And if he was that successful, his arguments must have been very good, and it must have been a very deceptive course that he took. It was not clear cut at all. The angels could not see the difference between truth and error in this situation.

Why didn't Satan just go out and establish another kingdom when he became dissatisfied with the structure of the one he was in? To an intelligent mind, like that which Lucifer possessed, it was obvious that God alone could uphold all life. Separating from God in order to establish his own kingdom without God, was impossible because nothing could live there. He knew that without God no creature could live. That is the reason why Lucifer did not leave the kingdom right away, but tried instead to stay in it and restructure it.

We now want to look more closely at how the position of Christ was the center of the controversy over Gospel Order.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 35-36:

> Now the perfect harmony of heaven was broken. Lucifer's disposition to serve himself instead of his Creator aroused a feeling of apprehension when observed by those who considered that the glory of God should be supreme. In heavenly council the angels pleaded with Lucifer. The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. God himself had established the order of heaven; and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker and bring ruin upon himself.

Lucifer was departing from the order of heaven, or Gospel Order. God's way of ordering is specifically designed to make all creatures happy. God himself had established the order of heaven, and in questioning the position of Christ, Lucifer was departing from this order. The order of heaven is the structure of God's kingdom, and this order centers around the position of Christ. When Christ's position is attacked, the very order of God is challenged.

The attack on this order was not so obviously erroneous as it appears to us from our perspective today. The deception was masked, and it was difficult to see where it was heading. In fact, Lucifer said that he was rallying a big campaign for the happiness of all creatures, and if only they would do what he wanted, everybody would be liberated and truly free.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 37:

Leaving his place in the immediate presence of the Father, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels. He worked with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealed his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God.

So, while he attacked the position of Christ, he showed great reverence for God. No doubt he would have said something like this:

"Well, I love God and I really want His kingdom to be firmly established; but I see a weak point here which must be rectified, so we need to restructure things just a little."

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 37:

He began to insinuate doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings...

This confirms that the problem had to do with the law, and the law, as we have seen, is Gospel Order.

He began to insinuate doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their own wisdom was a sufficient guide. They were not beings that could bring dishonor to God; all their thoughts were holy; it was no more possible for them than for God himself to err.

The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor. If this prince of angels could but attain to his true, exalted position, great good would

accrue to the entire host of heaven; for it was his object to secure freedom for all.

But now even the liberty which they had hitherto enjoyed was at an end; for an absolute Ruler had been appointed them, and to His authority all must pay homage. Such were the subtle deceptions that through the wiles of Lucifer were fast obtaining in the heavenly courts.

The big argument of Lucifer was:

"You are not free if you follow this system, and live in this order. If you will adhere to my structure, then you will be free."

The Faithfulness of Christ

In order to understand the position of Christ a little better, let us look at the following:

John 14

[1] Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me.
[2] In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
[3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also.
[4] And where I go you know, and the way you know.
[5] Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?
[6] Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes unto the Father except through me.

Here again, Jesus is presented as the only Connector, for it says,

[6] I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes unto the Father except through me.

But what does Jesus mean when He says, "I am the truth"? If you said this to someone who had never heard anything about Christianity, he might say,

"The truth is something that one cannot touch, cannot see, and cannot smell. How, then, can you say that Jesus is the truth?"

He not only taught the truth, but lived it so perfectly that it could be said, "He is the truth." In other words, He is the personification of truth.

Education, p. 78-79:
What He taught, He lived.

Jesus taught the truth, but more than this, He lived exactly what He taught. This is the secret of being a successful teacher, or successful parents: to be what we teach.

John 13
[15] I have given you an example, [He said to His disciples;] that you should do as I have done.

John 15
[10] I have kept my Father's commandments.

Thus in His life, Christ's words had perfect illustration and support. And more than this; what He taught, He was. His words were the expression, not only of His own life experience, but of His own character. Not only did He teach the truth, but He was the truth. It was this that gave His teaching, power.

So this principle is Jesus Christ, and He is the rock. He is not only the rock in His person, but also the truth is the rock upon which God builds His church. This truth is the principle of complete obedience to God, the principle of just passing on what we have received.

Jesus was absolutely faithful in all that He did. So when Jesus gave a message, you could rely on the fact that this was the message of the Father. There was no question about whether there was something added from Him or not. It was absolutely crystal clear that whatever Christ gave, was from the Father.

- If He gave life, it was the life from the Father.
- If He gave knowledge, it was the knowledge from His Father.
- If He gave a message, it was the message of His Father.

He was absolutely faithful in this, and this is the principle upon which God builds His church. This, the principle of Christ, has very much to do with the position of Christ. He could only be in this position if He was a very faithful transmitter of that which He received. He passed on only what He received, nothing else.

Hebrews 3
[2] Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

So, Lucifer attacked this very principle. Lucifer himself was not faithful in his campaign against the structure of God because he had no mandate from God to do this. It was entirely his own idea to restructure the kingdom of God, and in it he was very much different. The position of Christ was a stumbling block for Lucifer. He really thought,

> "Why just this one person, why not also I or others. Why just this one person?"

God was not being stubborn in refusing to change His organization. If God had changed the structure of His kingdom according to the desires of Lucifer, it would not have given happiness to the creatures, it would have destroyed their happiness. So the only course that God could safely go for the sake of His creatures was to adhere to the principles that He had established in the beginning, without bending. So rather than change the order, He explained the position of His Son.

Gospel Order Becomes a Test

Lucifer committed himself to fighting against this principle. It became a real test for him. God never manufactured the test. The order was there for the happiness of the universe. Also, before Lucifer rebelled against this situation, it was not a test for him at all.

Matthew 6
[10] Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, p. 109:

> The will of God is expressed in the precepts of His holy law, and the principles of this law are the principles of heaven. The angels of heaven attain unto no higher knowledge than to know the will of God, and to do His will is the highest service that can engage their powers.

This is the principle of the rock, which is the truth: to know and to do God's will.

> But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality.

What does it mean, "in the spirit of legality"? Legalistic obedience is doing something that one does not really want to do, but one has to do. It is done by force, and not by love.

> When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of.

What is the law? It is Gospel Order. And Gospel Order is also the cross. So when we read here of "the law," we can put in its place "Gospel Order." Let's read this again:

> When Satan rebelled against [Gospel Order], the thought that there was [Gospel Order] came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience [to Gospel Order] is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy.

That was the situation before Lucifer rebelled against Gospel Order, that is, against the position of Christ. Before he rebelled against it, he did not even think of Gospel Order because it was something that he did all day as his joy. So the position of Christ was not at all a test for Lucifer before rebellion came up in him.

A test is a trial, where we could choose more than one way to go. A test is something hard to overcome. We talk of tests when we take a test in school. Also we have tests of life, difficult situations which have to be overcome. Gospel Order was not a test for

Lucifer before he questioned the position of Christ. However, once he began to question the position of Christ, once he lost sight of the treasure that was in the earthen vessel, Gospel Order became a very hard test for him. Yet it was still a test which he could have passed.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36:

The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. God himself had established the order of heaven; and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker and bring ruin upon himself.

So what was the argument that Jesus presented in order to save Lucifer, to help him to pass the test in which he found himself now? He pointed to the fact that God himself had established this order. He pointed to what God had already done. He said to Lucifer,

> "God has already done this, and what God has done should stand above question."

It should be law in itself. As God's people, we ask for a "thus says the Lord," and we will not accept anything else. We will accept a "thus says the Lord" for every principle that is presented to us, and rightly so. But because we require a "thus says the Lord," we are used to looking at what God has written down in the Bible.

God's Actions Are Also His Word

But what He has done is as much His Word as what He has written. Here are some examples for this, starting with the position of Jesus. The position of Jesus in heaven existed ever since a creature was created. So no created beings knew anything different but this structure. Christ was the channel through whom God talked. God had established this, therefore there was no need to write down any rules concerning it. God had done it and therefore it

was right. It was not necessary for God to make a law book and write down,

"Now this is the position of Jesus and Him you must obey."

It was not necessary. God had done it and everybody was in agreement with it. When Lucifer rebelled against it, the argument that God had established this order should have led him to the conclusion to go back to this order, as it was what God had established.

What God has done is as much God's Word as what He has said. At the crossing of the Red Sea, when the people of Israel were on one side of the sea, they were in a sort of trap. The Egyptians were pursuing them, ahead of them was the water, and there they were in the midst of the mountains. They could not flee to the right nor to the left, and behind the Egyptians came with chariots, horses, soldiers, and weapons.

When they were in this situation, the Lord wanted to teach them something. He had led them there, and He did not teach them in so many words, telling them, "now do this, and do that." He taught them with His actions.

What was the great lesson that God wanted to teach His people at that time? He wanted to teach them that in order to travel to Canaan and overcome the Canaanites, they did not need swords. They did not need helmets, or weapons at all. He did not tell them in so many words, He told them in actions.

When they were at the Red Sea, the Lord opened the water for them; they came through, and how many battles did they have to fight in order to be free from the Egyptians? Not one. That was the clear message. Sadly, the Israelites did not understand this message. They did not receive it, and so they took the swords from the dead bodies of the Egyptians who were washed to the shore.

Exodus 14

[30] Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.

They took the weapons, and from that time forward they fought with weapons. But the idea that God had demonstrated by His actions was very clear:

"Here, I give you an example that you do not need swords."

So, what God had done should have taught them as much as if God had spoken it by words. We have a word that describes what God does. Providence. Providence is the word we use for what God does for us. His providence is the means whereby He talks to us.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 126:

Many are still tested as was Abraham. They do not hear the voice of God speaking directly from the heavens, but He calls them by the teachings of His word and the events of His providence. They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor, to leave congenial and profitable associations, and separate from kindred, to enter upon what appears to be only a path of self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice.

So what do we read here about providence? God talks to His people as much through the events of His providence as He talks through His teachings.

Steps to Christ, p. 93:

Through nature and revelation, through His providence, and by the influence of His Spirit, God speaks to us.

God speaks to us through the Bible, but also through His actions. These two are never contradictory. God does not act contrary to His word, but sometimes our understanding of His word is not correct, and then God can use actions to show us what He really means.

One story from the early church times makes this absolutely clear. The early church initially labored under the assumption that

the gospel was for the Jews, or circumcision, primarily. When in 34 AD, Stephen was stoned to death,[6] this event marked the end of the 70-week prophecy,[7] in which the time allotted for the Jews as a nation to do God's work was ended. So the time had come for the Gospel to go to especially to the Gentiles.

A series of events then took place, in God's providence. A persecution arose after Stephen's death which scattered the believers into other areas. Philip, the faithful deacon, fleeing the persecution in Jerusalem, first stopped in Samaria and found a harvest of souls among the Samaritans.[8]

Acts of the Apostles, p. 107:

Philip's work in Samaria was marked with great success, and, thus encouraged, he sent to Jerusalem for help. The apostles now perceived more fully the meaning of the words of Christ,

Acts 1

[8] You shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

While Philip was in Samaria, he was also directed to a devout Ethiopian, who was trying to understand the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the Messiah. Philip explained these as pointing to Jesus, and the Ethiopian was baptized, and took the Gospel back to his country. Shortly after this, Saul was converted, who would be especially set apart as an apostle to the Gentiles.[9]

Next, Peter was sent to Cornelius, a Gentile, but a worshiper of the true God.[10] But first God gave him a vision designed to overcome Peter's prejudices:

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 135-136:

This vision conveyed to Peter both reproof and instruction. It revealed to him the purpose of God—that by the death of Christ

[6] *Acts* 7.
[7] *Daniel* 9:24-27.
[8] *Acts* 8.
[9] *Acts* 9.
[10] *Acts* 10.

the Gentiles should be made fellow heirs with the Jews to the blessings of salvation.

As yet none of the disciples had preached the gospel to the Gentiles. In their minds the middle wall of partition, broken down by the death of Christ, still existed, and their labors had been confined to the Jews, for they had looked upon the Gentiles as excluded from the blessings of the gospel. Now the Lord was seeking to teach Peter the world-wide extent of the divine plan.

Peter went to Cornelius, taught him and his household the gospel, and much to his surprise, in the middle of the meeting, the Holy Spirit descended on these Gentile men and they began to speak in tongues and glorify God. Soon after they were baptized. When Peter returned to Jerusalem, he had to explain himself:

Acts 11

[1] And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.
[2] And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,
[3] Saying, You went in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them.
[4] But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning…

So he told them the whole story, and then said,

[17] Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?
[18] When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then has God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

This was new light, present truth at that time and new light for them. They had never heard such a message before; it was a tremendous new light for their minds, and they accepted it. They themselves expressed this new light because God had made it clear through His actions. It was against their previous understanding of the word of God, but by His actions, God was trying

to open their minds to the correct interpretation of His word. Meanwhile, while this was happening, some of the believers who fled to Antioch reached out to the Gentiles:

Acts 11
[19] Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.
[20] And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.
[21] And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

When this happened, Barnabas was sent to Antioch from Jerusalem, and he strengthened the new believers. A short while later he sought for Saul from Tarsus, and they both labored at Antioch for about a year with great success.

After this, these two men, with four other teachers and prophets, were fasting and praying, and the Holy Spirit told them to separate Saul and Barnabas to proclaim the gospel among the Gentiles.[11] So they departed and the next events of *Acts*[12] describe the experiences they had on their first missionary journey. After this they returned to Antioch:

Acts 14
[26] And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.
[27] And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.
[28] And there they abode long time with the disciples.

Then certain men came down from Judea and told the brethren that unless the Gentiles were circumcised according to the custom of Moses, they could not be saved. That brought dissension,

[11] *Acts* 13:1-3.
[12] Chapter 13 and 14.

dispute, struggle, and fighting into the church of Antioch. Paul and Barnabas stood very firmly for the right, not giving one inch, and at the same time these Judaising teachers tried to convince the people. Half sided with the one, and half sided with the other, and the church threatened to be divided. The only solution was found in waiting, or deferring the argument until a general convention of experienced brethren could be convened. This then was the first Jerusalem council about which we read.

Acts 15
[6] So the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.

There was much disputing in this first Jerusalem council. The dispute was over a thing which God had already made clear through the actings of His providence.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 189:
The Jewish converts generally were not inclined to move as rapidly as the providence of God opened the way.

They were not listening to the Word of God! They were not studying the Word of God. If you would say to the Jewish converts that they were not studying the Word of God, they would say,

"What? We are the most diligent students of the Word of God. We are here to support the Word of God. It is the Word of God that says you should be circumcised."

And then they would quote a lot of Old Testament Scriptures. These scriptures "seemed" to be the word of God, after all, they were from the Bible. But they overlooked that God not only speaks through His written Word, but also through His actions, through His providence. It was only their misinterpretation of God's Word that made the two seem contradictory. When they "were not inclined to move as rapidly as the providence of God opened the way," it shows that they were not inclined to understand and study the word of God as it was given through His ac-

tions. This does not mean that God's actions were contrary to His word, for as Paul later argued in *Romans*, Abraham was called, and believed God,

Romans 4
[11] ...being uncircumcised.

So the question was,

"Is circumcision the word of God *for this time?*"

That caused a dispute. There was contention and disunity, because it is only by uniting on God's word that we can become one. The message God had given through His providence, especially in the experience of Peter and Cornelius, was forgotten. Everything from the written Word was brought forth, so Paul argued with Scripture and the Judaising teachers also argued with Scripture. Scripture stood against Scripture. Everybody looked at just what was written but nobody asked the question,

"What has God done?"

Then Peter arose:

Acts 15
[7] And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.
[8] So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them, by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us,
[9] And made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.
[10] Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?
[11] But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.

> [12] Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.

How did this wonderful result come about? From the unifying effect of God's Word, in this instance not written, but acted. And in this same way, we as a people of God must also learn. Although it is a new thing for us, we must learn not only to read what God has written, but to look at what God has done. To see what God has done is as much God's word as to read what He has written down.

So in the meeting in heaven, Jesus put this great argument to Lucifer to help him. He said,

> "Look at what God has done. He himself has established the order of heaven."

If Lucifer had looked at this word of God, he would have been saved. While it was still a great test for Lucifer, he could have passed it. He could have accepted the fact that God himself had established the order of heaven, even though it "seemed" to him that it was arbitrary and repressive. But had he turned his eyes upon what God had done, he would have submitted to this order and sometime later he would have understood again why this was so. He would have again been able to see the treasure in the vessel and thereby he would have been saved.

As Lucifer could have been saved, so we too can be saved, if we look at what God has done. There will be times when the work of God will take unexpected turns that will cut across our incorrect views and wrong understandings. At those times, it is important to look at what God has done, and is doing, to establish His righteousness in the earth.

6. Treasure in Earthen Vessels

LET us continue studying the position of Christ, the center of Gospel Order. Previously, we considered the fact that what God has done is as much God's Word as that which He has written down or said.

Parables

When God writes something down, He uses human language. Here we have the same principle as shown by the position of Christ himself, namely that God puts a treasure in an earthen vessel.

> **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 17:**
> In Christ's parable teaching the same principle is seen as in His own mission to the world.

A parallel is drawn between the mission of Christ to this world and His parable teaching. So far we have studied the mission of Christ in this world—that He came in our flesh, the earthen vessel, into which was put the treasure of divine truth, the treasure of divinity.

> That we might become acquainted with His divine character and life, Christ took our nature and dwelt among us.

Here the mission of Christ is explained. Why did Christ take our nature and dwell among us? So that we might become acquainted with the treasure in the vessel. If Christ had come as a glorious angel, we would never have become acquainted with the treasure in the vessel, because it is very hard for human nature to bear the glory of God, especially in our sinful state.

The people could not endure even Moses' face when he was in the presence of God, so how much less could they endure an angel who is always in the presence of God? How could an angel teach us in a way that we could understand, about the divine nature, the treasure that is in the vessel? So, Jesus came into our

own nature, into this very vessel which we have, so that we might become acquainted with His character and life.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 17:

Divinity was revealed in humanity; the invisible glory in the visible human form.

The treasure is invisible while the earthen vessel is visible.

Men could learn of the unknown through the known; heavenly things were revealed through the earthly;...

What are the heavenly things? The treasure. And what is the earthly? The earthen vessel.

...God was made manifest in the likeness of men. So it was in Christ's teaching: the unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truths by earthly things with which the people were most familiar.

In the same way He came to this world, Christ taught the people. He used illustrations that were known by men, to teach them very deep, wonderful truths. Think, for example, of some of the parables. The parable of the vineyard: did the people know what a vineyard was? Certainly, there were many farmers that kept vineyards, everybody knew what they were. They worked in them, they ate their fruit. How about the parable of the sower and the seed? Again, here was something they saw in everyday life and knew very well.

What do you think about the parable of the unjust judge and the widow? Doesn't it sound strange to you? Doesn't it contain an error? To the human mind it seems to, because God is compared to an unjust judge. Is God unjust? Why is Jesus using an unjust judge to illustrate the wonderful truth of what God is and how we are to approach Him? Well, it was something they could understand, it was something from everyday life.

There was none whom Christ could really use to fully illustrate the heavenly Father. Likewise with the kingdom. Christ himself said,

Mark 4

[30] Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what comparison shall we compare it?

There was nothing on this earth with which to liken it. So He just used a person, like an unjust judge, and showed in the parable a divine truth which today we still study and find very enlightening. Just as in His divine-human nature, so in His parable-teaching: the principle that God puts the divine treasure of eternal truth in the earthen vessel is repeated. Divine truth is clothed in the dress of human language and knowledge.

Probably the most radical example is the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. This parable was chosen from the stories of the people of that time, this was the earthen vessel. Christ used it to carry a tremendous treasure. When God uses human language and human illustrations, they are all imperfect, fragile, earthen, but in them He puts His divine truth.

That God works in this way must become very clear to us. We as humans tend to misplace values, we tend to overvalue the earthen vessel and to undervalue the treasure that is in it. When the earthen vessel accomplishes something very great, we praise the vessel. We overlook the idea that it is the treasure in this earthen vessel which matters.

Today when people look back to Christ, what do they praise about Him? His miracles, His power, His strength, and so forth. Very few really see the inner truth Christ brought. People value the earthen vessel very highly, but misplace the treasure. For example, when you see pictures of Jesus today, you see pictures of a wonderful, young, healthy person. We know that he was not ugly, but at times, because of the stress He was placed under, He became emaciated, and worn in appearance. Under those conditions, He looked nothing like the pictures we see today. So when

the people look at Jesus in the pictures, they have a view of Him as a beautiful earthen vessel, but they have no view of the treasure that was dwelling in this earthen vessel.

Likewise, with the old prophets. People praised Jeremiah, they praised John the Baptist, they praised Elijah, but what were they? Earthen vessels, nothing more, in which dwelt the treasure of God. That is our problem, we overvalue the vessel, while we undervalue the treasure in the vessel. We must learn to reorder our thoughts.

At the same time, the earthen vessel also has to be appreciated. To despise the earthen vessel is not right either. In our own bodies we have the same illustration again: we have a treasure in an earthen vessel. We have a human nature, and a body, and in it, if we are born again, dwells the seed of Christ, the divine nature. This is the treasure. So in ourselves, we have a treasure in an earthen vessel. Does this mean that we despise our bodies? No, we have to keep them as fit vessels for this heavenly treasure. We must not despise our bodies and at the same time we must not overvalue our bodies.

What part of God's people does the Bible emphasize: their physical appearance or their spiritual appearance? The spiritual appearance is the emphasis, while at the same time the earthen vessel is not despised.

The Fall of Lucifer

Let us now come back to consider Lucifer. Lucifer, when in heaven, was looking at himself and thinking,

> "I have wisdom, I have strength, so why shouldn't I have this position that Christ occupies?"

It's even possible that in outward appearance, Lucifer looked more glorious than Christ. His beauty is particularly mentioned in the book of *Ezekiel*.[13] Lucifer, because he only saw the earthen

[13] *Ezekiel* 28:12-19.

vessel and not the treasure in it, could not understand why Christ was given a higher position. Therefore he wanted to restructure the order of heaven.

To answer this dilemma, God gave an explanation of that order. So the matter became a test to Lucifer, a test which he could have passed if he had looked on what God had already done. But sad to say, he did not pass the test even though God bore long with him. It was a time of serious trouble for him, during which he could have turned back. However, after hardening himself continually against the truth, he reached the place at which it was not possible to turn back anymore. So he lost his place in heaven. And what was the reason? Because he transgressed Gospel Order.

We have ample evidence of this by reading the first chapter in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, "Why Was Sin Permitted." In this chapter there is portrayed a progressive series of falls. First, sly doubts arose in Lucifer, which took hold more and more until he finally left the immediate presence of his Father. For a time, he pretended to have great reverence for God, while at the same time he spread his doubts to others. Then finally his rebellion became more and more open until he was cast out of heaven.

The Fall of Adam and Eve

Precisely the same thing happened on this earth. When Adam and Eve sinned, they fell by transgression of Gospel Order. For evidence of this, let us look at the chapter "Temptation and Fall" in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Once again, the position of Christ was in question. Christ was the great messenger of the whole universe, of every created world, and also of this world.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 50-51:

The holy pair were not only children under the fatherly care of God but students receiving instruction from the all-wise Creator. They were visited by angels, and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between. They were full of the vigor imparted by the tree of life, and their intellectual power was but little less than that of the angels. The mysteries of the

visible universe—"the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge"[14]—afforded them an exhaustless source of instruction and delight.

So Adam and Eve were diligent students, and who was their teacher? Jesus, definitely. It says here,

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 50:
They were visited by angels, and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between.

That must have been Christ, because He was the link between God and man, even before their fall, as He was the link between God and angels.

The Example of Unfallen Angels

They were also visited by angels, so we see here that angels play a role. These angels were the helpers of Jesus. Jesus did not always talk personally with Adam and Eve. Sometimes angels talked with them. These angels did the same work as Christ, they were His helpers. As His helpers, they were working the same way that Jesus worked in relation to His Father. He passed on what He received from His Father. He said,

John 8
[28] I do nothing of myself; but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things.

That is the work that Christ did. He did not pass on a message of His own. He did not pass on life of His own. Everything that He passed on, He first received from His Father. That was the work of Christ in relation to His Father.

In the same way, the angels worked in relation to Christ, for they are called in the Bible "ministering spirits."[15] When they gave instruction to Adam and Eve, they gave the instruction that they received from Christ. That was their work as helpers of Jesus Christ.

[14] *Job* 37:16.
[15] *Hebrews* 1:14.

The angels could have given them quite interesting knowledge on their own account. Like Jesus, they could have unlocked mysteries to Adam and Eve that would have carried the thought, or would have occupied the thoughts of mankind until the end of time. The angels are very powerful, intelligent beings, who understand laws and the relationships of laws much, much better than any man does. So they could have given a tremendous amount of knowledge to mankind. But they limited themselves to what Jesus gave them to say. When we read about the angels being faithful ministering spirits, we know that they were the helpers of Christ.

Adam and Eve very clearly had Gospel Order. They had a messenger, Jesus Christ, and they also had His helpers who did not do their own work, but did the same work as Christ. The whole kingdom of earth was established on this Rock, this Principle, this Truth, that everything is communicated through Christ.

Satan challenged this principle in heaven, and the same challenge he brought up in heaven, he also brought up on earth. About this we read in the third chapter in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, "The Temptation and Fall."

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 52:

> Our first parents were not left without a warning of the danger that threatened them. Heavenly messengers opened to them the history of Satan's fall and his plots for their destruction, unfolding more fully the nature of the divine government, which the prince of evil was trying to overthrow.

Here it says, "Heavenly messengers opened to them the history of Satan's fall…" These heavenly messengers, who were they? Angels, evidently, in relation to Christ—ministering spirits, the helpers of Christ. The word *angel* is a Greek word which means *messenger* in English. There is a very close relationship here.

Another reason given here for angels to be the helpers of Christ in the case of Adam and Eve, was that the angels were really qualified for this because they had experienced the fall of Lucifer. They had experienced his deceptive power and they knew how

deceiving he was, therefore when they passed on the message that they received from Christ to give to mankind, they could put special emphasis on it. They could say,

> "We have experienced this, we know how dangerous it is, and therefore we know that what Christ gave us to tell you is the truth."

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 52:

> Heavenly messengers opened to them the history of Satan's fall and his plots for their destruction, unfolding more fully the nature of the divine government, which the prince of evil was trying to overthrow. It was by disobedience to the just commands of God that Satan and his host had fallen. How important, then, that Adam and Eve should honor that law by which alone it was possible for order and equity to be maintained.

As we learned before, we can substitute "Gospel Order" for the word "law."

> How important then, that Adam and Eve should honor that law [Gospel Order] by which alone it was possible for order and equity to be maintained. The law of God is as sacred as God himself. It is a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, the expression of divine love and wisdom. The harmony of creation depends upon the perfect conformity of all beings, of everything, animate and inanimate, to the law of the Creator. God has ordained laws for the government, not only of living beings, but of all the operations of nature. Everything is under fixed laws...

And the center of all these laws is the position of Christ, Christ and His work.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53:

> The angels warned them to be on their guard against the devices of Satan, for his efforts to ensnare them would be unwearied. While they were obedient to God the evil one could not harm them; for, if need be, every angel in heaven would be sent to their help. If they steadfastly repelled his first insinuations, they would be as secure as the heavenly messengers. But should

they once yield to temptation, their nature would become so depraved that in themselves they would have no power and no disposition to resist Satan.

This was the clear message that they received from the heavenly Messenger and His helpers.

Obedience Is Required

When they received this message, their duty was to obey it to the letter—to acknowledge Christ in His position. If we just say "yes" to the position of Christ, but actually disobey His orders, then our confession is worth nothing, because in reality we deny Him in His proper place. In order to really remain in Gospel Order it is *not* enough to say,

> "Yes, I acknowledge that Christ is the only connector between man and God."

Gospel Order goes much further than that. It means we make the message our very own until it becomes our very nature and we act out this message naturally. This alone can fulfill the requirements of Gospel Order, the requirements of the Rock which is Jesus Christ.

A Warning Is Given

Adam and Eve were then given further instruction:

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53:**
> The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone.

This was a message from God, through Christ, through the angels, to Adam and Eve, and especially to Eve. She was cautioned to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in her daily labor in the garden. It was the duty of Eve, in order to acknowledge Gospel Order, to make this message her very own. Did she do so?

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53-54:

But absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side.

Here was the first step into danger: unconsciously she wandered from his side. Why? She was absorbed in her pleasing task. When we are absorbed in the task that God gives us, in our daily work, then we know that we are in danger to forget God.

For example, if the farmer works very diligently to bring in the grain, he has worked very hard and after a toilsome day he says, "today I have worked a lot." Then when he sees his full garner, he is very proud, isn't he?

Or likewise with the carpenter, and with every other work. This is natural, and it is also good when the task that we are doing is a pleasing task. We should not do our work with an unwilling spirit, as do many people who don't like their work. Yet even when we work hard, God is doing by far the greater part.

Because we tend to overlook the greater part, we need to set aside our work for one day out of seven in order to have unhindered study of God's part in our work. As we meditate on this, we will find how very easily we also become absorbed in our pleasing task, and unconsciously wander away from the path that God has set for us.

Eve Puts Herself in the Place of Christ

Immediately, when Eve wandered away, her conscience spoke to her:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 54:

On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger...

There was still a good possibility for her to avoid falling into sin. She should have built on the Rock. She should have remembered the message she received from God, through Christ, through His angels, to not go away from her husband. She should have thought to herself,

"Now I've wandered away, so in order to respect Gospel Order, I must immediately go back."

That was what was required at this time.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 54:

...she felt an apprehension of danger, but dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it.

On what basis did she dismiss her fears? On the basis that she thought she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it. In other words, she replaced Christ as the messenger with another messenger, herself—her own wisdom and strength to discern evil and withstand it—the same thing that Lucifer had done in heaven. When we study the fall of man, we are just studying a repetition of Lucifer.

...but [she] dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it.

She put herself in the place of Christ.

Unmindful of the angels' caution, she soon found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the forbidden tree.

The promise of Jesus is, when we build on the Rock, the gates of Hades shall not overcome us. But when we do not build on the Rock, then the gates of Hades *will* overcome us. After she had decided that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it, then the sure outcome was that the gates of Hades would overcome her. The act of eating the fruit was only the natural consequence of replacing the messenger, Christ.

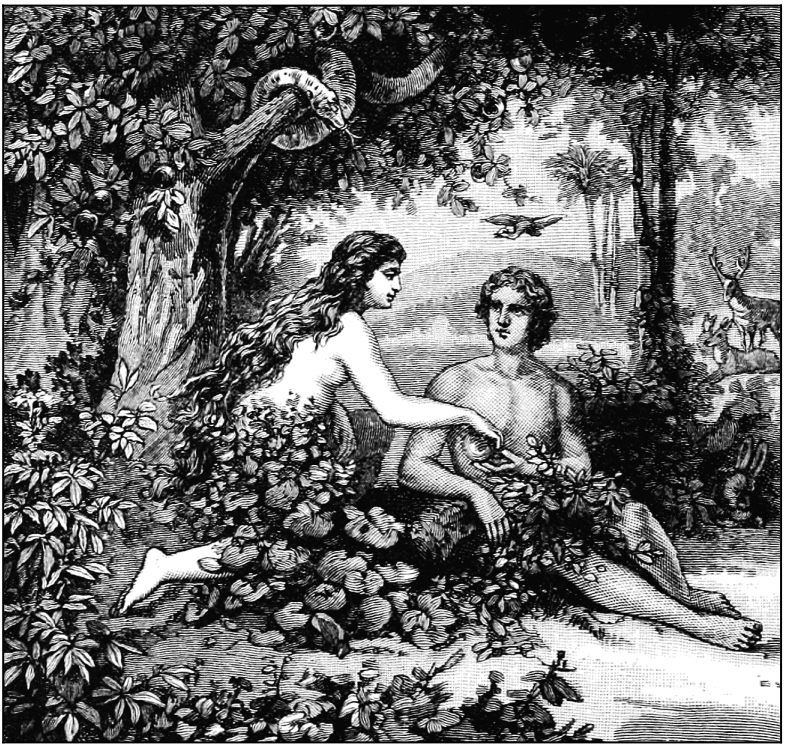
She now found it easy to place other persons where Christ was formerly, and the next was the serpent, Satan himself, whose very philosophy was to put himself in the place of Christ. Eve obeyed what he said, which was in direct opposition to God. The fall of

mankind was exactly like the fall of Lucifer: a transgression of Gospel Order.

The Review and Herald, Feb. 24, 1874:

Angels on probation had been deceived by Satan, and had been led on by him in the great rebellion in heaven against Christ. *They failed to bear the test* brought to bear upon them, and they fell.

Adam was then created in the image of God and placed upon probation. He had a perfectly developed organism. All his faculties harmonized. In all his emotions, words, and actions there was a perfect conformity to the will of his Maker. After God had made every provision for the happiness of man, and had supplied his every want, he tested Adam's loyalty. If the holy pair should be obedient, the race would after a time be made equal to the angels. As *Adam and Eve failed to bear this test*, Christ proposed to become a voluntary offering for man.



7. A Test for Us

Romans 10

[13] For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

[14] How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

[15] And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

[16] But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah said, Lord, who has believed our report?

[17] So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

SEEING that man has fallen from Gospel Order, we find ourselves in the position of being, by nature and example, rebellious against Gospel Order. Let us open again for a moment, *Early Writings*, the chapter "Gospel Order":

A Restriction of Liberty?

Early Writings, p. 97:

The Lord has shown that Gospel Order has been too much feared and neglected.

Why has Gospel Order been feared and neglected? One reason is that in the fallen churches, there is an order, which they often call "Gospel Order." There is seemingly a wonderful order in the church: everybody sits in his place; the preacher has a nice sermon; afterwards everybody goes out again in an orderly fashion, and so forth. There is often a better outward order than is found among the people of God.

But this order is accomplished through men ruling over men. For this reason, the true people of God tend to fear Gospel Order. They say,

"No, this kind of thing we don't want."

But there is also a deeper reason. Let us return to Lucifer and his rebellion in heaven.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 37:

> If this prince of angels could but attain to his true, exalted position, great good would accrue to the entire host of heaven; for it was his object to secure freedom for all. But now even the liberty which they had hitherto enjoyed was at an end…

Lucifer's great point was that he was coming to give the people freedom, because he did not think they had freedom. Freedom is one thing that we really want, we don't like restrictions. So Satan presents Gospel Order, the position of Christ, as something that restricts our freedom. Ever since man has fallen into the same rebellion as Lucifer, what does he think of Gospel Order? Very naturally, he also thinks of it as a restriction of liberty.

The precautionary measure that Lucifer and Eve could have taken to prevent falling into sin was obedience to Gospel Order; that is, doing what they knew to be right. In the case of Lucifer, he received a clear warning to look on what God had done and submit to it. Lucifer should have asked himself the question,

> "Does this desire to change the structure of God's kingdom come from God through His chosen way?"

The obvious answer would have been, "No!" Lucifer really thought that the change of the structure of God's kingdom was necessary, that it really gave the people liberty. Lucifer was not intentionally deceiving everybody. Rather, he had become so confused that he really thought that what he was proposing was for the best of God's kingdom. He *wanted* to obey God, as he said; he *wanted* to submit to Him, and that is therefore what he intended to do through his new structure.

When Lucifer thought to restructure the kingdom, he really thought he was doing something good. On one side was the truth as Lucifer saw it, and on the other was the established way of

communication—from God through Christ to Lucifer. On which side should he have turned? On the side of God's established way.

Discerning Truth and Error

It is not enough to ask the question,

> "Is it the truth?"

We can always be deceived concerning what is the truth. We must ask,

> "Is it the truth", *and* "Does it come to us through the way of Gospel Order?"

Does this "truth" come to us through God's ordained way? That is the rock on which we need to build. Let us apply this in the case of Eve. When she had wandered away from her husband's side, she thought that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it. Did she have wisdom? Yes. Did she have strength? Yes. In her own mind, did she have sufficient wisdom to discern evil and to withstand it? Yes. In her own mind this was the pure truth. But this "truth" came to her from within herself—but not in the way that God had always communicated truth to her. That was the difference. If she had asked herself the question,

> "Is the truth that I am receiving here coming in God's ordained way?"

The answer would have been:

> "No, it is not coming through God's ordained way, therefore I will reject this message."

This is a very wonderful safety precaution that the Lord has given us in order to guide us to what we can safely study. Error always disguises itself as truth, and we may not be able to discern the difference. But by adhering to Gospel Order, we can avoid the channels through which error comes.

I will tell you a story illustrating how difficult it is to discern error using our own judgment. One day I was sitting in an Adventist church, and the minister was presenting a study about the verse:

Philippians 4
[13] I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

It was a wonderful sermon; I was amazed by the chosen words, and the wonderful rhetoric. I found it quite charming. After the sermon was over, my friend came to me and said,

"What did you think of this sermon?"

I replied,

"Well, that was a good sermon wasn't it?"

His response was,

"I don't think so!"

He repeated the sermon in his own words:

"I can do all things through Christ means that I can be rich with Christ, I can be poor with Christ in the same way. I can be exalted with Christ as I can be humbled with Christ in the same way, but I cannot be perfect with Christ; that is impossible."

I did not discern it, but what the minister preached is,

"It is impossible to overcome every sin."

That was the real heart of the sermon, and I just didn't catch it, yet I really believed it was the truth. I must admit I was not exclusively studying the truth which came through God's channel, as I do today. I was listening to many voices from the Adventist church, so I had less ability than I have today to discern truth and to withstand error.

But this example showed me very clearly that I just cannot trust my own understanding of what is truth. I must have more

security than this, and so I am very happy for the guardianship the Lord has given us. Using the principles of Gospel Order we must now test all doctrine with this question:

> "Is it the truth, *and* does it come through God's ordained channel of communication?"

Born in Rebellion

Both Lucifer and man fell over the same problem: transgression of Gospel Order. We are now born with the spirit of rebellion, and therefore we fear Gospel Order by nature. This is the deeper reason why Gospel Order has been feared. It is not just because Gospel Order has been misrepresented in churches where man rules over man. The true Gospel Order is feared because we find ourselves in a spirit of rebellion against it.

> **The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1114:**
> I question whether genuine rebellion is ever curable...Rebellion and apostasy are in the very air we breathe. We shall be affected by it unless we by faith hang our helpless souls upon Christ.

This is a very startling statement,

> Rebellion and apostasy are in the very air we breathe.

We don't like to be told that we are rebellious; it seems harsh. But this has been the spirit of man since the fall of Adam. He is in a spirit of rebellion against God, and therefore against God's order. This spirit of rebellion fears Gospel Order. It fears that its liberty will be restricted, which is how Satan has portrayed it. We fear that if we restrict ourselves to just one channel of communication, we will miss out on some very essential truth which we really need, in order to live and flourish.

Rebellion against Gospel Order is the great quandary in which we find ourselves. Therefore, Gospel Order is a test for us just as it was for Lucifer when he was in heaven.

Gospel Order was not always a test for Lucifer. When he did not question the position of Christ, it was so natural for him to

obey Christ and to receive every command through this one channel that he did not even question it. It was a joy for him to fulfill everything that came to him this way, even though Christ was an angel similar in appearance to him. But once he began to question the position of Christ, it became very hard for him to accept everything that God gave him through that channel. And now, we find ourselves in the same situation as Lucifer, after he questioned the position of Jesus. It is not easy for us to accept everything that comes through God's channel.

Is Christ Accepted Today?

But we might say:

> "Ah! Is this really so? Is this really so? Don't we accept everything that comes to us through Christ? Doesn't everything we receive come through Christ?"

Today, it is not the position of Christ in heaven that is the real test, because all Christians, at least in theory, acknowledge the position of Christ. Some say He is not fully God, or not fully man, but apart from this, they believe they receive everything from Christ. How then can we know whether they truly acknowledge this principle or not?

God has provided a very clear test. God has established precisely the same structure on earth as He has in heaven. This structure is the Rock. We can see this structure very clearly when Christ was physically on this earth. God communicated all the messages to the disciples merely through one person, Jesus Christ. There is no question about this.

Everybody says if Christ was among us we would obey every word of His; but would we? We should put ourselves into the position of the people back there, who found so great a difficulty in accepting everything that came through Christ. Why did they have these difficulties? Because they saw only the earthen vessel, not the treasure within it.

God gave this order not only in the time of Christ's earthly sojourn, but for all times. God has erected an identical structure on this earth as He did in heaven; that is, He had a messenger on this earth as He had in heaven. This messenger on earth does not take the place of Christ in heaven; he could never do this. But he has the same authority as far as the communication of the message is concerned.

The messenger does not fill the same role as Christ does in heaven: he is not the Problem Solver, the Burden Bearer and so forth; they are different in this respect. But in the communication of the message, God has given the messenger on this earth the same authority as He gave Christ in heaven.

When we study Christ as He was the messenger on this earth, this becomes very obvious. Christ had very great authority because everybody who rejected the message of Christ, on this earth, thereby showed the same rebellion as Lucifer in heaven. The leaders of the Jews especially repeated Lucifer's fall in heaven by rejecting Christ. Whoever accepted Christ as the messenger sent from God, thereby showed that he passed the test—he was prepared to accept what Lucifer could not accept: the communication of the message through only one messenger.

That which is true of Christ as a messenger is true of every other messenger, because God has spoken through others besides Christ.

Hebrews 1

[1] God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
[2] Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.

As God has spoken by His Son, He has also spoken by prophets in the past, or more generally, by messengers. We have had many different messengers since the fall of man, messengers who were God's means of communications to present His messages to the people.

Summary

To summarize:

1. Lucifer had a test in heaven over the messengership of Christ.
2. We are now found having the same rebellious spirit as Lucifer.
3. So for us, Gospel Order is also a test.
4. In order to be reinstated from the position to which Lucifer fell, we must pass the test over the position of Christ.
5. Christ is far away, so God brings the test much closer, giving us a living messenger among us, as we have today and as most generations had. All through history, beginning with Adam and ending today, God has used a messenger to communicate with men. In the past it was critical for the people to accept the message from the messenger. So it is today.

On Earth as in Heaven

God structured the church on this earth in the same way that He structured the church in heaven. Though on a different level, it is the same structure.

> **Matthew 6**
> [9] In this manner, therefore pray: Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be your name.
> [10] Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

How is God's will done in heaven? Always through Christ. Everything God did, He did through Christ. How must God's will be done on earth? Through Christ, and with respect to the communication of messages to the church, through a messenger. Christ receives the message from the Father, and then passes it through a messenger.

The messenger also stands in relation to Christ as Christ does to the Father. As Christ receives what He has to give, and did not

preach or give anything of His own devising, so the messenger receives what he has to give and does not, and must not, give anything of his own devising—only what he receives from the divine source. This is illustrated in the words of Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 1

[4] Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

[5] Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations.

[6] Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

[7] But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for you shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatsoever I command you, you shall speak.

When Jesus was on earth, it is written that he "made no plans for himself":

The Desire of Ages, p. 208:

So utterly was Christ emptied of self that He made no plans for himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will.

He let the Father plan his life. Likewise, He let the Father determine what His message would be to the people. Of himself, Jesus could have enlightened mankind to the end of time, yet He limited himself to the words and works that God gave to Him:

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 22:

Christ might have opened to men the deepest truths of science. He might have unlocked mysteries which have required many centuries of toil and study to penetrate. He might have made suggestions in scientific lines that would have afforded food for thought and stimulus for invention to the close of time. But He did not do this.

He said nothing to gratify curiosity, or to satisfy man's ambition by opening doors to worldly greatness. In all His teaching, Christ brought the mind of man in contact with the Infinite

Mind. He did not direct the people to study men's theories about God, His word, or His works. He taught them to behold Him as manifested in His works, in His word, and by His providences.

Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 34:

He said nothing to gratify curiosity or to stimulate selfish ambition. He did not deal in abstract theories, but in that which is essential to the development of character, that which will enlarge man's capacity for knowing God, and increase his power to do good. . . . He brought their minds in contact with the mind of the Infinite. He unfolded principles that struck at the root of selfishness.

Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 1, p. 245:

Jesus could have flashed bright beams of light on the darkest mysteries of science, but He would not spare a moment from teaching the knowledge of the science of salvation. His time, His knowledge, His faculties, His life itself, were appreciated only as the means of working out the salvation of the souls of men.

Selected Messages, vol. 2, p. 33:

In His life on earth, Christ could have made disclosures which would have eclipsed and assigned to oblivion all human discoveries. He could have opened door after door to mysterious things, and many revelations of eternal realities would have been the sure result. He could have uttered words which would have been as a key to unlock mysteries that would have captivated the minds of generations to the close of time.

But Christ does not open the numerous doors at which human curiosity has been striving to obtain entrance. He does not spread for men a feast that would prove deleterious to their highest interests. He came to plant for men, not the tree of knowledge, but the tree of life...

The Signs of the Times, May 1, 1893:

If Christ had thought it necessary, he could have opened to his disciples mysteries which would have eclipsed and put far out of sight all the discoveries of the human mind. He could have presented facts concerning every subject that would have gone beyond human reasonings, and yet not misrepresented the truth in

any particular. He could have revealed that which was unknown, that which would have put imagination to the stretch, and attracted the thoughts of successive generations to the close of earth's history. He could have opened doors into mysteries that the human mind had sought in vain to open. He could have presented to men a tree of knowledge from which they might have plucked from age to age; but this work was not essential to their soul's salvation, and the knowledge of the character of God was necessary to their eternal interests.

As it is, men have devoted their time and talents to the pursuit of certain kinds of knowledge merely for the gratification of curiosity, and have neglected the momentous subjects that have been plainly revealed, which concern their eternal interests.

Medical Ministry, p. 116:

A minister once said that he could but think that Christ must have known something about science. Of what could this minister have been thinking? Science! Christ could have opened door after door of science. He could have revealed to men treasures of science on which they might have feasted to the present time. But knowing that this knowledge would have been appropriated to unholy uses, He did not open the door.

Jesus restricted himself to revealing only that which would help to reform man's character back into the image of God. This was man's great need. To divert the attention onto other themes, however exciting they might seem, was to endanger lives by wasting the time they needed to get to know God, and giving them tools that they would only use for "unholy uses," or to their own destruction.

So there is a kind of "restriction of liberty" in Gospel Order. This restriction was seen in the garden, where man was warned not to eat of one particular tree, whose fruit would bring death. Gospel Order restricts us from the so-called freedom of sin, and searching into things that will lead to destruction. Sin brings death, and God is not interested in the death of His created beings. His path is the path of life.

In the same way, the messenger, even if he had the capacity to preach many other wonderful things, must give only what the Father gives him to say: the words of salvation. This we call "present truth"—exactly what God gives, at a given time, through a heaven-appointed messenger.

Why a Test?

But why does God use Gospel Order to test us? Isn't it against His character? Does He test people? Does He tempt them? We have very clear words in the Bible to show us that God does not tempt anybody, for example in *James:*

> **James 1**
> [13] Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God: for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.

> **The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1094:**
> What is temptation?—It is the means by which those who claim to be the children of God are tested and tried. We read that God tempted Abraham, that He tempted the children of Israel. This means that He permitted circumstances to occur to test their faith, and lead them to look to Him for help.

God does not arbitrarily impose a temptation upon us, and Gospel Order would not be a temptation if we were in harmony with it. But being found in the spirit of rebellion, God uses it to test us. Why?

1. First of all, we need it. We can never be reinstated in heaven unless we overcome where Lucifer fell. The work of redemption includes complete recovery from sin.
2. Second, God does not tempt us; He permits this situation because it is His way of kingdom-building: to place His heavenly wisdom and knowledge in a vessel that can fully reach His created beings.

In heaven, this was the only way God could communicate to all the angels, it was the only possibility. Christ was the only one qualified for the position—He was God and angel at the same

time. God does not choose from many possible ways, but the ONLY way that leads to success and happiness of His creatures.

As He does in heaven, so He does on earth. When God chose a messenger in order to communicate His messages, He did it because it was the only possible way to help us, the only way to build his kingdom on the earth.

Christ was the primary messenger in heaven; that is the great critical issue around which Gospel Order revolves. Lucifer could not stand this, so he fell; but he could have been saved had he accepted it. He should have asked himself,

> "Does every thought I am receiving come through the God-ordained channel or does it come some other way?"

Then when the thoughts that developed in himself were in opposition to the message that came through God's ordained channel, he should have rejected them. This is not an easy thing to do because we tend to trust most to our own thoughts. To give up our own thoughts for those that come through another channel is really a humbling thing which very few people are able to do. The word for this is "submission," and submission is very unpopular in this world of rebellion.

For Lucifer this was a very hard test, for the spirit of rebellion was in him. We are born into the same situation, and need to overcome where Lucifer failed. To repeat this test for men, the same situation must exist on this earth. Since Christ cannot be personally here for the whole six thousand years of this earths history, God needs to place other humans into this position on earth.

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 54:

> God speaks through His appointed agencies, and let no man, or confederacy of men, insult the Spirit of God by refusing to hear the message of God's word from the lips of His chosen messengers. By refusing to hear the message of God, men close themselves in a chamber of darkness. They shut their own souls

away from vast blessings and rob Christ of the glory that should come to Him, by showing disrespect to His appointed agencies.

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 97:

I have no smooth message to bear to those who have been so long as false guideposts, pointing the wrong way. If you reject Christ's delegated messengers, you reject Christ.

Rejecting Christ's messenger is the same as rejecting Christ, because it is His message. It comes from God, through Christ, to the messenger and through him to the people. So to reject the messenger means to reject the line of communication God is using, the same line He was using in heaven. The way we treat the message through God's ordained messenger is the same way we would treat the message in heaven, if we had been among the angels with Lucifer at the beginning.

Galatians 4

[12] Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as you are: you have not injured me at all.
[13] You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.
[14] And my temptation which was in my flesh you did not despise, nor reject; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

The Galatians had before them a very earthen vessel. Very fragile, as Paul says; they could have despised him because of that, but instead they received him as "Christ Jesus." This was the way that Lucifer should have received Jesus Christ in heaven. They received him the same way the loyal angels received Christ in heaven, thus showing in what way they would have related to Christ in heaven, had they been there. They passed the test of Gospel Order.

The question is will we repeat this rebellion of Lucifer, or not? It all comes down to how we relate ourselves to God's messenger today.

8. The Patriarchal System

WE SAW that Lucifer failed the test of Gospel Order. The fact that Christ was the only messenger, the only one through whom God communicated His information to the angels, was too much for Lucifer to bear.

The Testing of Man

After Lucifer's fall, man was created, with the intention that after a time they should fill the places of Lucifer and the angels who fell with him.

> **Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 473:**
> Satan urges before God his accusations against them, declaring that they have by their sins forfeited the divine protection, and claiming the right to destroy them as transgressors. He pronounces them just as deserving as himself of exclusion from the favor of God. "Are these," he says, "the people who are to take my place in heaven and the place of the angels who united with me?"

For us to be given the places once occupied by the fallen angels, we must submit to, and pass, the same test that they failed. To reproduce the test, God must choose a messenger who is on the same level as we are. If the messenger was on the same level as the angels, he would be far above us; and that would be different than the test Lucifer faced, because Christ possessed the same angelic nature that Lucifer had. The only difference between Christ and Lucifer was the treasure which Christ had in him.

For the test to be repeated for us, we must have a messenger on this earth who possesses the same nature as us, and that is why Christ took upon himself humanity.

God has always worked the same way: He communicates through Christ to His people. With Adam and Eve, God communicated to Christ, Christ passed on the message to the angels, His helpers, and what they received they passed on to Adam and Eve. Sometimes Christ also talked directly with Adam and Eve. But as

he communicated through angels as well, today Christ also talks through an earthly messenger.

When Jesus was on earth, God communicated His will through Him; Jesus was the messenger on this earth to God's people. Jesus needed to become a man in order that the test might be very real for us. If He had remained in an angelic form, the test would not have been the same as it was for Lucifer in heaven. Lucifer had to deal with a person who was on exactly the same level as he was, and yet who had privileges that he did not possess, namely to enter into direct communion with the Father.

When Jesus was on earth, the same test was put to the disciples and the Jews: they had to receive the gospel message through Jesus. While He was here, He was the main communicator of God's will for His people. Not everybody could bear this. The disciples could, and so they came in agreement with Gospel Order, were unified, and received the early rain. But the majority of the Jews could not bear this:

Luke 19
[14] We will not have this man to reign over us.

They could not stand the test, and so they were lost. They did not come in harmony with Gospel Order and the church of God.

If Jesus were among us now, we would have the same test as the Jews and the disciples. But Jesus, being a human, had a limited time on this earth; it would be impossible for Him to live as a human for six thousand years. For this reason there must be another person, like Jesus, to pass on the messages as Jesus did during His earthly sojourn. This is a messenger of God's choosing. With a messenger, we are placed into the same conditions as Lucifer was in heaven, and that is an important part in the question of Gospel Order.

That means if we find it too difficult a thing to accept—to receive the truth through God's appointed messenger—then we are declaring that we are of the same mind as Lucifer, and we too

could not accept Christ as the messenger to us. We would, like him, declare that we would accept God, but we would not submit to Christ.

If a woman wants to marry a man and she wants to know how this man will deal with her in the future, what does she do? She looks at how he deals with his mother. If he is rude to his mother, then she knows that he will be rude to her. This is good counsel that experienced people can give to young people who are intending to marry.

Likewise, if we cannot accept a messenger on this earth as being the channel of God's message to us, then we could not accept Christ if we were in heaven. It is the same thing, and the whole universe witnesses to it.

The Place of the Messenger

Note though, we do not place the messenger on the same level as Christ in heaven. Christ is still the messenger even for the messenger on this earth. He is always the connecting link; this we must emphasize again and again. The messenger is not the Problem Solver, nor the Burden Bearer, nor the Plan Maker, but he is the communicator of the message. What does this mean in practical terms?

- When you have a problem, who do you go to? You go directly to Christ, or to the Father through Christ.
- And when you have a burden, do you tell the messenger all your burdens? No, you tell it to Christ, or to God through Christ.
- And when you want to know plans for your personal life, where shall you go? Again, to God through Christ.

But if we want to know what is present truth? To Christ, through the messenger, that is the path. When we want to know something about the message, we go through the messenger.

Some people have the idea that if we want to know something about present truth, we do not need to go to the present messen-

ger, but we can go to God directly, or to Christ directly. But, as we have read in *Testimonies to Ministers*, when we reject Christ's delegated messengers, we reject Christ. We will not receive any light when we bypass the messenger. It was impossible for Lucifer to receive any light from the Father when he bypassed Christ. That is the same principle, the same structure in heaven as on earth.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 122:

Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world.

What does God do when somebody desires light? He directs them to the channel of light to the world, which on a larger scale is His church, and in a special sense is His messenger. When somebody thinks he can receive light by bypassing the messenger, he is mistaken.

There is an idea in the world that when several people independently go to God, they will arrive at the same truth. This sounds theoretically very nice, but in practice it does not work, because God does not structure His kingdom in this way. He always uses a channel of light and this channel of light is a human channel.

The Desire of Ages, p. 296:

As His representatives among men, Christ does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save. Christ took upon himself humanity, that He might reach humanity.

This is simply Gospel Order. That is the structure of His kingdom. As it was in heaven, so it is on earth.

Matthew 6

[10] Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

When we pray this prayer we say,

> "Please structure your kingdom on earth exactly as it was structured in heaven. As it was structured in heaven with a faithful messenger, so please structure your kingdom on this earth too."

This is the only way by which we may become unified in the truth and be saved in the present truth. The only ones who can pray this prayer are those who are convinced that this is the order of God, and is the only safe way. Those who have come to love Gospel Order like to pray this prayer, and they pray it understandingly. Let us come to appreciate the safety of God's way.

Let us also see very clearly that it was because of the transgression of these principles that this misery came over Satan and likewise over mankind. In fact the misery in which we find ourselves is the direct result of the transgression of this principle. This structure, which was in heaven, should be on earth too. Let us pray this prayer with all our heart.

> **Matthew 6**
> [10] Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The messages we received in the past all came through one human being. This is considered by many to be very unpopular, and unsafe. They think that if you listen to one messenger, you run the risk of becoming one-sided, narrow-minded, and Papal. For this reason, we must dwell a bit on the position of the messenger, to make it more clear.

The messenger does not give his own ideas to the people. If he did, the whole system would be a very dangerous system indeed, a papal system. He only passes on what he receives. He is somebody who channels through the light from one side to the other, which makes this a very wonderful system.

Again, what can we say about the history of our movement? God has repeatedly worked like this. He has used one messenger

only. Does this mean that we cannot receive any truth directly? God communicates all the principal messages through His primary messenger. That does not mean that others do not receive wonderful insights into these truths. There will be a deeper understanding of truths by others as well, but as far as the principal messages are concerned, they come through this one channel.

Once God has established a messenger among us, we can trust that God will give him messages of truth. At the same time, we must continue to restudy the message, in order to confirm and establish the truth. This is our part.

Now let's search history to see what God has done, and how He has consistently structured His kingdom on earth.

The Patriarchal System

We will start in the Old Testament, beginning with the time after the fall. After the fall of man, Christ established a messenger through whom He communicated His light and present truth to all the others. Who was His first primary messenger? Adam.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 82:**
>
> For nearly a thousand years Adam lived among men, a witness to the results of sin. Faithfully he sought to stem the tide of evil. He had been commanded to instruct his posterity in the way of the Lord; and he carefully treasured what God had revealed to him, and repeated it to succeeding generations.
>
> To his children and children's children, to the ninth generation, he described man's holy and happy estate in Paradise, and repeated the history of his fall, telling them of the sufferings by which God had taught him the necessity of strict adherence to His law, and explaining to them the merciful provisions for their salvation. Yet there were but few who gave heed to his words.

That is how we find the messengership of Adam described, he received revelations from God and he passed these revelations on to the succeeding generations, even to the ninth generation. That means he revealed the message of God to generations of great

great grandchildren. They all looked up to him as their messenger.

This special system which God placed on earth in this time is called the Patriarchal system. In the Patriarchal system, the messenger was not only the communicator of a message, he was also the father, the head of the household, and the leader. He was the head in secular matters as well as in religious matters.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 141:

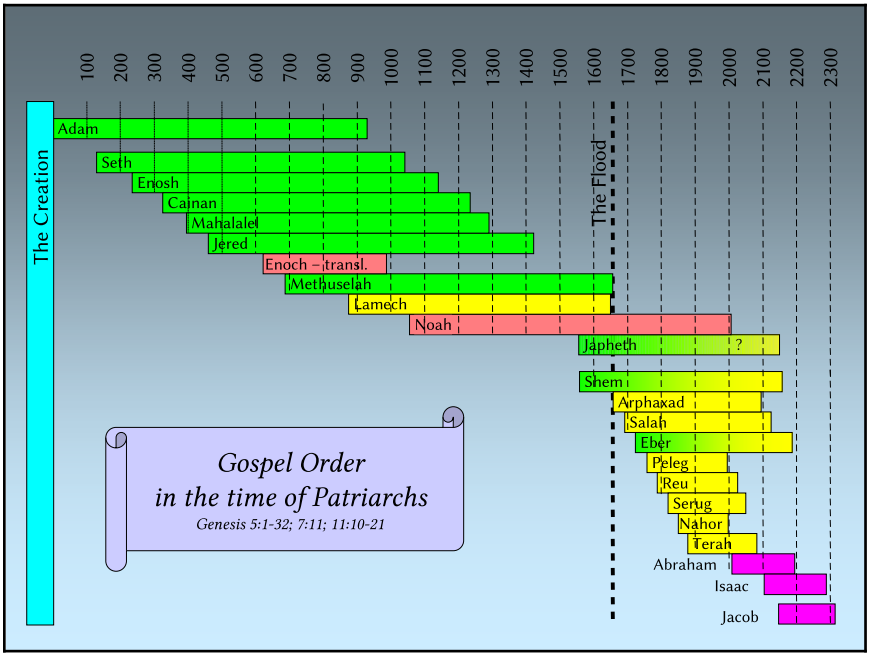
> In early times the father was the ruler and priest of his own family, and he exercised authority over his children, even after they had families of their own. His descendants were taught to look up to him as their head, in both religious and secular matters. This patriarchal system of government, Abraham endeavoured to perpetuate, as it tended to preserve the knowledge of God.

The Patriarchal system involved the father exercising authority over his children even after they had families of their own. It was not like now: when the children become old the father has no more say in their affairs. No, he was the head still, in both secular and in religious matters.

In secular matters he ruled them according to the principles of righteousness; and in the religious matters, he was simply the messenger; he passed on what he had received from God. But he did not just pass it on technically, he added to it his own testimony, his own experience, because Adam had really experienced the difference between paradise and after the fall. What a sad experience it was; he could really put emphasis on what God told him, and how important it was to keep the law and not to break it. He must have been a very good messenger, having had such an experience.

How long did Adam remain a king and priest like this? As long as he lived: to the ninth generation. Nine generations is up to Lamech, so he lived still in the time of Lamech then he died. Who then became the messenger to the tenth generation? Seth. Seth

was the next one who was the head of the family. He was the one who was the father of them and he was their head even after they had families of their own, so he was the messenger as long as he lived. And the next messenger was the oldest son, provided he outlived his father. And so we have several messengers down to the time of Jacob.



It is important to understand the principle which we just read:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 141:

In early times the father was the ruler and priest of his own family and he exercised his authority even after they had families of their own. His descendants were taught to look up to him as their head, in both religious and secular matters.

The secular matters we can leave away today because they belong to the king of the state or to the president. But the religious matters apply in the same way as they did back there. We look up to the messenger as the communicator of the message from God, as they once looked up to Adam.

Let's imagine a person like Lamech, or Jared, saying;

> "Well Adam, I am not interested in what you say. I will ask God directly what happened during the fall and how we must keep the law."

What would God have told him? Either nothing, or He would have told him to go to Adam.

> "That is my channel of communication to you and to bypass this channel of communication means that you cannot be blessed. Impossible."

So that is the earliest time of history in which we find primary messengers.

9. The System of Prophets

NEXT comes the time when Israel was in bondage in Egypt. There, understandably, the patriarchal system could not function properly because they were prisoners. They could not have a head of family both in secular and religious matters. In secular matters it was impossible; and even in religious matters, there was much loss of the knowledge of God. So, God had to build up a movement again.

When He built up His people on earth, He used the same structure and configuration as in heaven: a single messenger. This time, however, it was not the oldest Israelite, or the head of all the Israelites, but another person. The patriarchal system, as it was before, did not exist anymore. Likewise today the messenger is not chosen according to the patriarchal order but after other criteria.

God Chooses a Man

Let us now investigate how God started to build during the Egyptian captivity. He started by choosing a single messenger. That is His system, that is His structure. How does He choose His messenger?

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 245:**
> The elders of Israel were taught by angels that the time for their deliverance was near, and that Moses was the man whom God would employ to accomplish this work.

God did not speak to one of the Israelites during the night time, saying,

> "Please gather together all the elders in Israel, and then counsel together whom you might choose, and then finally I will give my endorsement to this man and he will lead you out."

This is *not* how God did it. But He could have done it like this, if He had been like other men. But He structures His kingdom only in one way, and this is the way that is for the happiness of His

people. So what did He do? He did *not* counsel with the elders. He did *not* ask them,

> "What do you think, whom shall we choose?"

He did *not* ask Moses beforehand,

> "Moses do you think you are the right person or would you like to do this?"

He did nothing of this sort. But what did He do? He just informed the elders, through angels,

> "This is the man I have chosen."

And the angels also instructed Moses that Jehovah had chosen him to break the bondage of His people.

So both were informed independently by God. You know how ministers are usually chosen today in many churches: one older minister goes around and looks for candidates and he asks them if they would like to become a minister. And this is how God could have done it. He could have said to Moses,

> "Wouldn't you like to become a messenger for me? My mouthpiece, my instrument to lead them out?"

But there was nothing like this. He came down and said without question,

> "You are the man."

When God comes down without asking you whether you want to be the person, then sometimes you feel like you are over-ridden. You would like to be asked first. Likewise, the church likes to be asked who the man is. But nothing of this sort does God do, and this is one very significant feature of God's structure. When He chooses persons, He never ever counsels with man about it. He just gives the information, this is my person, and that is it. He informs the church, and He informs the person concerned. The information that God gave to His church was very significant:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 245:

The elders of Israel were taught by angels...

That's a very clear revelation of God's will. This manner of God informing the church should be well remembered by us. If we have the question;

"How shall we know who the messenger is?"

How is this question answered? Shall we ask him,

"Are you the messenger?"

Do we test his teachings, and if he agrees with the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, then he must be the one?

Isaiah 8

[20] To the law and to the testimony.

But there might be several persons who agree with the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible. Then who will be the one who leads Israel out? Don't you think that there were several people in Israel who agreed with these principles? There were, after all, some worshipers of the true God among Israel. So which one?

Well the answer is very simple: God tells His church. God is responsible for telling His church and however they need to be informed, whether it be by angel or another way, that is His concern. But the fact is, God informs the church who the messenger is. It is not guess work. There needs to be no voting about it; no wandering around. We *will* know by God's information. And all of God's enlightened children will know this. So let us stick to this principle that God will inform His church who His messenger is.

Did God do this in heaven? Certainly. At the beginning, we stated that every principle we studied must be founded on the Rock. So did God inform the angels who His messenger was? Definitely, He did so by example, by consistently transmitting His light through His messenger. But then in addition to that, He gave

a sermon to all the inhabitants of the universe and told them that this was so. God definitely informed the church who His messenger was. And as He did in heaven, so He will do on earth in the same way.

He likewise informs the person involved, and tells him that he shall be the man. There was no need for the elders of Israel to go to Moses and tell him that the Lord had chosen him. That was not necessary because God went to Moses himself.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p 245:
Angels instructed Moses also that Jehovah had chosen him to break the bondage of His people.

Likewise it was not necessary for Moses to go to the elders and tell them that God had called him. So today the messenger does not need to go to the church and tell them,

"I am your messenger, please accept me as such."

If he would do this, then this would mean that his calling is not from God, because God will inform the church separately. The messenger does not need to contend for this position. Likewise, if the church comes to the messenger and says,

"Please be our messenger,"

—then he is mistaken, because God will inform him personally and directly. There must be a flow of information to the church on one side and to the messenger on the other side. And when both sides are informed, and they find that God has informed both of them individually, then there will be a mutual agreement between them.

Not a Democracy or a Papacy

That is the way God chose Moses and that is the way God has chosen every messenger since. But we like to be asked before such an important move is made, don't we? And when people are just told, "this is the way," some can get very upset.

Democracy is one form of this thought, that the people have the right to say who can be their leader. We know that democracy is a safety precaution against dictatorship, or you can also call it a precaution against popery. There are a number of essential differences between the structure of the Papacy and the structure of God's kingdom:

1. The Pope has no connection with heaven. At the top is God, in the middle is Christ, and down here we have the Pope. You could also say, the dictator and the people. But there is no connection between heaven and earth through the Pope. He receives no messages from God, therefore what can he give to the people? Only his own ideas.
2. The Pope rules over the people according to his wishes. He makes the plans for the direction of the church, he decides what they shall believe, and so forth. He rules over them.

This is not so in God's structure. When God chooses a messenger, the chosen one does not rule over the others but he is only the channel of light. In God's church there are different tasks and one task is that there must be somebody who channels the light to the others and this task is given to the messenger.

And so we find at least two very essential differences between a dictatorship and the structure of God's kingdom. In the case of the elders of Israel, angels told the elders,

> "This is God's choice."

The Recognition of the Church

God did not always employ the same way to inform His church, but He does inform it.

> It should be repeated, that it may not be forgotten, that every responsibility in The Church is the direct gift of God by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.
>
> And the membership of The Church, by the Spirit are to be able to recognize the gift upon the individual and accordingly to rec-

ognize that individual in the place and work in the Church for which the gift has prepared him. *Acts* 13:2-4; 6:3-5.[16]

We must be able to recognize the messenger by the Holy Spirit. God comes to a person and tells him,

"Here, you are my worker in this respect."

And He enables him with a gift. Then by the Spirit He tells the church,

"This is the person whom I have gifted with this treasure and he is to serve you because the treasure is in this vessel."

And then both come together and mutually they agree. The church has to be very careful in this because sometimes the voice of God and the voice of the Holy Spirit are mistaken. When we receive a plan from God for our individual lives and we think that this is from God, then what precautionary measure do we take to make sure that it is from God? We bring the plan back to God…

Steps to Christ, p. 70:
…to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate.

God chose the worker. It does not need to be an exalted position. God is not exalting the person, but just giving them a work. He informs the church about this worker, and both are informed independently and then they both come together mutually.

I believe very strongly in this mutual agreement, because too much human work has been done in the churches in the past, especially in the fallen churches. I remember being at school in the SDA church. We had our last class in school; it was not a ministerial class but an ordinary school class. A leader came around and gave a speech about needing workers and ministers. And then one person rose and asked the question,

"Well how do we know that God has chosen us?"

[16] A. T. Jones, *Lessons from the Reformation*, p. 109. The original title of this book is *The Reformation: 14th to 16th Century.*

And he said:

> "Well, I tell you now that God has chosen you through me."

That was how he was supposed to get the position of a minister. When we see this kind of work, we see that there is no mutual agreement. The person who asked the question was really dependent on the other person.

But in order for God to lead His church,—and this is an invisible leading,—there must be on the one side the calling of the worker directly from God, and there must be the information of God to the church, as we just read in *Lessons from the Reformation.*

The same thing applies in marriage. Marriage is also an establishment of God's kingdom, only on another level. We have God's kingdom in heaven, we have God's kingdom on earth in the church, and we have God's kingdom in the family. All these are the same kingdom, only at different levels.

In the family we also have a messenger and that is the head of the family. This person has to be chosen by God and there has to be information received on both sides independently. And when this information comes from God, then there is a mutual agreement between both. This call of God has to be tested very carefully, to confirm that the choice is of God. And the way which a husband or a wife is chosen is not less important than when a messenger is chosen in the church; it is to be God's choice not our own.

- How often do humans interfere by trying to bring together people whom they think are suitable with each other.
- How often does one partner try to influence the other.

When we see this kind of situation, we see that the work of God,—the invisible leading of the Spirit in the family,—is broken; it is destroyed by human works. And so we must be very careful to let God guide in heaven, on earth in the church, and on earth in the family. There must be mutual agreement when these two

partners come together. In the same way there must be mutual agreement when the messenger and the church acknowledge each other. This can happen only when God gives the information. This was the case in Israel.

When God informs the church, this information has an effect only when the church has the spiritual eyesalve. If the church has no connection with God, if they are very earth bound, if they are very legalistic, or whatever, it is very hard for God to tell them who His messenger is.

He can use mighty measures: to send down angels to inform the elders of Israel was a mighty measure, and very visible. Was this sufficient for the church to acknowledge God's choice? Did the church understand God's choice? Sad to say, they didn't, and this proves to us that the church needs spiritual eyesalve, as well as the messenger. Both need it.

By God's Power, Not Man's Power

Moses accepted the choice and by doing this, he accepted Gospel Order. He really saw that God's choice is the best and he prepared himself as well as he could at the courts of Egypt for his future task.

One day Moses saw an Egyptian flogging an Israelite and he became so upset about it that he quickly slew the Egyptian and buried him. He thought nobody had seen the matter. Later he tried to pacify a struggle between two Israelites, admonishing them that they should not fight against each other, but should be united. Then one of these men turned against Moses, questioning him as to whether he would slay him like he did the Egyptian.

> **Acts 7**
> [25] For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they did not understand.

These reports of slaying the Egyptians were soon carried to the Egyptian court and Moses had to flee. When Moses killed the

Egyptian, he made a bad mistake. This action grew out of his concept that God would deliver them through warfare.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 247:

In slaying the Egyptian, Moses had fallen into the same error so often committed by his fathers, of taking into their own hands the work that God had promised to do. It was not God's will to deliver His people by warfare, as Moses thought, but by His own mighty power, that the glory might be ascribed to Him alone.



What is warfare? The human instrumentality. Men suppose that they can do this in their own strength without the treasure in the vessel, and the result is warfare. But they were to be delivered, not by warfare, but by the mighty power of God. When God delivered them by His own mighty power, He still used an earthen vessel, and His own mighty power was the treasure in the earthen vessel. For what reason did God do this?

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 247:
...that the glory might be ascribed to Him alone.

2 Corinthians 4
[7] But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

The treasure is God's mighty power. The earthen vessels are the people through whom God wants to reveal His mighty power. When Moses killed the Egyptian he did not fully understand this concept. He did not see that it was the treasure which gave strength for the accomplishment, and not the earthen vessel. So he did not fully understand Gospel Order, even though he accepted the call.

God's Plan Not Changed by Human Weakness

But now his lack of understanding of Gospel Order was revealed. When Moses fled, he thought that now his messengership had ended, that it was over forever. That was a serious mistake also. Moses was badly mistaken and the same failure that led to his killing the Egyptian was also revealed when he thought that his messengership had ended. He did not see that God was using the earthen vessel to place in it His treasure.

What does earthen vessel mean? It comes from the earth, and the earth is a symbol for humanity and also for sin. For sin is in everything that comes from down here. God is using this material, the sinful human being, and in this He puts His treasure in order that it is obvious that the work is of God and not of man.

Ephesians 2
[8] For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
[9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.
[10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

When Moses looked back on his sin, he believed that this had disqualified him from his calling. In what way was this thought a rejection of Gospel Order?

The Desire of Ages, p. 826:

> The gospel is to be presented, not as a lifeless theory, but as a living force to change the life. God desires that the receivers of His grace shall be witnesses to its power. Those whose course has been most offensive to Him He freely accepts; when they repent, He imparts to them His divine Spirit, places them in the highest positions of trust, and sends them forth into the camp of the disloyal to proclaim His boundless mercy.

Had Moses' course been offensive to God? Certainly. So what will God do? He will use this vessel which has fallen, whose course has been most offensive to Him. He will accept the vessel and forgive the person and then will put His treasure into this person. And this will be done for one purpose: to send this earthen vessel into the camp of the disloyal in order to save other earthen vessels.

That is His way of doing things. In other words, God uses the very material which He comes to save, in order to save others. Moses' mistake did not disqualify him for this work because God freely forgives. If he had rejected forgiveness that would have been another matter, but God freely forgives and puts His treasure into the earthen vessel and then sends them into the camp of the disloyal.

The Desire of Ages, p. 296:

> As His representatives among men, Christ does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save.

That is God's system, that is His method.

The Desire of Ages, p. 297:

> He who called the fishermen of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and

sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God.

2 Corinthians 4 [RV]

[7] We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves.

This is why the preaching of the gospel was committed to erring men rather than to the angels. It is manifest that the power which works through the weakness of humanity is the power of God; and thus we are encouraged to believe that the power which can help others as weak as ourselves can help us. And those who are themselves "compassed with infirmity"[17] should be able to...

Hebrews 5

[2] ...have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.

Having been in peril themselves, they are acquainted with the dangers and difficulties of the way, and for this reason are called to reach out for others in like peril. There are souls perplexed with doubt, burdened with infirmities, weak in faith, and unable to grasp the Unseen; but a friend whom they can see, coming to them in Christ's stead, can be a connecting link to fasten their trembling faith upon Christ.

This is the method, this is the system that God uses. He uses earthen vessels. The earthen vessel is an erring man who has fallen and Moses was such a person. That was the very material that God wanted to use to put His treasure into, and to send him into the camp of the disloyal.

[17] *Hebrews* 5:2.

10. More Lessons from Moses

MOSES made the terrible mistake of killing the Egyptian, but it was only an out-growth of his misconception of God's messenger-ship, or of Gospel Order. He tried to do accomplish what only God's power—the treasure,—could accomplish. He expected that God would so strengthen the earthen vessel that the earthen vessel could do it, while in fact it is the treasure which does the work.

Treasure in Earthen Vessels

2 Corinthians 4

[7] We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

If the earthen vessel accomplished the work, then the glory would go to the vessel. But since the treasure is doing the work, the glory is going to God.

God uses people as an instrument to bring others to the truth. In my experience I find that I usually do not do much. It is God who does it all and I hardly ever have to play a great role. This makes it obvious that it is the treasure and not the vessel which is doing the work.

When Moses slew the Egyptian he did not understand that. This act was performed out of a misconception. He should have seen that God is using the earthen vessel as it is, and then He puts His treasure into it and sends it into the camp of the disloyal.

The Desire of Ages, p. 297:

2 Corinthians 4 [RV]

[7] We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves.

This is why the preaching of the gospel was committed to erring men rather than to the angels. It is manifest that the power which works through the weakness of humanity is the power of God; and thus we are encouraged to believe that the power which can help others as weak as ourselves can help us.

This also dismisses the idea that God's messenger has an exalted position above the others. He is a worker just like the others, only his specific work is in conveying the message from God. The one chosen to do this work is a person who is not perfect, but someone who has erred, and yet God is still willing to use this weak humanity in order to come near to the others.

The Desire of Ages, p. 297

Having been in peril themselves, they are acquainted with the dangers and difficulties of the way, and for this reason are called to reach out for others in like peril. There are souls perplexed with doubt, burdened with infirmities, weak in faith, and unable to grasp the Unseen; but a friend whom they can see, coming to them in Christ's stead, can be a connecting link to fasten their trembling faith upon Christ.

Since this vessel is earthen, it can come very near to the other earthen vessels. And since it is carrying the treasure, it can bring that treasure to the other vessels.

Let us turn to one of the last chapters in *The Great Controversy*, "The Controversy Ended." There is a description of the throne as it appears before Satan and his host as they approach to attack the city. The throne is described, and the arrangement around the throne.

The Great Controversy, p. 665:

Nearest to the throne are those who were once zealous in the cause of Satan, but who, plucked as brands from the burning, have followed their Savior with deep, intense devotion. Next are those who perfected Christian characters in the midst of falsehood and infidelity, those who honored the law of God when the Christian world declared it void, and the millions, of all ages, who were martyred for their faith. And beyond is the...

Revelation 7

[9] ...great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,...before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

Their warfare is ended, their victory won.

Here is the throne and there are several people around the throne. There are the martyrs, the hundred and forty four thousand, and the great multitude of the redeemed. Yet there is another class also. Who are those who stand nearest to the throne?

The Great Controversy, p. 665:

Those who were once zealous in the cause of Satan, but who, plucked as brands from the burning, have followed their Savior with deep, intense devotion.

Who may some of these be? Paul was zealous in the cause of Satan when he persecuted the early church. Mary was a great sinner, and in this sense she was zealous in the cause of Satan. Both showed this deep, intense devotion on earth. But now they are nearest to the throne; nearer even than the one hundred and forty four thousand; nearer even than the martyrs. This means that God can use them best in explaining His mystery.

This is His method of working. He uses this earthen vessel, forgives it, and places His treasure in it, and then sends it into the enemy's camp. When God works in this way, He uses a very skillful method. He comes as near as possible to the sinners in order to save them and He also comes right into the heart of the enemy's camp. This does not excuse sin. We cannot say,

"Well, now I will err often, I will sin a lot, so that I can be such a fit vessel."

If we were to behave in this way, we would lose the treasure and would end up in darkness. But once we are delivered out of darkness and God puts His treasure in us, then we are fit to go into the enemy's camp. So there is hope for all those who have erred, who have made mistakes. In fact, God wants to use them to come very close to other erring people. That is the way He works.

Jeremiah thought that the messenger must be a person who is able to make wise plans, who is able to arrange where he has to go; one who is able to make good speeches and to formulate the

truth in a wonderful way. Moses thought in a similar way, and therefore when he made this mistake, he thought,

> "Now I am disqualified. I have shown that I am not able."

Certainly he had shown that he was not able, but who is able to do such a work? No man is able. Only when God puts the treasure in us do we become of any value in the work of God. And so likewise with the messenger.

The Misconceptions of Moses

This was the calling of Moses, and let us now see how his misconception of this order, of this structure of God's kingdom, led him to have great difficulty when God approached him a second time.

Exodus 3

[1] Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.
[2] And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.
[3] And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.
[4] And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.
[5] And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.

The meeting place was arranged by God in such a manner that He would meet Moses alone and again give him the commission that he was the man through whom God wanted to deliver Israel. God met Moses alone, and this was in agreement with Gospel Order. He could have chosen other means. For example, He could have gone again to the elders, and asked them to come together and choose a person. Or He could have selected several persons to lead Israel out. But no, He again remained true to His one way.

He came alone to Moses and told him,

"You are the man."



Exodus 3
[7] And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt…

This must have been music in the ears of Moses, because Moses was also praying about the oppression of his people. He must have felt a great remorse because he thought that his mistake had contributed to the oppression. So when God said,

"I have seen the oppression of my people,"

—that would have been a great consolation, knowing that God had the same feelings. What an encouragement for Moses to hear those words.

Exodus 3

[7] ...and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

[8] And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians...

How Moses must have leaped for joy when he heard those words. He must have thought,

"Finally God can deliver them, and redeem my failure!"

[8] ...and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

[9] Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

Up to this point, the message was absolutely welcome for Moses.

[10] Come now therefore, and I will send you unto Pharaoh, that you may bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

This was the unwelcome part of the message. Up to this point he must have been very joyful, but now his hope sank because he still held the false concept. He did not see that we have such a treasure in an earthen vessel that the glory might be of God, and not of us. Let us observe how God gave the message to him. He did not come to him and tell him,

"Moses, you know I have called you, now please go again."

No, He came and said to him first of all,

"I have come down to deliver the people."

In other words,

"I will do this with my might."

It is the treasure that does the work. And then He said,

"Please be the vessel for it. Please let me pour the treasure into the vessel."

If Moses had understood this concept—the treasure in the earthen vessel—he would have immediately seen what a privilege this is. He would have seen that it is possible, not in his might, but in God's might. But Moses was in a perilous situation, because he was a wanted man in Egypt. He was guilty of murder, and they suspected him of trying to overthrow the government. To go there would be to imperil his life. Furthermore, Pharaoh was one of the most stubborn people and to go to him and tell him,

"Please let my people go,"

–seemed to be an impossible plan. It was only impossible if you think in terms of the human vessel. But God had said,

"I will deliver my people."

The treasure would do the work, in the earthen vessel. God invited Moses to be the vessel that He needed to carry the glory of His treasure. God needed the vessel.

The Desire of Ages, p. 296:

Christ took upon himself humanity, that He might reach humanity. *Divinity needed humanity*; for it required both the divine and the human to bring salvation to the world. *Divinity needed humanity*, that humanity might afford a channel of communication between God and man.

God needed the earthen vessel. He said,

"Please be my earthen vessel in which I can pour in my treasure."

Exodus 3

[11] And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

Can you see the false concept here? The right concept would be:

> "Who am I? I am only an earthen vessel, but You are the treasure who pours into this earthen vessel and therefore I will go."

But instead he said,

> "Who am I?"

He was just looking on the visible "I." And so God again explains to him the concept of true messengership:

[12] And He said, Certainly I will be with you; and this shall be a token unto you, that I have sent you: When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.
[13] And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers has sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them?
[14] And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you.

So in very short but pointed words He said,

> "I will certainly be with you."

[13] And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers has sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them?
[14] And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you.

This question of Moses:

"What shall I say to the people?"

–shows us another problem which faced Moses. Forty years before, angels visited the elders of Israel and told them,

"Moses is my man,"

–but the people did not understand. So how should they now understand forty years later? What could God do to make them understand? If they didn't have the spiritual eyesalve back then to understand how God was speaking to them concerning His messenger, how could they have it now? God also met this objection because He had seen this problem already beforehand, and so He told Moses what to say:

"The Great I AM has sent me."

What if Moses came to the people, and he said,

"God has sent me,"

–and they replied,

"Well you had a bad dream, Moses, you must be mistaken"?

Place yourself in the position of the messenger. He receives the call from God,

"Please go to my people and give them this message."

The messenger does not necessarily know that God has also spoken to the people. So when he goes there, he must wonder,

"Will they believe what I tell them, that it is not from me, but from God? What will they say?"

When God's choice is clear, then we can depend on this, that He has prepared the way for it. When God gives the messenger the task,

"Give my people this message,"

–then He has prepared the way for it by telling the people that this is His messenger. For this reason the messenger does not need to fear, he just needs to do his part. And so Moses just needed to say,

"I AM WHO I AM has sent me."

Exodus 3

[16] Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt:
[17] And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

And now God says something that is very important for the messenger:

[18] And they shall hearken to your voice: and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and you shall say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us: and now let us go, we beseech you, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.

What a request against the most powerful ruler of the earth in those days!

"Please let go your captives for three days' journey."

This Moses could not do, but the treasure is able to do everything. It just needs a vessel to carry it, that is all.

[19] And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.
[20] And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.

[21] And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when you go, you shall not go empty.

God made it very clear that it was not the work of the earthen vessel, but the work of the treasure, so that the exceeding greatness of the power, may be of God and not of Moses. But Moses still did not understand the concept of true messengership. He did not build the kingdom of God according to God's way. Or we could say, he did not pray,

Matthew 6
[10] Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And so he raised further objections:

Exodus 4
[1] But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord has not appeared unto you.

This objection showed that he just saw the earthen vessel before him, nothing more. God had already said,

"Look, my treasure is in there and they will receive you."

After this clear teaching of the Lord to Moses, this objection was inexcusable. His questions at the beginning were excusable, because he came out of great darkness. He did not have the privilege to study Gospel Order as we can today and also, he was a very humble man and it is always difficult for the messenger to accept his call.

When he continued to reject, he really rejected Gospel Order. But God was patient with him. He gave him the sign of the stick which became a serpent. And then He gave the sign of the hand that became white as snow with leprosy, and then whole again when Moses stuck it in his coat. He should have gone, but he still raised objections.



He said,

> "I cannot speak properly. I have been so long away from Egypt that when I go back there, my language is very bad and so I cannot really give them this message."

Here again he showed that he was looking only on the earthen vessel. Human language is an earthen vessel, but the message that is in it is the treasure. It is the same with the object lessons of Christ. The parables He used were the earthen vessel, but the teaching in these parables, this was the treasure. And so Moses showed an ignorance of those principles that was really remarkable. Then finally God said,

> "Well, I have made your tongue."

Again He repeated this truth,

> "I am the treasure, please be my vessel."

Finally Moses said again,

> "No, please not me."

God Meets Moses Halfway

That is when God met him halfway and said,

> "Okay then, if this is so, then I must give you Aaron."

Aaron was Moses' brother who had stayed in Egypt and was very able to speak, and He said,

> "He shall be your spokesman."

So when Moses went to Egypt and spoke with the elders, and to Pharaoh, he never spoke to them directly, but always through Aaron, using him like an interpreter. And this is not a very effective way of talking to the people. It was a compromise which was necessary because of Moses' rejection of a principle of Gospel Order.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 254:**
>
> The Lord said unto him, "Who has made man's mouth?"...[and then we read Moses' excuses]...These excuses at first proceeded from humility and diffidence; but after the Lord had promised to remove all difficulties, and to give him final success, then any further shrinking back and complaining of his unfitness showed distrust of God. It implied a fear that God was unable to qualify him for the great work to which He had called him, or that He had made a mistake in the selection of the man.
>
> Moses was now directed to Aaron, his elder brother, who, having been in daily use of the language of the Egyptians, was able to speak it perfectly.

The choice of Aaron came after Moses had gone one step too far. The choice of Aaron should never have been made. It was a serious impediment to the work. Eventually Aaron made a terrible mistake on Mount Sinai, where he led the people in the worship of the golden calf. He did this because he was not firmly standing against the wishes of the people, and this weakness of character was very revealing.

If Aaron would have allowed God to change him, to the extent that He changed Moses, to make him a vessel in which He could

put His treasure, then likewise he would have been as qualified as Moses. But not every person is willing to give themselves so completely to God that He can forgive them and put His treasure in them. God does not find everybody suitable for every work. He knows best who He can choose and for what work. And if He chooses one for the work of giving the light to the people, then He knows that the person will be faithful to the end, because He does not tempt us above what we are able to bear.

Moses Learns Through Obedience

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 255:

A man will gain power and efficiency as he accepts the responsibilities that God places upon him, and with his whole soul seeks to qualify himself to bear them aright. However humble his position or limited his ability, that man will attain true greatness who, trusting to divine strength, seeks to perform his work with fidelity. Had Moses relied upon his own strength and wisdom, and eagerly accepted the great charge, he would have evinced his entire unfitness for such a work. The fact that a man feels his weakness is at least some evidence that he realizes the magnitude of the work appointed him, and that he will make God his counselor and his strength.

Once Moses accepted the call, he accepted it wholeheartedly. We should not forget to mention this, because after God gave him Aaron, he accepted it, and from that time onward, Moses never again laid down his work. He kept faithful to the end. This is one of the great attributes of Moses, that he kept stable in spite of all the difficulties and hardships that he experienced later.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 255:

The divine command given to Moses found him self-distrustful, slow of speech, and timid. He was overwhelmed with a sense of his incapacity to be a mouthpiece for God to Israel. But having once accepted the work, he entered upon it with his whole heart, putting all his trust in the Lord. The greatness of his mission called into exercise the best powers of his mind. God blessed his ready obedience, and he became eloquent, hopeful, self-pos-

sessed, and well fitted for the greatest work ever given to man. This is an example of what God does to strengthen the character of those who trust Him fully and give themselves unreservedly to His commands.

The human vessel, even though it is fragile, even though it is earthen, still can be sanctified through the treasure. Because Moses finally accepted the call and went into his work wholeheartedly, "he became eloquent, hopeful, self-possessed and well fitted for the greatest work ever given to man." But even to the end of time, he always distrusted his earthen vessel, and trusted instead the treasure that was inside. That is one of the great characteristics of Moses, which we can gladly study as an example.

So that was the confirmation of the call of Moses and in it we see Gospel Order at work. Initially, Moses did not understand Gospel Order, and God tried to teach him. All these things are written for our learning so that we understand the position and work of the messenger today. It is necessary that we all understand this in order to better appreciate the message and also so we can be fitted for the important work that is yet to come upon us.

11. Confirming the Messenger

WE WILL now consider Moses' work as messenger to Israel. God always kept true to His calling of Moses as the messenger. There was not one single second messenger in the camp. Everything that God revealed, He revealed through Moses. Whenever other people tried fill that place, then the Lord did not sanctify them, but rather, these people either died or were separated from the people of Israel.

The Deliverance from Egypt

God confirmed the messengership of Moses in various ways. First of all, the introduction of Moses as the messenger was very clear. Angels came to the elders and informed them,

> "This is the person whom I will use to deliver you from bondage."

But apart from this, when God called him the second time, there were some evidences that God gave him, for example, the rod and the hand that became leprous then became whole again when he put it into his coat a second time.

And Moses went to Pharaoh and predicted certain events. For Pharaoh, Moses was definitely a messenger because he gave the message from God to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh refused this order of God, he refused the message that came from God, and replied:

> **Exodus 5**
> [2] Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.

When the events came exactly as they were predicted, it was a mighty evidence for Pharaoh and all the others, that this was indeed a message from God. It is the same evidence we have today: the message is being fulfilled as stated, giving a mighty evidence so that even those who are unbelievers can see that this is indeed the message from God.

Even Pharaoh recognized this to a certain extent, because when he wanted to stop one of the plagues, he called for Moses and he asked him to plead with God for him. In this he was acknowledging the fact that Moses really was the messenger from God, but nevertheless, he disobeyed the message, thereby refusing to build on the rock. And what was the result for Pharaoh? Death. Not only his temporal death, but eternal death.

And so it will happen with us when we do not build on the rock. It will cost our lives, and so for this reason we must really understand how to build on the rock. It means to acknowledge God's way of building His kingdom, as Pharaoh should have done.

The Red Sea

When the powers of Egypt were finally so weakened that Pharaoh let the people go, Moses was now clearly their messenger. Upon their arrival at the Red Sea, they did not at first show very much trust in God's leading through Moses, because they were very fearful. They imagined that they had been led into a trap. Not realizing that Moses was only the instrument whereby God led them, they blamed him.

Moses reacted very well in this situation. He calmly but very firmly insisted that God had led them and not he, therefore God would solve this problem for them. So firm was he in this stand that Israel became calm too, and finally when the command came to go into the cold waves of the Red Sea, they went. That was nothing short of remarkable; that was obeying Gospel Order, and building on the rock.

When the messenger gives us a message that is a beautiful truth like the Character of God, or Sabbath Rest, or something that appeals to us, then it is relatively easy to accept and say it is wonderful. But when a message from the messenger comes that tells us, go step down into the Red Sea, what then? That is frightening, and it appears as if the messenger has made a mistake.

When we are called to go forward to what looks like certain death, or even at the very least, the restriction of our liberty, then it is very hard to obey; yet Israel obeyed. Through this obedience they were delivered from their enemies. And so likewise, through the same obedience we will succeed in entering our homeland.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 290:

> God in His providence brought the Hebrews into the mountain fastnesses before the sea, that He might manifest His power in their deliverance and signally humble the pride of their oppressors. He might have saved them in any other way, but He chose this method in order to test their faith and strengthen their trust in Him.

Or we could say,

> "God might have used another method of structuring His kingdom, but He chose this way to test our faith and strengthen our trust in Him. God has chosen this structure because it is the best way."

And so likewise, God chose this way for Israel…

> …in order to test their faith and strengthen their trust in Him. The people were weary and terrified, yet if they had held back when Moses bade them advance, God would never have opened the path for them. It was "by faith" that "they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land." *Hebrews* 11:29. In marching down to the very water, they showed that they believed the word of God as spoken by Moses. They did all that was in their power to do, and then the Mighty One of Israel divided the sea to make a path for their feet.

Here, the people's inner thoughts were telling them,

> "Don't go in this water, or you will drown!"

On the other side was the voice of Moses, a man just like them, saying,

> "Go forward!"

It was God's voice through Moses, but it required faith on their part to see this, and act on it. So likewise we have our own thoughts about God, and about present truth, which may be dear to us, and we don't like to give them up. On the other side we have the voice of God's messenger telling us His message, which at times may contradict our own thoughts. Which will we follow?

The people at the Red Sea became terrified, and we sometimes can be terrified when we hear the whisperings of Satan, who tells us:

> "This will restrict your liberty!"

It is a hard situation to be in. It is hard to prefer the thoughts of another person before our own thoughts. We are used to relying on that which comes from within ourselves, our own thoughts, our own logic, our own reasoning.

We need to rely on our own reasoning in certain areas of life, but in the area of present truth, we must be prepared to submit our own thoughts in preference of another, and that is sometimes hard to do. But we can do this by faith, just as the Israelites did at the Red Sea. We must have faith that the message is not *from* the other person, but *through* the other person, and understand the principle of divine messengership.

Marah: the Bitter Water

After the Red Sea, they came to Marah.[18] That was soon after the Red Sea, and here they faced the bitter waters, and again they were tempted to distrust God's leading. Sometimes the people of God seemed to move forward in faith and at other times, they had no faith. Previously, they had marched down into the cold waters. You might think,

> "But they had no other choice!"

[18] *Exodus* chapter 15.

They didn't really, but they could have made some other suggestions like saying,

> "Let's first look how deep it is. Are there sharks? How cold is it? Perhaps we should build some boats!"

But no, they obeyed the word as spoken through Moses. Yet shortly after, at Marah, they came again to a trying place, and they murmured against Moses.

> **Exodus 15**
> [22] So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.
> [23] Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah [margin: that is, *bitterness*].

They were in the wilderness for three days, and they must have been thirsty, because you can't live without water for three days. No doubt they had some reserves, but these reserves were empty and now they were looking for water. Moses knew that there was water nearby, but he also knew that it was bitter, so he was not very happy when they discovered the water. Finally they got to the water and they started murmuring,

> [24] And the people complained against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

Against whom did they murmur? Against Moses. Here they showed their misconception of the office of the messenger. They murmured against Moses, against the messenger, against the earthen vessel, as though it was the earthen vessel that had brought them to this place. But who had brought them to this place? God.

When people claim that Gospel Order is the same system as the Papacy, they show that they do not understand it. The Pope has no connection with God. He is leading the people according to what he thinks is right. The messages that he develops are from

within himself. But in the work of God, the true messenger never gives from himself. He gives only what he receives from God and therefore the messenger himself is totally insignificant.

In the case of Israel, it was very obvious who was leading them. Did Moses say each day,

> "Now we go in this direction!"?

No, it was the cloud that led them. So they had a visible presence that led them. Christ was in the cloud and this cloud was going ahead and Moses was following after, just as the people were. So then, who led them to the bitter water? God did, and not Moses. And when they murmured against Moses, they murmured against him as though he was the Pope; as though he had no connection with God; as though it was his plan to lead them in this direction.

The messenger is only a channel who passes on what he receives from God. And that was the work of Moses. To murmur against Moses meant to murmur against what God was giving them. What did Moses do? He cried out to God. He brought the matter to the Lord and said,

> "Here is this problem."

The way that God solved this problem is a wonderful confirmation of Gospel Order.

Exodus 15

25 So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them. And there He tested them.

Who cried out to the Lord? Moses. To whom did He show the tree? To the elders? To the people as a whole? No, to Moses, and Moses commanded that this tree should be cut and thrown into the water and it became sweet. It is obvious that Moses did not have in himself the ability to solve this problem. Rather it was the

power of God and He used that very effective way of doing it. The way it was done made it obvious that the earthen vessel could not do such a thing, only the Treasure. By the solution to the problem, God was teaching them:

> "Here is my messenger through whom I will bless you."

It was done in this way to educate them in the principles of Gospel Order. As He educated the people back there, so He wants to educate us as well today. Sometimes people ask,

> "How do we know the difference between the true messenger of God and all the false messengers who also claim to be the true messenger, and who also claim that they have a connection with God and bring their message from God?"

If you have experience in this movement, you know that we receive one truth after another, one new light coming after another, all in perfect agreement with former messages. It is a miracle. Compared to past history, there was no time when so much light was revealed in such a short space as these last times. We are living in very tremendous times and yet we are so weak, and that is a strange contrast.

To those who are new to the message, there is evidence that they can see also, such as testimonies of others in the message. In the year 1977 we studied *The Battle of Armageddon* and *The King of the North and the King of the South.* Some things were predicted that seemed impossible to happen in the world outside, but today we are seeing the literal fulfillment of these things.[19]

[19] PP Editor's note: what Andreas is referring to is a prophetic study which interpreted the "king of the north" and the "king of the south" of *Daniel* 11 to be represented in the Christian/Catholic nations of USA and Europe, and the more anti-Christian nations espousing Communism and Islam. These thoughts were printed in a study called *The Gathering Storm* in 1979 (included in the book, *Armageddon* which is available on our website), and began to be fulfilled 10 years later, with the collapse of Communism in USSR and Eastern Europe. It was at the beginning of that fall that these studies on Gospel Order were presented, in the year 1989.

What we see before us is the fulfillment of prophecy, and this is is a very strong testimony that the Lord has given to us, to show that this is indeed the truth. It is not the only testimony, but it is one very strong testimony, and I can tell you that this gave a big boost to the movement in East Germany. So here we have very mighty evidences that this message is indeed from God, even visible evidences. Apart from this we have made our experiences with the message which should be a very strong evidence for us too.

So God again confirmed that He was leading through Moses, just as in Egypt, when God spoke to Pharaoh through Moses in predicting the plagues and in stopping them. Pharaoh was given a most wonderful object lesson because Moses was standing as the representative of God before him, as we read in *Exodus* chapter 7, and Aaron was as His prophet.

Elim: the Manna

The next incident was at Elim.

> **Exodus 16**
> [3] And the children of Israel said to them, Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

That was quite a charge, wasn't it? Again and again God had confirmed to them,

> "I am leading you, through Moses."

But here again they doubted. We must realize that they actually were in straight places at times; they were not just imagining difficulties. They doubted because they really had shortages of food, and they really were used to the flesh. The appetite is one of the most difficult things to overcome. Here in the desert they were clinging to their old habits of appetite, and they were saying they wanted to eat in the same manner.

As they really had a lack of things they charged Moses with leading them to a place where they would die, and he would be able to enrich himself from their possessions. Moses was standing there, listening to all these charges. We can be so glad that he did not give up. Once he had accepted the call of God, he never laid down his responsibility.

Exodus 16

[4] Then the Lord said to Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.

The Lord answered this problem in such a way as to confirm the messengership of Moses. It was through Moses, and through nobody else, that God informed the Israelites,

"Tomorrow, bread will rain."

It is impossible that a man could predict that it would rain bread and have it happen. Therefore when Moses said this and it actually happened, again they had an evidence that God was talking through him.

Israel seemed to have accepted Moses' messengership when they had the evidence that God was blessing them through him, but the next time that they came into a straight place, they again doubted. This is a thing that our human nature tends to do. When we receive a wonderful message, we say,

"Oh! Wonderful! Amen!"

We accept the messenger of God with one message, but then we go away and forget all about it. When we receive a truth from God through a certain channel, we must always expect to get more through this channel. It is like a fountain.

For example, when for the first time I heard the message on *Romans* 7 & 8, that was around 1973, I was really amazed about this revelation of truth. Then I feared for a bit that this might be seri-

ous error, and thought I must stay away from it. But it still impressed me, and after a while I realized it was a wonderful truth, and therefore thought there must be more. So I took out the books and studied. And so I kept on in contact with this message, because I expected that more and more would come. That is how it has happened, all these years since: more and more comes.

It is like when you have found a well of water, you don't just take a cup of water and then you close the soil again, but you leave it open. You make a basin to catch the fresh water. You go again and again to the same place because you know that it is always coming out of the earth. But many people seem to be satisfied to get one cup of water, they drink it, say it is wonderful, and then they go away and forget about the well.

This is how it was with the Israelites. Here was a revelation from God to them, through Moses, and the next time they came into straight places they forgot that God was working through this man. When God uses a certain channel, He will continue to use it. He is not fickle, one time using this person, and then not using him again. God is constant, He can be relied upon.

If they had lived by this principle, they would have known that when they, as God's church in the wilderness, found themselves in a straight place, they must go to God through Moses, and God would not let them down. The answer would not always come immediately, but it would definitely come. In His great mercy, the Lord gave the Israelites one evidence after another.

Manna was the next thing the Lord used to show them how He worked. He did not give them a lot of manna at a time. But just enough for one day. If they tried to gather more, then it went rotten. By this God showed that He could be depended on. Our source is constant, it is not only falling one day, and then it stops, no it is constant. The falling manna was a lesson for both Israel and us on how God works.

Rephidim: No Water

In *Exodus* 17, they came to Rephidim, and there the people had no water to drink. Already they had experienced a similar problem, at Marah. What would be the logical deduction for this problem?

> "God has blessed us at Marah, so He will do the same thing here. He gives manna from one day to the next, so He will give water also."

But how do we find the people reacting?

> **Exodus 17**
> [2] Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, Give us water, that we may drink. And Moses said to them, Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?

Was Moses making himself equal with God? He said,

> "Why do you contend with *me?* Why do you tempt the Lord?"

Was Moses a blasphemer? No, because he could do nothing of himself, but only what he saw his heavenly Father do. Moses was not a blasphemer, but he was an instrument. He was doing the work of God, he made no plans for himself. He followed the plans that were revealed to him day by day, and so he could very calmly say, "Why do you tempt the Lord?"

> [3] And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?

What a terrible thing to say. This should be a warning to us. We should not look down on the Israelites and think that we would never be like that.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 293:**
> Many look back to the Israelites, and marvel at their unbelief and murmuring, feeling that they themselves would not have been so ungrateful; but when their faith is tested, even by little trials, they manifest no more faith or patience than did ancient

Israel. When brought into strait places, they murmur at the process by which God has chosen to purify them.

The "process by which God has chosen to purify" us is Gospel Order. It was by following God's commands through Moses that the people were led into strait places.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 293:

Though their present needs are supplied, many are unwilling to trust God for the future, and they are in constant anxiety lest poverty shall come upon them, and their children shall be left to suffer. Some are always anticipating evil or magnifying the difficulties that really exist, so that their eyes are blinded to the many blessings which demand their gratitude. The obstacles they encounter, instead of leading them to seek help from God, the only Source of strength, separate them from Him, because they awaken unrest and repining.

Do we well to be thus unbelieving? Why should we be ungrateful and distrustful? Jesus is our friend; all heaven is interested in our welfare; and our anxiety and fear grieve the Holy Spirit of God. We should not indulge in a solicitude that only frets and wears us, but does not help us to bear trials.

No place should be given to that distrust of God which leads us to make a preparation against future want, the chief pursuit of life, as though our happiness consisted in these earthly things. It is not the will of God that His people should be weighed down with care.

But our Lord does not tell us that there are no dangers in our path. He does not propose to take His people out of the world of sin and evil, but He points us to a never-failing refuge. He invites the weary and care-laden, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Lay off the yoke of anxiety and worldly care that you have placed on your own neck, and "take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." *Matthew* 11:28-29. We may find rest and peace in God, casting all our care upon Him; for He cares for us. *1 Peter* 5:7.

This speaks very much to us and tells us how we need to rest in the principles of Gospel Order. We don't need to be worried, we just need to trust Christ who has led us this far. Let us study the stories of the Israelites, not as something that is past, that cannot touch us, but let us put ourselves in their situation and see really how we would murmur against the messenger if we came into straight places.

Moses cried to the Lord again and the Lord again found a solution to this problem at Rephidim, and the command was given that Moses should go and strike the rock, and water came out and the people drank.

Exodus 17

[7] So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us or not?

They asked themselves the question,

"Is the Lord among us or not?"

Within a short time, they had received one visible evidence after another that God was leading them. This thirst for water was the second time that they were lacking water and so they went over the same ground again. They should have learned the lesson, therefore this murmuring was inexcusable. For this reason, the Lord had to withdraw from the people to a certain extent.

The Attack of the Amalekites

This resulted in the attack of the Amalekites upon them. They attacked the rear of the procession and killed old people and children, those who could not walk as fast as the others. That was a very cruel and mean act on the part of the Amalekites and measures were immediately taken.

Exodus 17

[8] Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

[9] And Moses said to Joshua, Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.
[10] So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.
[11] And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

Moses was on the top of the mountain and so evidently he could be seen by everybody. He held up his hands and whenever he did so, Israel prevailed. When he let down his hands, the enemies prevailed. What secret was there in lifting up the hands? The lifting up of the hands was a sign that he was praying. In other words, whenever Moses was praying, Israel prevailed. When he stopped praying, Amalek prevailed. In this we have another evidence that God gave to Israel, that Moses was His messenger. Again in this instance, God explained to them the structure of His kingdom.

What is prayer? Prayer is not a one-sided talk where we talk to God, but it is communion, which means both people talk. A communion where only one person talks is very boring, and it can get tiring. However when both parties have something to say, then it becomes interesting. Especially if what the other person has to say is pleasing.

So, not only should we pour out our heart before God with our problems and so forth, but we should also wait for His answer and see how God talks with us. Everybody must develop his own personal relationship with God so that he understands how God speaks to him. It is one of the most wonderful seasons when we can talk to God and actually hear His voice talking to us. That is a most wonderful thing.

When Moses was praying, he was talking to God, but also God talked to him. In the case of Moses being the messenger, when God talked to him, what did God tell him? That which he was to pass on to the people.

Exodus 17

[12] But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.
[13] So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.



Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 299:

As Aaron and Hur supported the hands of Moses, they showed the people their duty to sustain him in his arduous work while he should receive the word from God to speak to them. And the act of Moses also was significant, showing that God held their destiny in His hands; while they made Him their trust, He would fight for them and subdue their enemies; but when they should let go their hold upon Him, and trust in their own power, they would be even weaker than those who had not the knowledge of God, and their foes would prevail against them.

The Spirit of Prophecy confirms here, that when Moses was lifting up his hands, it signified that Moses received the word from God to speak to Israel. When we see Moses on the mountain lifting up his hands, we see the messenger of God receiving the messages. Whenever Moses received the messages, Israel won the battle. When he stopped receiving messages, Israel lost the battle.

Israel should have learned that God structures His kingdom around the messenger; that He gives His truth to them through the messenger. Whenever they received messages from God, through Moses, they were safe; they would win their battles against their enemies. That was one further confirmation on the side of God to confirm Moses as the messenger.

Beginning at the Red Sea, then at Marah, then in Elim, followed by Rephidim, everywhere God confirmed to them:

> "I speak to you through my messenger, and when I do this you are blessed."

Revelation Brings Order

And so they must have become conditioned to this. For us this lesson is also very important and very precious because it shows us that we, as a people of God, are indeed dependent on receiving messages through a messenger. And there is a wonderful text in the Bible, confirming the same truth:

> **Proverbs 29**
> [18] Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law.

What is revelation? Revelation is a message from God through a channel, that is revelation. For example, you find the last book, it is called *Revelation*, and why is it called so? Because it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him, and Jesus Christ gave it to the angel, and the angel gave it to John and John gave it to the seven stars of the churches, or seven angels of the churches. And they gave it to the

churches and so it is handed down to us. A revelation is a message that comes from God, through His channel.

> **Proverbs 29**
> [18] Where there is no revelation the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.

The German translation of this verse says:

> "Where there is no revelation, the people become barren and wild."

To cast off restraint is to become barren. There were times when God could not give revelations to this earth because there was no instrument, there was no living messenger. Between the Testaments, what happened with God's people? They became barren, as "dry as the mountains of Gilboa." They did not have a living message. They only had the old things to repeat over and over again and so they became barren and dry, like a desert. They also became lifeless.

And they become wild, or they cast of restraint. What does this mean? They lost discipline, they became disorderly. Today there is no order anymore and this is so true when you look at the churches. If they would not have a human order which would keep them together, what would happen in these churches? They would become very disorderly, and fall apart.

It is also possible to have a living messenger among us and yet become barren and wild. A living stream of revelation relies not only on the presence of a living messenger among God's people, but also the willingness of the people to receive the message. Otherwise the stream does not flow.

When God was speaking through Ellen White, the prophet, He had a living messenger among His people. Yet the people became barren, as the prophet herself testified, dry as the mountains of Gilboa,[20] and they became wild.

[20] "As a people, we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of

There are two sources of order in the world:

1. *Human organization:* this is necessary where there is disorder and where order cannot be brought about by other means. It brings order and we must admit this.
2. *Revelation:* this is God's way to bring order to His people. It is through Gospel Order that God unifies His people, and a unified people is an orderly people.

Disorderly people are a people who do as they like. Everybody works against each other in contradiction. They cannot wait for the Lord to lead them, but they rush ahead and do this and that when they should be waiting. On the other hand, when there is work that needs doing, it is not done, because the people are occupied with something else. In short: confusion, disorder, or without restraint.

Proverbs 29:18 tells us that:

Where there is NO revelation,
the people cast off restraint.

We can turn this around and say,

Where there IS revelation,
there is order.

By giving us one revelation after another, God has kept us as His people. But we must also receive these revelations into our hearts and only then can we be a people that are not barren and do not cast of restraint.

Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain." *Review and Herald*, March 11, 1890.

12. Supporting the Messenger

WHENEVER Moses lifted up his arm, Israel prevailed. So we have two forces here: on the one side, Moses on the mountain lifting up his hands, or in other words, receiving messages; and on the other hand, the people of God, cooperating with this work: lifting up the hands of Moses and fighting down there in the valley.

We will not now discuss the problem of picking up the sword, but just consider that they were diligent in their work. They cooperated with the revelations that Moses was receiving. Likewise, Aaron and Hur cooperated.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 299:**
> As Aaron and Hur supported the hands of Moses, they showed the people their duty to sustain him in his arduous work while he should receive the word from God to speak to them.

The example of Aaron and Hur was for all the people. How can we today support the hands of the messenger? How can we support and sustain him in his arduous work while he should receive the word from God to speak to us?

1. With our material support;
2. With our prayers;
3. By encouraging him;
4. By receiving the messages with all our heart and diligently restudying until they become our very own.

In this way we can sustain the hands of the messenger and he is thus encouraged to continue to lift up his hands in continuing this work which is so essential for God's church for all times. This would prevent us from becoming wild and barren.

All Are Workers

Let's not underestimate the part which we have to do in this. Likewise, the Israelites who fought down in the valley, they dili-

gently cooperated.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 299:**
> As the Hebrews triumphed when Moses was reaching his hands toward heaven and interceding in their behalf, so the Israel of God prevail when they by faith take hold upon the strength of their mighty Helper. Yet divine strength is to be combined with human effort. Moses did not believe that God would overcome their foes while Israel remained inactive. While the great leader was pleading with the Lord, Joshua and his brave followers were putting forth their utmost efforts to repulse the enemies of Israel and of God.

We must put our utmost efforts into restudying the message, to make sure that we understand it and that it is the truth. And then we must practice it. We all have to work together.

When we see Moses doing his important work of receiving the word from God to speak to the people, we see that the people also have an important work. And that is one thing which we have not studied so far in the structure of Gods' kingdom. We have concentrated our attention on the work of one person, but we must also see the work of all the others.

Sometimes people accuse us of being a "one-man movement." Literally speaking, such a movement would consist of only one man. There are such movements: they are single men who believe what they believe all for themselves; nobody else believes as they do. But what the accusers mean is that there is only one man who thinks, and acts, for all the rest. This is not true, as each person has their part.

The children of Israel were not a "one-man movement" just because Moses was the "one man" who communicated God's messages to the people. As we are seeing in the story of the battle with the Amalekites, each must play their part. But it is not our part to stand in the place of the messenger.

Another possibility is that we are a "one man worker movement." That means that only one man works and he does the

work for all the others. That would be nice, wouldn't it? But are we such a one man worker movement? No. We are all workers and that is a fact which is too little realized by us, because in the churches from which we came, usually the emphasis was laid on the difference between the clergy, who were the workers, or producers; and the laity who were the consumers. But the truth is that everybody is a worker.

1 Corinthians 12

[1] Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:
[2] You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.
[3] Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.
[4] There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.
[5] There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.
[6] And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.
[7] But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.

So to whom is the Spirit given to make a worker? To each one. That is the purpose for receiving the Spirit, to be a worker.

[7] ...the Spirit is given to each one.

It speaks only of those who are part of Christ's body, those who are born into the family of God. Of them it is written, that each one of them has received the Spirit for the profit all. So everybody has a task in God's church. The messenger is a worker, and his task is to give present truth. But everyone else has a task in God's work as well.

Receiving to Give

Matthew 20

[1] For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

[2] Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.
[3] And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.
[4] So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.
[5] And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, Why have you been standing here idle all day?
[6] They said to him, Because no one hired us. He said to them, You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.
[7] So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.
[8] And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.

Each one in the vineyard received a denarius. But in God's kingdom:

We receive in order to give.

Satan's principle is the opposite:

We give in order to receive.

The laborers give their work so that they receive something. That is the reason these workers came, for in verse 11 we find them complaining over the amount paid. They came into the vineyard, they gave their labor and wanted money for it, and that is the reason people work today; because they receive something for it. But in the kingdom of God, we receive so that we can give.

Let's apply this for a short moment to our eternal life. For what reason do we receive, or inherit eternal life? There are two answers:

1. It is a gift, or

2. It is a reward.

Which is it? It is definitely a gift. Eternal life is given so that we can enter into a new stage of service. Everyone receives the gift of the Holy Spirit in order to be a worker.

But in the kingdom of Satan, everybody works in order to earn eternal life. Those who work to be Christians in order to earn eternal life, they never get it because in the kingdom of Satan there is no such thing as eternal life and when you work according to these principles, you will never get it.



And so we come back to the parable of the vineyard again, when each one received a denarius, that was for the purpose of service. So therefore, we receive in order to give. In other words, if each one receives, each one must give in the kingdom of God.

The Talents

The same truth is made clear in the parable of the talents:

Matthew 25

[14] For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.
[15] And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.
[16] Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents.
[17] And likewise he who had received two gained two more also.
[18] But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.
[19] After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.
[20] So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.
[21] His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.
[22] He also who had received two talents came and said, Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.
[23] His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.

Who received a talent? Everyone! There was none who received nothing. They did not all receive the same, but everybody received something. For what purpose? To serve, to work with it.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 326-327:

To His servants Christ commits "His goods"—something to be put to use for Him. He gives "to every man his work." Each has his place in the eternal plan of heaven. Each is to work in cooperation with Christ for the salvation of souls. Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God.

Each one in God's church has a work as surely as we have a place in heaven. Everyone of God's people is a worker in His cause. We are not all workers in His cause in the same capacity. Not everybody has the same gift, or the same task. One is the channel of light, and that is the messenger, another has another work, and the other has another work still.

That is something which we are not used to thinking of. We are used to thinking that the messenger does his work very well, that is okay. But we must get used to the fact that we all have a work to do. Aaron and Hur had the work to support the hands of Moses directly, then the others had to fight the battle in the valley and so likewise, we all have to do something in the cause of God.

You may ask me the question,

> "What work should I do?"

But this I cannot answer, neither can the messenger. We can only lay out the principle:

> **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 327:**
> Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God.

Harmonious Working of the Body

We must cooperate and work in harmony with each other. We cannot just do a work that would contradict or that would interfere with the work of another.

> **1 Corinthians 12**
> [12] For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.
> [13] For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.
> [14] For the body is not one member but many.

If the person who is responsible for educating children should say,

> "Because I am not the primary messenger of God's movement, I am therefore not a part of the movement!"

–would this be right? Not at all!

1 Corinthians 12
[14] For the body is not one member but many.

Imagine if all the body would be just a foot, where would be the hand? Let's imagine everybody would be the primary messenger, where would be the secondary messenger? Where would be the man who carried on the message to those who had not heard it before? We would be all occupied in giving the message to each other and the field would be neglected. Not everybody can fulfill this place; it is reserved to one person and the others have another work to do.

> [15] If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?
> [16] And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?

No one organ is more important that the other. The eye is not more important than the ear, or the nose, or the mouth, or whatever. We need every part of the body. In fact if you cut off something from the body, then you miss it very badly. Every part of the body is designed to serve the body and if you cut some of it off, then you are an invalid, and so it is in the spiritual world.

Every person in God's kingdom has his place, and when members fail to fill their place we become impaired. This is one of the reasons why we are so weak. If every member would fulfill the position that God has given him, then the body would be whole, and then it would be unified, and in a very short time the message would go to the whole world.

But when the members say, "I am not a part of the body because I am not an eye," or "because I am not an ear," and therefore neglect their parts which they have, be it as a finger or as a foot, then the whole body is crippled. God is waiting with great desire to have a perfect body, with great desire as we read in:

Ephesians 4

[11] And He himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,
[12] For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,
[13] Till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;
[14] That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive,
[15] But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—
[16] From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Christ gave himself for this purpose, and He is waiting with great longing, that this body will become whole. And this means that we all understand that we are all workers.

13. God Is the Teacher

IN THE experience of Moses we have seen how God works through a messenger, and how He confirms the fact that He speaks only through this one messenger.

The fact that God spoke through Moses is not questioned as much as the fact that He *only* spoke through Moses. This was indeed challenged later through some individuals like Korah, Dathan, Abiram. It was also questioned by Aaron and Miriam. We will study these incidents to see God's reaction. In each case, God did the same on earth as He did in heaven. As in heaven He confirmed that Jesus Christ was His only communicator to the angels, likewise on earth He confirmed Moses again and again.

Each One Has a Work and a Place

So far we have seen that Aaron and Hur supported Moses. Especially in connection with the fight against the Amalekites:

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, 299**
>
> As Aaron and Hur supported the hands of Moses, they showed the people their duty to sustain him in his arduous work while he should receive the word from God to speak to them.

We asked ourselves the question,

> "How can we support the messenger as he receives the word of God to speak to us?"

We must receive the message with all our heart, and apply it to our lives, and by doing this we acknowledge the messenger in his position. At the same time we give up any desire for this position as well. In the church of God, we must respect the work and position of another worker. This is the conclusion of *1 Corinthians* 12, where we read that the church of God is a body, and not the whole body is an eye. If the ear would say,

> "I am not satisfied that I am an ear, I would like to be an eye."

–would it therefore stop being an ear? No! It must fulfill the position of the ear. Let's imagine our ear would say,

"I am not satisfied being an ear, I want to see."

And it starts trying to see. Then all of a sudden we wouldn't hear anymore; we would see a lot but would stop hearing. Would this be satisfying? Not at all. The moment we try to step into the work and place of another worker, we stop doing the work that is appointed to us. That is another principle that we studied, that each believer in God's cause, is a worker. That each one who is a part of Christ's body, has a work to do.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 327:

Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God.

So we do not have a one-man worker movement, but, an everybody-worker movement. We really need to know our place and position in the work of God. We must understand the voice of God speaking to us. If we do not know how God leads us from day to day, then we will never know what our place is, where we are to work.

We need to understand God's voice, then He can lead us to the place He has designated on this earth; where we are to work for Him. This will prevent us from entering into a work that does not belong to us. Even if we try, the result will never be successful. We can only do the work that God has given to us for only this work will He give His blessing, His treasure. All other work we try to do will fail, and especially if we step into the area or position of another worker. This is especially true of the position of the Primary Messenger, who channels the light of God to His people. There was only one in heaven, there is only one on earth.

Let us come back to Moses again. He was the receiver of the messages, but he had many other helpers in his work, they were workers in God's cause. Like Aaron and Hur, Miriam, and Joshua,

we could name a lot of them, yet every Israelite should be a worker in God's cause.

God's Order Confirmed at Sinai

We will come now to Sinai. The Israelites left Egypt, and then had these terrible disappointments at Marah, Elim, Rephidim, and the battle against the Amalekites, where again and again they were shown Gospel Order, through God's continual use of Moses.

Some say that the Israelites were very immature when they left Egypt, which is true. But they conclude from this that because they were so immature, God could only give them one messenger. There is a certain truth in this, but the real fact is that God always builds His church with a single messenger, and He continued His church with a single messenger. That was His order. He continued on earth the same order that was in heaven. God did not give them one order when they were immature and when they got mature enough, another order. He continued the same order at Mount Sinai as He gave them at the beginning.

It was a perfect order right from the beginning, because a single messengership was the perfect order in heaven. There was nothing imperfect in it when God established it in heaven and in fact it is a safe order and would have saved Lucifer from falling, had he submitted to that order. And the same structure, the same order, God began on earth, therefore it is a perfect order.

When Israel came to Sinai, God made a special covenant with them. He, in a very special sense, made them His own people, and He confirmed the single messengership, thereby confirming that this is His perfect order.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 303:

Soon after the encampment at Sinai, Moses was called up into the mountain to meet with God. *Alone he climbed the steep and rugged path, and drew near to the cloud that marked the place of Jehovah's presence.* Israel was now to be taken into a close and peculiar relation to the Most High—to be incorporated as a church and a nation under the government of God. The message

to Moses for the people was: "You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings..."

They were "...to be incorporated as a church and a nation under the government of God." Here we talk in the terms of a theocracy, which is a government under God.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 303:

Moses returned to the camp, and having summoned the elders of Israel, he repeated to them the divine message. Their answer was, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do."

How many people did God call up into the mount, to speak to them His message for the people?

ALONE he climbed the steep and rugged path, and drew near to the cloud that marked the place of Jehovah's presence.

God intentionally chose Moses to come alone. God could have chosen another course. For a change He could have chosen Joshua. Joshua was a man like Moses. But in so doing God would have departed from His order.

Moses returned to the camp and he summoned the elders and then he repeated to them the divine message which he had received. A second time he climbed up, we read this in the next paragraph.

Again *their leader ascended the mountain*, and the Lord said unto him, "Lo, I come unto you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever." When they met with difficulties in the way, they were disposed to murmur against Moses and Aaron, and accuse them of leading the hosts of Israel from Egypt to destroy them. *The Lord would honor Moses before them, that they might be led to confide in his instructions.*

Again, the second time, what do we read here?

Their leader ascended the mountain...

It does not say particularly here, but in the second sentence of the chapter it did; he ascended alone. The important sentence that we want to dwell upon is this:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 303-304:

The Lord would honor Moses before them that they might be led to confide in his instruction.

Again, God confirmed the choice He had made.

God purposed to make the occasion of speaking His law a scene of awful grandeur, in keeping with its exalted character. The people were to be impressed that everything connected with the service of God must be regarded with the greatest reverence. The Lord said to Moses,

"Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai."

During these intervening days all were to occupy the time in solemn preparation to appear before God. Their person and their clothing must be freed from impurity. And as Moses should point out their sins, they were to devote themselves to humiliation, fasting, and prayer, that their hearts might be cleansed from iniquity.

So here we have two examples where Moses went onto the mountain, and in both instances, God honored Moses by giving him the message alone. Now we turn to *Exodus* and there we read that indeed that others went with him to the mountain:

Exodus 24

[1] Now He said to Moses, Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar.
[2] And Moses *alone* shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him.
[3] So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, All the words which the Lord has said we will do.

So again, the same principle is confirmed.

> "Moses alone shall come into my presence. Him alone shall I give my message for the people. That is my way of doing things."

The same thing is true when he went up another time, and this time with Joshua:

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 313:**
> Moses and "his minister Joshua" were now summoned to meet with God. And as they were to be some time absent, the leader appointed Aaron and Hur, assisted by the elders, to act in his stead.

Joshua was the helper of Moses, and both together were called up now:

> For six days the cloud covered the mountain as a token of God's special presence; yet there was no revelation of himself or communication of His will. During this time Moses remained in waiting for a summons to the presence chamber of the Most High. He had been directed, "Come up to me into the mount, and be there," and though his patience and obedience were tested, he did not grow weary of watching, or forsake his post.
>
> This period of waiting was to him a time of preparation, of close self-examination. Even this favored servant of God could not at once approach into His presence and endure the exhibitions of His glory. Six days must be employed in devoting himself to God by searching of heart, meditation, and prayer before he could be prepared for direct communication with his Maker.
>
> Upon the seventh day, which was the Sabbath, Moses was called up into the cloud. The thick cloud opened in the sight of all Israel, and the glory of the Lord broke forth like devouring fire. "And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and got him up into the mount; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights."
>
> During the six days Joshua was with Moses, and together they ate of the manna and drank of "the brook that descended out of the mount." But Joshua did not enter with Moses into the cloud. He remained without, and continued to eat and drink daily while

awaiting the return of Moses, but Moses fasted during the entire forty days.

This is a very clear testimony which shows us that Moses alone came into this mountain. Not even Joshua, his close companion, went in to the cloud with him. The Lord had called Moses alone to be the messenger. Did Joshua become envious? Not at all! He was very satisfied to stay out and wait for Moses to come back with the wonderful message from God.

You can imagine that also Joshua would have desired to see the glorious things that Moses saw. I would desire it also. But Joshua was satisfied with his position and his place. He did not desire the position and place of another worker. Remember, that was Lucifer's great failure; he desired the position and work of another worker, namely, the work of the messenger, of Christ.

When Moses was up there in the mountain, he received wonderful revelations and these you can read in *Exodus* 24:1-30. He stayed there for forty days and forty nights; that was a long camp meeting, wasn't it? Not just one week, but six weeks, and not only five hours a day, but I would suppose all the time.

And not only days, but also nights, because it says he was there "forty days and forty nights." I think that he didn't even sleep. There is no record, but it could well be since he did not even need to eat. This means that he had concentrated study all the time. That was an intense camp meeting and he must have been specially sustained to be able to understand all that much instruction in such a concentrated camp meeting.

Following the Curriculum

When we have one camp meeting, we find it hard to follow study after study sometimes, especially if it is hot. But for Moses to have endured such a concentrated study, he must have been sustained. Also, the revelations he received were wonderful, they were just glorious, because God is the best teacher that you can imagine. It was the Father through Christ who taught him. When

Moses received these revelations, he passed them on to the people. How much revelation did Moses receive about Armageddon? The Seven Angels? Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and so on? Nothing! So on what did he receive revelations? On present truth. God always has a certain time and a certain message to give, and this is called "present truth." That is the message which must occupy our minds.

When we go to school as students, and we learn the alphabet, the teacher says to the students, this is an "A," and they all learn it. One bright fellow student sitting there on the benches and looking in a book turns the pages and sees a letter that looks like this: "Z." And he says to the teacher,

> "What letter is this?"

The teacher says,

> "Wait a little bit, we first have to study other letters."

So he continues to teach the students this letter "A." He then says,

> "Next week we will study the letter which you want to know about."

And the student says,

> "Well I am not satisfied, I will find out myself."

He goes home and tries to find out himself what this letter means. In the end, he can't find it out, but he calls it a name; he calls it "whoo." Then he comes back to school and thinks he has made a wonderful discovery. Meanwhile the children have continued with their letters and they are already there. While he was gone he missed out on all the other letters. He is faced with two disadvantages: first of all, he does not know what this new letter means; second of all, he does not know what the other ones in between mean.

If we neglect to study the truth that our divine teacher has appointed us at the present time, and try to occupy our minds with other themes of the Bible which may also be interesting, then we will miss keeping in step with the present light, while at the same time we will come out with wrong conclusions.

It is Satan's studied effort to separate those who are inclined to study for themselves, independent of God's messenger. It is his studied effort to separate them from the channel of light. Then they are literally shut in "a chamber of darkness":

> **Testimonies to Ministers, p. 54:**
> God speaks through His appointed agencies, and let no man, or confederacy of men, insult the Spirit of God by refusing to hear the message of God's word from the lips of His chosen messengers. By refusing to hear the message of God, men close themselves in a chamber of darkness.

And how much do you discover in a chamber of darkness? Nothing. You can feel a form, but in a chamber of darkness when you feel a form, you will certainly give it a wrong name, because you need to see in order to find out what it is. You could give it some name but not the right one, because in a chamber of darkness we cannot see. Therefore when Satan works with us, to separate us from the channels of light because we are inclined to independent study, then we will be in a chamber of darkness, and we will most certainly come to wrong conclusions; we will come up with a false message.

> They shut their own souls away from vast blessings and rob Christ of the glory that should come to Him, by showing disrespect to His appointed agencies.

To show disrespect to His appointed agencies is an insult to God, because in His love He gives us these agencies, and He wants us to make full use out of them.

The same principle is found in the purpose of the Sabbath. God gives us a love gift, and He wants us to make full use of it. It is really disappointing for the angels, for God, for the whole universe,

that His people make so little use of the means that He gives for their enlightenment and encouragement. Because Satan has so deeply implanted rebellion into the heart of man, he is very successful in his endeavors to separate men from the appointed channels of God.

If we receive God's message as given by His messenger, where then is the place for personal Bible study? When we study our Bible at home, we are to study the theme that we are given through God's appointed agencies. Take the example of school. At school you follow the curriculum that the teacher lays out, and when you do your homework, you study more deeply into the very things which you studied during school time. You don't just jump to any theme, but you stick to the curriculum that the teacher has assigned. That is for the safety of the student; it's for his best. If he would study what he thinks best, he would become very confused after a while.

The great question for us is this: what shall we study in order to be prepared for the latter rain and the fight with the Image of the Beast? What information do we need? What shall we study? We now know that it is Gospel Order. But without the messenger, would we know it? Without God informing us what we need to study at the present time, we would *not* know.

In England there was a brother, and he had the idea, which is quite common, that he needed to study his Bible independently, and that he had to discover every now and then some very wonderful new truths. And after a while he became very disappointed and thought that he had lost his connection with God because he was not making any progress in this kind of work. When we studied Gospel Order together, and went over these principles, he was so relieved and happy. He told me,

> "Now I am glad, I know what to study during the year."

For example, you can take up the whole history again beginning with Adam and Eve, coming to the Patriarchs, to Moses, and

you can also study the later history. You can cover many things which we cannot cover in a week and study these stories in the light of Gospel Order. This will be a very great blessing. Thoughts will come to your mind which you did not think of during our study now, because in the first hearing, not every idea is caught; many things are lost. That is sad, but many things will come back to your mind as you make a diligent restudy of the theme.

This is precisely what we need for the coming storm. If we would refuse to study this theme and rather look for other things which *we think* are good things to study, then God could not bless us, and soon we would find ourselves in a chamber of darkness. This would mean that we miss the necessary preparation for the coming time of trouble.

In all the messages that God has revealed to us in the past years, there has been a constant continuation of, or a building up of a certain message, because all the themes are held together like a chain. If you would take away one link, the whole chain would break. If a person rejects one message, or if he does not fully accept one message, then he soon loses the whole chain. God has given us link after link, and every new link is a further step in preparation for the time of the end. We are in a school where each class prepares for the next, and leads to the reception of the latter rain.

When people come new into the message, what shall we counsel them to study? The natural thing for them to study would be the themes that God has given to us in their order. There may be exceptions as the Holy Spirit leads. I have known some people who had great problems understanding God's character, and the book *Behold Your God* was given to them and it was just the right thing to help them. It was the first thing that introduced them into our message. Others have great difficulty with their sin problem and then the message *From Bondage to Freedom* is the very thing that helps them.

But as a general rule, we would suggest that in the same order that the Lord has given us the messages, so it would be wise for others also to study them. They are all present truth; and present truth is what we need to study most.

Coworking of the Holy Spirit and the Messenger

Christ asked the question,

Matthew 16
[13] Who do men say that I the Son of man am?

The present truth at that time was,

"Who is Jesus? Who is He?"

So Jesus taught them this message, which was to occupy their thoughts, and so God could teach them that message more deeply. This is seen in the answer of Peter, to which Christ acknowledged,

[17] Flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you.

This is an illustration of how God is the teacher. Christ presented the truth, and the Holy Spirit gave them the comprehension of that truth.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 401:
...God is the teacher of His people...

In heaven, Satan claimed that God was his direct teacher, and he would not accept Jesus as the one through whom God was teaching. Likewise today, can we accept that God is our teacher through a human channel? There are several statements that confirm that God is always using human channels, that He is not talking directly to people, nor even through angels, in the presentation of His messages for the church.

The Desire of Ages, p. 296:
As His representatives among men, Christ does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save. Divinity needed humanity;

for it required both the divine and the human to bring salvation to the world.

So if there was just divinity, could salvation have come to the world? No, it required both: the divine and the human.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 122:

Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world.

When the Ethiopian was traveling back from Jerusalem to Ethiopia, God did not send an angel to him, but He sent Phillip. The same example we are shown through the ministry of Peter to Cornelius. God always uses a human channel to bring to men the gospel message. Some people cannot endure this. They do not want the human channel, and therefore they reject the message from God. This leaves them in total darkness.

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 54:

God speaks through His appointed agencies, and let no man, or confederacy of men, insult the Spirit of God by refusing to hear the message of God's word from the lips of His chosen messengers. By refusing to hear the message of God, men close themselves in *a chamber of darkness*. They shut their own souls away from vast blessings and rob Christ of the glory that should come to Him, by showing disrespect to His appointed agencies.

When God channels His light through a human instrument, or earthen vessel, He is still our Teacher.

We will come now to the example of Peter, to see indeed in what way God is the personal teacher of His people. We have read *Matthew* 16, the verses where Christ asks the question,

"Who do the people say that the Son of Man is?"

Let us turn to *The Desire of Ages* for a moment, to the chapter 45, "The Foreshadowing of the Cross." Here we read about the answer of Peter.

The Desire of Ages, p. 412:

> Peter had expressed the faith of the twelve. Yet the disciples were still far from understanding Christ's mission. The opposition and misrepresentation of the priests and rulers, while it could not turn them away from Christ, still caused them great perplexity. They did not see their way clearly. The influence of their early training, the teaching of the rabbis, the power of tradition, still intercepted their view of truth. From time to time precious rays of light from Jesus shone upon them, yet often they were like men groping among shadows. But on this day, before they were brought face to face with the great trial of their faith, the Holy Spirit rested upon them in power. For a little time their eyes were turned away from "the things which are seen," to behold "the things which are not seen." Beneath the guise of humanity the discerned the glory of the Son of God.

Who was the teacher of the disciples? Christ as an angel? Christ as God? No, Christ as a man. Christ as a human messenger as He was on this earth. He was like any other human messenger too, He was an earthen vessel. The Bible says He was like Moses, faithful in His house like Moses. So Christ was evidently the teacher of the disciples.

So when they had questions about the message, where did they go? To the Pharisees? Definitely not, because if they had gone to them they would have received very deceiving answers. They went to Christ when they were puzzled about doctrinal points. Very often they were puzzled because they got involved in discussions with the Pharisees, and they tried to defend their faith. And then they sometimes found themselves lost for arguments. When this was so, then the disciples went to Jesus, and very often Jesus taught them by the wayside, in special seasons of rest. Jesus was their only channel, or their only teacher. But does this mean that God was not their teacher? Certainly not, God was their teacher.

The Desire of Ages, p. 412:

Jesus answered Peter, saying,

Matthew 16

[17] Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven.

The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer's faith. It is that which Christ himself has declared to be eternal life. But the possession of this knowledge was no ground for self-glorification. Through no wisdom or goodness of his own had it been revealed to Peter. Never can humanity, of itself, attain to a knowledge of the divine.

Job 11

[8] It is as high as heaven; what can you do? deeper than hell; what can you know?

Only the spirit of adoption can reveal to us the deep things of God, which...

1 Corinthians 2

[9] ...eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man.

[10] God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Psalm 25

[14] The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him;

–and the fact that Peter discerned the glory of Christ was an evidence that he had been "taught of God." *John* 6:45, Ah, indeed, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you."

So, here we have two seemingly contradictory statements. On the one side we say, Christ was his teacher, or Jesus as a man. On the other hand it says here, God was his teacher. It was not Christ as God that was his teacher, but Christ as man, that must be clear. So there are two different persons. We have read in the whole statement, that the Holy Spirit had made clear to Peter, that Christ is the Son of God, that He is the Messiah. I ask you the question,

"From whom did Peter get the information that Christ was the Messiah?"

No, not from the Holy Spirit, not first hand. From John the Baptist, exactly, because John the Baptist has pointed to Christ as the Messiah, and from there he got the knowledge of who Christ was. But now he again repeats the same truth and Jesus says,

> "You are taught by God."

The human messenger (which John the Baptist was) does a certain work, and also the Holy Spirit does a certain work and we must understand the relationship of both. If the preacher would present the message and everybody would hear and that was the end of the whole story, then, nothing could be accomplished, absolutely nothing. Another element, or even two other elements need to be there too. Element number two is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the administrator of the message.

It is not so easy to translate the word *administrator* in different languages. This word is used when we speak of "administering the Lord's Supper." In other words, you pass it on; you take it from one place and give it personally to the person. And this is the meaning of the work. The Holy Spirit takes the message that the messenger presents and plants it into the heart of the person so that he can see this with spiritual discernment.

If the messenger would preach the message without the work of the Holy Spirit, then his message would not do it's work; it would have no results at all. And so we realize this at times when we present the message, that it is totally misunderstood, and misconstrued. For example, I had one experience in a group of young people in the SDA church. I was invited there to give a study. It was back in the beginning when I first knew the message and I was so full of the studies of *Romans* 7 and 8, that I presented them, very carefully and I expected that they would show the same enthusiasm and the same happiness that I had, but I was severely disappointed. I presented the whole thing as good as I could and yet everybody sat there quietly as though they were sleeping. At the end of the study, not one person came and asked questions, they all went home as they came.

Another experience that I had was when I was at the Adventist school, and there it was the custom for the students to lead the evening worship in turn. I very seldom got it, only once or twice in the three years I was there, and the theme I presented was God's character: that God does not destroy. I thought that must rouse some interest, and at least some protest or such, but nothing the like came. I could almost hear them all snoring. That was very disappointing I can tell you, but now I realize why this was. I was acting here as the messenger preaching the message, but for some reason or other, the Holy Spirit could not administer the message to the people and therefore they did not get the message. They did not even understand what I was talking about.

And so the same thing can happen again and again when the Holy Spirit is not working. He is the administrator of the message and without Him, the preacher is totally at loss. His labor is in vain. So what we need in the transmission of the message is the work of the Holy Spirit, and this is a personal work which God does for each individual who hears the message. And in this sense, God is the personal teacher of everyone of us.

When the message is presented by a human channel, it must be the Holy Spirit who brings it home to our heart. Why is this so important? First of all, the language of the preacher is imperfect, isn't it? Especially if it is not in his mother tongue. We have different circumstances, we come from different places, one may have a need due to a terrible home situation, the other due to unemployment, so there are different needs. What needs you have the preacher does not know, but the Holy Spirit knows and He brings the message home to you in such a way that you will see that it exactly fulfills your need. When God gives us a new message year after year, and I present it in Kenya as well as in Germany, England, Portugal, I find that after the people hear it, they come and say,

> "You know that was just the message I needed. It was just in the right time."

I sometimes wonder how they can all say this, since I know nothing about their inner struggles. But they say this only because the Holy Spirit, the administrator of the message, has brought it home to their hearts.

Furthermore, the preacher could be in constant fear that his audience does not understand the message, or that they misunderstand it. When you say one thing it can be taken many different ways. But the Holy Spirit takes the message and puts the meaning of it into our hearts. So this was the work that was done for Peter. Let's look at him again.

He got the message that Christ was the Messiah, first of all from John the Baptist, then later from Christ himself. Not much is mentioned in the Bible about Christ talking of himself, but we can suppose that Christ confirmed the message of John the Baptist. Therefore Peter knew from the human channels that Christ was the Messiah. But even though he had this information, it was not enough; it did not help him discern what he had heard. It was only when the Holy Spirit, who was the administrator of the message, brought home to him this message, only when he was personally taught by God, then he realized what the truth was.

And so we must understand that God is the teacher of His people. The messenger has to play an important role. He gives the message, he presents and preaches it, but the Holy Spirit brings it home to the heart. What would you suppose is by far the greater work, the work of the Holy Spirit or the work of the preacher? Definitely the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit will not do the work of the preacher. If the preacher refuses to pass on the message that God gives him, the Holy Spirit does not make up for this. The people are left in darkness then. Why is this so?

The Desire of Ages, p. 296:

> As His representatives among men, Christ does not choose angels who have never fallen,....

–nor the Holy Spirit,…

> …but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save. Christ took upon himself humanity, that He might reach humanity. Divinity needed humanity.

So the human channel,—the messenger,—is very essential in this chain of communication, but he does the smaller work compared with the greater work which the Holy Spirit does when He brings home the message to our hearts so that we are convinced of its truth.

The confessions that were made in the German camp meeting, and also in the other camp meetings, were in no way forced, they were in no way even encouraged. In fact on several occasions we said,

> "Please do not give a confession unless the Holy Spirit prompts you to do so."

These confessions were confessions about transgression of Gospel Order. It could be only the Holy Spirit's work to show the people where they had transgressed Gospel Order, otherwise they couldn't see it, could they? Likewise, when we hear the message but we do not have the Holy Spirit to bring the message home to our hearts, we will not see where we have transgressed; the message will not convict us of our sin. But the Holy Spirit can do this work.

The third element in this line of communication is the receiver, which is you and me, who receive the message and we have to apply the message to our own lives. This work, neither the messenger, nor the Holy Spirit can do for us; we have to do this. When the message is presented by the preacher, when the Holy Spirit has convicted us where it applies in our lives, then the third step is the submission of the hearer. This is sometimes a hard thing to do, but it must be done. I must really submit to the truth of the message and then actually carry it out, and this is a work

which neither of the other two can do. Neither the Holy Spirit, nor the messenger can do this for me.

There are three essential elements in the communication of the message:

1. The Messenger,
2. The Holy Spirit, and
3. The Receiver.

And that God is the teacher of His people is true in a very, very close sense, namely, in the sense that the Holy Spirit, who is God, personally convicts us of the truth of the message. Therefore we need to pray at the beginning of every study hour for the Holy Spirit to guide us, not only that He guides the speaker, but also that He guides the hearers: that is just as essential.

I hope that it is understood now, how limited the role of the messenger is. He is not at all the mediator for the people, he is just the presenter of the message and that is the end of his work. The Holy Spirit has to continue the work and when we see this, then we understand better that God is the personal teacher of each one.

Even though the Holy Spirit does by far the greater work, the work of the messenger is still essential and if we despise the messenger, then we are left in a chamber of darkness. The same is true if we despise the work of the Holy Spirit by not applying the message into our lives. Or if we despise the Holy Spirit by not wanting to understand the message, or by having a definite spirit of resistance.

I still wonder why the young Adventist people to whom I presented the studies on *Romans* 7 and 8, and the young people to whom I presented the message on God's character, could not see the message. Obviously the reason is that the Holy Spirit was not there. But *why* could He not be there? Did I not pray enough for the Holy Spirit? That could be one reason, or it could also be that

the hearers were just not ready for Him; they did not open their hearts to Him.

So, in our camp meetings, we all must work together. You have to open your hearts to the Holy Spirit, I have to pray for Him, and as we do this, then the Lord will bless us and bring the message home to us. Let us pray that He is really doing it.

The Messenger Is Not a Mediator

Let us for a moment emphasize what the messenger is and what he is not.

> **Exodus 20** [NKJV]
> [18] Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.
> [19] Then they said to Moses, You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.
> [20] And Moses said to the people, Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.
> [21] So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.

From their exodus until Sinai, we have read how God called only Moses into His presence. And by this He was confirming that He was speaking only through this one channel, this channel doing the smaller work compared with the work of the Holy Spirit. He was doing the smaller work but it was essential, and it was also essential for the people to recognize this work of the messenger.

But here we read for the first time, that it seems that God wants to talk to the people personally and the people don't want this, they want Moses to talk with them. So the whole thing seems to be turned upside down, or in contradiction to what we have said. Is there an answer to this question? Certainly! The answer to this question makes it clear again what the messenger is and what he is not. Let us read the commentary on this verse:



Selected Messages, book 1, p. 238:

The proclamation of the law of ten commandments was a wonderful exhibition of the glory and majesty of God. How did this manifestation of power affect the people?—They were afraid. As they saw "the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking," they "removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

And now listen to this commentary:

> They desired Moses to be their mediator. They did not understand that Christ was their appointed mediator, and that deprived of His mediation, they would certainly have been consumed.

When we think of our relationship to God, we must understand that we cannot see Him face to face, because there is a constant outflow of power from Him and for this reason we cannot see Him face to face. So what do we need? A mediator, somebody who shields God for us. And can Christ shield God for us? Certainly, through Christ's mediation we can come near to God.

Can the messenger shield God for us? No, definitely not. So when God was coming near to the people, then they desired Moses to shield them and in this they were badly mistaken. Moses, or the messenger as he is today, can never be a shield from God. There will come a time when even the messenger will be able to be shield for God, but this time comes after translation; it is not on this old earth.

While the messenger preaches the message, and transmits the message from God to man, he cannot mediate; he cannot shield God. Yet the people of Israel did not understand it. In their estimation, Moses was so holy and so high, and he could approach the presence of God, that they thought because he can do this, he would be able to shield Him too. But the only way Moses could approach the presence of God, is through Christ. Only when Christ shielded the heavenly Father could they come near to God or God come near to them.

What we read here in *Exodus*, is not the question of transmitting a message to them, because God has often done this through Moses, in fact always; but it speaks here of God coming near to the people.

Some get the idea that when we talk of the role of the messenger, of being the transmitter of light, that only through him can we approach God. Is this true? Not at all. If we could only approach God through him, then how could we receive the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit must come direct to every person. So likewise, how could we give our problems to God? We couldn't. How could we give our burdens to God? We couldn't. The messenger is not able either to carry sins, nor to carry burdens, nor to shield God in any way whatsoever. We must come near to God personally, and we must come through Christ. That is our great need.

But in the area of transmitting a message to us, God uses this human channel in order to teach us a very important and vital lesson. And so we must see this difference very clearly.

When God teaches a message, it is always present truth. He did not deal, in the time of Israel, with *Armageddon*, with the *Seven Angels*, and so forth, but He dealt with the Sanctuary and its truth. Today He is dealing with us in teaching us Gospel Order and this is present truth, and we need to confine ourselves to the study of this message. This does not mean that we only read the messenger and nothing else. It means that we read the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and all the past messengers, but we read them *in the light of* Gospel Order.

I will tell you a little experience here. When the message on Gospel Order came to us, then we made this our main occupation of the mind. We studied, restudied it, read the messenger, and read other Scriptures, read *The Acts of the Apostles* and so forth, and at that time we were proof reading the *Sabbath Rest* book, which we had translated into German. We were coming to the last chapters so we proof read and studied them at the same time. You can hardly separate these two things, and while we were doing this, we saw Gospel Order in the Sabbath Rest book.

So if you want to profit from this message, go back and restudy the other messages in the light of Gospel Order. As long as the Holy Spirit is the administrator to you personally, you will find a great blessing in it.

14. Many Witnesses

AT THE moment the main point of our study is the transmission of the message. We had seen that there are three elements necessary:

- the messenger,
- the Holy Spirit, and
- the receiver.

All three are essential and none can do the work of the other. Through the example of Moses, we have also seen that the messenger is not the mediator but that he is only a transmitter of light. He cannot be a mediator in his present state.

The Witness of the Church

In the inspired writings, there are some statements which seem to contradict the message on Gospel Order. Lets turn to one now, and I am always thankful for the seeming contradictions because they often clarify the message further. One such statement is found *The Acts of Apostles*, the chapter is "The Gospel Message in Antioch."

> **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 163:**
> God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church—Christ's body—is left in darkness. In His providence He places His servants in close connection with His church in order that they may have less confidence in themselves and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work.

In heaven, God communicated His messages only through one person, and that was Christ. On earth, God worked the same way. He only communicates through one channel, that is, the messenger. But here we read:

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 163:

He [God] does not…give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church…is left in darkness.

That sounds like a contradiction. Isn't that what God did with Moses? He gave His will to Moses for the church of the day, in order to communicate to the entire body. He gave Moses His truth and His message, and this message was for the entire church. But the church was not left in darkness when God communicated His will through Moses.

Let's suppose a person among us rises up and says:

"I have a message for all of you."

That is nothing unusual, we have received messages in the past, so we would listen to it. But then suppose that none of us could see light in this message except the messenger who presented it. What should the messenger think of such a situation? He should be very cautious, at least. There *is* the possibility that the whole church has fallen away and cannot discern the truth. But if, up to that point, the church has shown spiritual perception in understanding God's messages, but suddenly they could not see any light in what was presented, then the messenger should be very cautious, because God is not giving light to one man while He is leaving all the others in darkness.

That places a big responsibility on the church, because they do not help the messenger if they just say "yes" to the message without re-studying it. Neither is the messenger helped when the church is suspicious all the time and thinks, "Oh, there must be some error here," and then searches only for error. Neither of these attitudes help.

The Faithful Bereans

Acts 17 [NKJV]

[10] Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

[11] These were more fair-minded [KJV: “noble”] than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.



We tend to think that the Bereans were “more fair-minded” because they tested the message, as if they were looking carefully to discover if there was any error in it. But it actually says “they received the word with all readiness.” This means that the Holy Spirit had already been preparing their hearts, and that in Paul’s presentations they immediately grasped the hidden treasure: the message from God. Therefore with readiness they accepted the word.

There are situations in which we must not receive a word with readiness, where we must be careful. That is the situation when error is pushed on us by a false teacher. When Satan came to Eve, she received his message with all readiness and what was the result? She fell. And if we accept a message from a false messenger we will be sure to fall. We must close our mind and hearts to such a message, that is the only safety. That does not mean that we have to be unfriendly to them. This would not be the spirit of

Christ. But at the same time we must take a very firm stand against any false message.

But when an established messenger of truth comes to us, then we should have no hesitation to receive the message with all readiness, based on the truths we have received in the past. In order to be fair-minded:

1. We must receive the word from God's true channel with all readiness.
2. We must search into the message from the Scriptures, to make it our own.

Testing Is Not Done with Doubt

Today, there is a certain method used to test ideas, which is called the scientific method. A. T. Jones talks of this in the book, *The Place of the Bible in Education*, and he points out that the world's method of doubting to find truth, will not work for spiritual things. You try to prove something false and when you cannot, then it must be true: that is the method of doubting. First you try to find out if something is false, and when you cannot find that it is false, you then decide it must be true. So you have to search for a long time, you have to apply many, many tests, and finally, when you have gone through all the possible tests of finding out if it is false, and every test has failed, finally you accept it as true.

People have applied this method of doubt to the Bible, and to spiritual things. The method of falsification, may have some merit in the world of physics or biology, but in the field of the Bible, what does the method of falsification mean? Doubt, unbelief. If you follow this method, you will end up questioning whether the Bible is really the word of God. And this, Jones pointed out, is exactly what happened.[21]

[21] PP Editor's note: The reason why the method of doubt does not work when searching for spiritual truth, is that truth is not a theory, it is a life. Jesus said, "I am…the truth." *John* 14:6. A person receives the truth by receiving life from Christ. But a man cannot receive spiritual life without first having faith in God, for faith opens the door of the heart for God to work in the person. Therefore, the method for finding spiritual truth is first, to feel our lack or need of it, sec-

If you go to the theological schools today, there is a lot of study made to determine who the authors of the books of the Bible were, even though it might mention the author right at the beginning of the book.

"Is this the letter of Paul?"

They question this. And many other things they question. They say that Jeremiah was not written by Jeremiah, that Isaiah was not written by Isaiah. They say, these men didn't exist, that they were fantasy figures, and so forth. This is a result of applying the scientific method to studying spiritual truths. When we apply this method in studying the message that comes through God's proven channel, then we will never arrive at truth. In fact, we will not receive the truth with *all readiness*, but we will receive the truth with *all doubt*.

These words about the Bereans, they sound a bit like falsification because it says, they searched the Scriptures daily to find out *whether these things were so*. We might jump to the conclusion that they tested to find out whether Paul's message was false and when they couldn't disprove it, they accepted it. But that this was not their method, is shown, because it says,

Acts 17
[11] ...they received the word with all readiness.

Whenever you approach a subject of truth with doubt in your heart, you will never arrive at a proper understanding of it. Never. It is impossible. So our standpoint must be to really receive the message with all readiness, but only from God's proven channel. All the other channels we don't need, and we can close our eyes and ears to them. And then we must also restudy the message to see how it is to be applied in our lives. That requires very diligent

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ond, to have God reveal to us the truth that answers our need (which comes through hearing or reading a God-appointed messenger), and third, to receive that living truth into the soul through prayer and faith. We know we have the truth when we have the power to live a life of victory over sin.

effort. This is what the Bereans did when they "searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."

Importance of the Church's Witness

For the messenger, this re-studying of the message is very essential because he knows very well the principle that God does not give one man a knowledge for His church, while His church is left in darkness. For this reason, when the messenger presents a message, he looks to see what the church says to the message when they restudy it diligently. This is natural and is good. He is careful because he knows that he is a man, just like the people; he knows his frailty, and that he can err at times in his understanding.

When we need a specific plan for our life, and we believe that God has given us this plan, we don't immediately rush forward, but are very cautious. We give back the plan to God, to be carried through or given up as His providence may indicate. We are really ready to give up the plan when His providence indicates so. And we wait until the Lord makes the way clear to us.[22]

And so the messenger, when he presents a message, carefully looks to see what the church says about the message. If they just say "yes, yes," without restudying it, then their testimony is not worth very much.

Two or Three Witnesses

We want now to consider some texts in the Word of God which explain this principle.

> **Deuteronomy 17**
> [6] Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

God made it very clear that the accused shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. What kind of witness do these "two or three" have to be? Let's say my brother has done

[22] See the book, *God's Sabbath Rest*, particularly the chapter on "The Place for Our Plans."

something that is not worthy of the death sentence, but I really hate him and I want to get rid of him. So I lie to the elders saying that my brother has done something that is worthy of the death sentence. The elders would say,

> "We cannot take a single testimony. We must have other witnesses."

So I go, and bribe two other witnesses and say,

> "Please give testimony so that he is worthy of the death sentence."

They do as I asked. Is this the right procedure? Evidently not.

Let's take another example. Often there is trouble in a marriage and the two partners do not understand each other. Both go to their respective friends to talk of their troubles. And each friend says,

> "Yes, yes, you are right,"

–and so the friends go to the other partner to try to change them. So each person then has two or three people talking to them, to say the same thing. Are these good witnesses?

This principle of two or three witnesses is applied often in the Bible. With the concordance I have looked up several of these texts. There are so many that I cannot quote them all here, but we read some in the New Testament now.

> **Matthew 18** [NKJV]
> [15] Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.
> [16] But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

In this case, if you have something against your brother, and you want him to be punished for it, what good is there in taking

along two or three others who are your friends, who are influenced by you? None! If you personally cannot convince him of his error, then the extras you produce will have no more effect, as the witness all adds up to only one. They are all influenced by the one witness. And by one witness, a matter shall not be established, but by two or three witnesses.

So what is the requirement of the two or three witnesses? Independence. Only if each of the other persons can witness to the same thing independently, then a matter shall be true. That is even the accepted method in the courts of this world. Relatives cannot be witnesses for other relatives because they are too liable to talk in favor of their own kin. And so for this reason they must be absolutely independent witnesses to give a reliable testimony. An independent witness is one that was not influenced by another and they have their own personal testimony to give.

THE FIRST WITNESS

So likewise the messenger must have two or three witnesses for the truth of his message. One witness is the way in which he receives the message. The messenger himself should know how God is communicating to him. He has received messages in the past so therefore, when he receives another message, he knows,

> "This is God talking to me."

THE SECOND WITNESS

But that is only one witness. He presents the message to the people and what do the people do? They, by virtue of the fact that the Holy Spirit is working with them because they have a living connection with God, are able to confirm the message. They say,

> "Yes, it is the truth because I have restudied it and made the message my very own."

Only when the message is made our very own, and only then, can we be a valid second witness. The messenger eagerly awaits to see how the church reacts on the thing because he knows that

God is not giving one man a knowledge for the entire church while the church is left in darkness.

There is a practical example of this. When we needed a church name, the communication was received by the messenger in the usual way, and then he presented it to the people and asked them to pray about the matter, in order to gain a personal confirmation. Someone misunderstood this and thought that now the messenger was asking for a vote. They had not grasped the principle of how a message is to be confirmed. Each one of God's people must, through a living connection with God, have a personal conviction of this truth, and then he can give confirmation to the message. This is a second witness to the messenger and to all the others that the message is the truth.

THE THIRD WITNESS

A third witness of it would be our personal living experience in the message. So God is making a truth very, very clear. He is really establishing it on a firm foundation.

> **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 163:**
> Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church—Christ's body—is left in darkness. In His providence He places His servants in close connection with His church in order that they may have less confidence in themselves and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work.

And so God has placed a responsibility upon us and the responsibility is, we must be like the noble Bereans, and study the message to see whether these things are so. Nobody can take away this responsibility from us, and the better our personal connection with God, the better or the more we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit's working while we receive the messages, the firmer or the more reliable this testimony of the church will be.

We pray that there will be a very reliable testimony, so that the unity of God's church is genuine. We don't want a unity based on lack of restudy, or laziness. That would be very sad. Let's be like

the noble Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so.

Here are a few more passages regarding witnesses:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 516:

It was Christ who gave to Moses these directions for Israel; and when personally with His disciples on earth, as He taught them how to treat the erring, the Great Teacher repeated the lesson that one man's testimony is not to acquit or condemn. One man's views and opinions are not to settle disputed questions. In all these matters two or more are to be associated, and together they are to bear the responsibility, "that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

The Desire of Ages, p. 441:

But even this effort may be unavailing. Then, said Jesus, "take with you one or two more." It may be that their united influence will prevail where that of the first was unsuccessful. Not being parties to the trouble, they will be more likely to act impartially, and this fact will give their counsel greater weight with the erring one.

Here it is stated that the witnesses be independent, "not being parties in the trouble." This is a principle. We are not comparing messages to "troubles," but the same principle of witnesses applies. Not being dependent on man, but being dependent on God, we re-study the message and thereby confirm it through the work of the Holy Spirit and this gives a mighty weight to the truthfulness of the message.

Following the Curriculum

God is working as the teacher of His children and it is very essential that we really follow the curriculum that He gives us. When we think that we do not need to keep up with what God is teaching at the present time, then we miss some very essential points which we need for our preparation in the last days. We are actually in a school and it is very serious. God is teaching us through the messenger and the Holy Spirit, and when we neglect this

means which God has given to us, then we will not be prepared for the last battle.

Let us turn again to Moses and see in what way He taught the children of Israel. Moses received the vision of the sanctuary and all the instructions about how it should be built, and what the meanings of the items of furniture were. And then it says:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 343:

All these directions were carefully recorded by Moses, who communicated them to the leaders of the people.

The giving of the sanctuary truth illustrates in a very wonderful way what the task of the messenger is. His task is to present the message exactly as God has given it. At the beginning of the paragraph we just read, it says:

Chosen men were especially endowed by God with skill and wisdom for the construction of the sacred building.

Usually when you go to a talented person, such as an artist, and you ask him to paint a picture exactly as you want, will he do it like this? Usually he doesn't make the picture exactly as you want, usually he puts something extra into the picture which he thinks would enrich it. Imagine if God gave the instructions for the sanctuary, and these talented highly-skilled men who were able to make wonderful pieces of art, said,

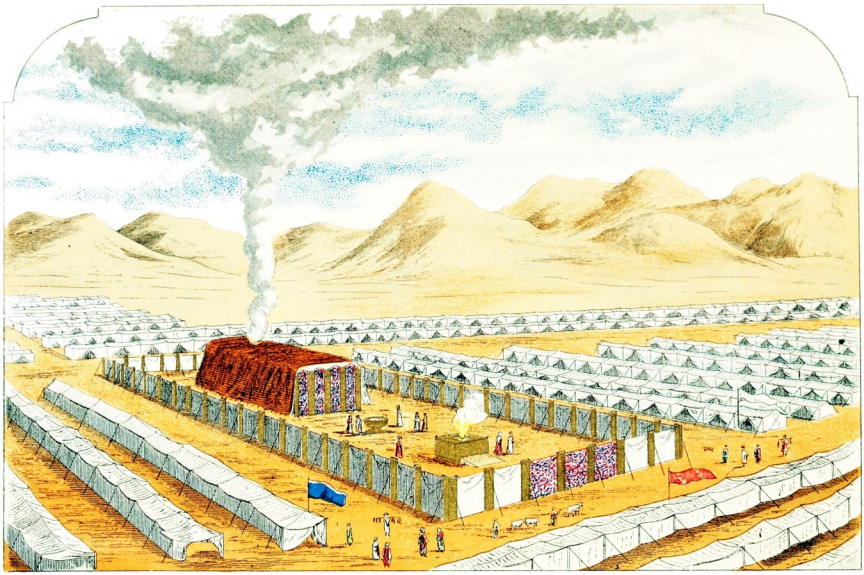
"That is all good and well what we receive here, but it would look a little bit nicer if we would add some curves here on the edge of the sanctuary. And also to use this fur on the outside is not very nice, we should use some better covering, not from the beasts of the sea. Not the seals skins, lets put in some leopards skins."

But if they had done that, the whole purpose and meaning would have been changed.

The Desire of Ages, p. 208-209:

When Moses was about to build the sanctuary as a dwelling place for God, he was directed to make all things according to

> the pattern shown him in the mount. Moses was full of zeal to do God's work; the most talented, skillful men were at hand to carry out his suggestions. Yet he was not to make a bell, a pomegranate, a tassel, a fringe, a curtain, or any vessel of the sanctuary, except according to the pattern shown him.



The instructions were very detailed. Not one pomegranate was to be made except according to the pattern. Pomegranates were to be hung on the dress of the High Priest. Let's imagine the artist would say,

> "Well there are five pomegranates, lets put a sixth one there. It just looks more symmetrical."

That would have been a transgression of Gospel Order. They must do everything exactly as it was shown to them and it was very essential. God called him into the mount and revealed to him heavenly things. The Lord covered him with His own glory, that he might see the pattern and according to it, all things were made.

The Desire of Ages, p. 209:

So to Israel, whom He desired to make His dwelling place, He had revealed His glorious ideal of character. The pattern was shown them in the mount when the law was given from Sinai, and when the Lord passed by before Moses and proclaimed,

Exodus 34

[6] The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

[7] Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

But Israel chose their own ways. Christ was faithful as Moses was faithful.[23] Christ made no plans for himself, not even one pomegranate, not one bell, not one fringe. Christ added nothing apart from His Father to His own mission. He added nothing which the Father did not show Him, but He carried out everything exactly as the Father told Him to do.

Christ could have enriched the world with a wonderful knowledge, which would have occupied the minds of men to the end of time. But instead, He built His life according to the pattern shown on the mount—His Father's plan. And so His life was the most faithful witness to the truth, power, and beauty of Gospel Order.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 311:

Only the covering which Christ himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul. "I counsel you," He says, "to buy of me…white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear." *Revelation* 3:18.

This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it *not one thread of human devising*. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us.

[23] *Hebrews* 3:2.

15. Every Member a Worker

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 163:

God does not give one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church—Christ's body—is left in darkness.

Work of the Spirit Through the Messenger

WE HAVE applied this statement to anyone who receives knowledge from God, including the messenger. God does not give to one man knowledge and leave the church in darkness. When God is the teacher of His people, He is not only the teacher of the messenger, but He is also the teacher of the other believers as well. But He can only be a teacher to them when there is a living connection between them and God. Otherwise the Holy Spirit cannot possibly be the teacher of each one.

Because the Holy Spirit is the personal teacher of each person, does that make the instrumentality of the messenger unnecessary? Compared with the work of the Holy Spirit, the part of the messenger is very small. But nevertheless, it is an essential part. Take away this link in the chain of communication, and the church ceases to receive light from the Holy Spirit. Or, as we read earlier, to despise God's messengers is to be in a chamber of darkness. Through our connection with God, and the teaching of the messenger, we receive a deep personal understanding of the message that is taught.

A very wonderful example of this was Peter. He first received the knowledge that Christ was the Messiah through his brother, Andrew. But since he was taught not only by the human instrument, but also by the Holy Spirit, he saw the truth in a much deeper way. And so as we diligently re-study the message for ourselves, we will receive deep insights into the message, and it will become our very own.

The Desire of Ages, p. 668:

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses.

Work of the Spirit on the Receiver

We receive Christ by receiving His words. And His words are presented to us in the messages that are given. Therefore, the same is true in receiving a message. Our hearts and minds need to be so blended into conformity to the message that when obeying the message we are but carrying out our own impulses.

The Desire of Ages, p. 668:

The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.

Every message that God sends is designed to expel sin from us. As the message is received sin will become hateful to us, not only because we theoretically believe the message, but because the Holy Spirit has convinced us of the truth of it through our re-study and His working on our heart. In this way it becomes our very own. Only when we learn in this manner can we truly say that we are taught by God. And this shows how God does not…

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 163:

…give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church…is left in darkness.

In fact He is the teacher of everyone in the church.

A Remedy for Self-Dependence

Naturally, there are always some who tend towards independence and say,

"It does not matter what anyone else in the church thinks, it only matters what I think."

This is a tendency that affects every man. We tend to trust our own thoughts more than those of others. When our own thoughts say one thing, and the majority say something else, we tend to go with our own thoughts. In such a situation, a truly humble person will be prepared to submit or reconsider their position in order to receive the help of others.

In studying the way God has led this movement, the following pattern emerges: God gives a message through the messenger first, and then the believers restudy it; there are some that cannot follow the light and they go out. Then comes the next message through the messenger and the same thing happens: the spiritually enlightened accept it, while a few reject it and go away. Then comes the next message and the same thing happens again.

So when we see this pattern happening over and over, and we suddenly find ourselves out of step with the majority of God's church, we should be prepared to reconsider our stand. We should be very careful not to lean too much to an independent spirit, thinking that God has given us an understanding alone while all the others are in darkness. This is precisely what the statement in *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 163, is all about.

Passing on the Message Faithfully

Let us come back to the statement with which we stopped our study, that was on page 208-209 of *The Desire of Ages*, where we read about Moses receiving the plan for the sanctuary and having employed the most skillful and talented to carry out his suggestions. When great skill and talent are involved in a work, there is a great temptation to add a little bit or leave something away. The same danger exists for the messenger. He must be very faithful to pass on exactly what he receives. He has no liberty to add anything, nor has he liberty to take anything away from the message.

There is often the temptation for the messenger to leave something away. When he can foresee that what he has to preach will cause difficulties, and would not be popular, he will be tempted to soften down the message to make it a bit more acceptable to the people. The opposite danger also exists, namely to add something to the message. God is very firm and very strict in this regard and He tells us that when we receive something to give to others, we must be very careful only to give what we have received. We read this warning in:

Revelation 22
[18] For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;
[19] And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

This warning is very clear and precise. It refers especially to the last book of the Bible, which is called *The Revelation of Jesus Christ.* But this revelation is not only to be found in the last book; the revelation includes every ray of light, every message, which God gives through His channel. Therefore these words apply to any message at any time. If anyone adds something to what God reveals, God will add to him from the plagues; if anyone leaves something away, he will come short of receiving from the Tree of Life.

Because of the dreadfulness of this warning, we must not come to the conclusion that God is trying to frighten us into obedience, so that we obey Him out of fear. Rather, in His love He is foretelling the results that will incur if we do not obey this principle. We must understand God's words not as a threat, but as a warning given in love, to make us aware of the outworking of a certain course of action. A loving God must warn His children when He sees danger coming, else He is proved to be cruel.

Some may say,

> "This warning concerns the messenger, but it does not concern me."

Actually, it concerns each one of us, because each one of us receives a message to pass on and it is very essential that we pass on exactly what we receive, both in spirit and in letter. That does not mean that we must pass on the message in exactly the same words, which would be practically impossible, but it does mean that we really must pass on the message as we have received it: in the same spirit, in the same truthfulness.

God rarely dictates to the people what He wants them to say; the words are chosen by the vessel. But the message comes from God, and must be passed on exactly as He gave it. We saw this in the example of Moses, who could not even add one pomegranate, one curtain, or one vessel to the plan of the sanctuary. Every detail was given by God.

In the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* we read that chosen men were endowed by God with skill for the construction of the sacred building, and even though they were talented, they were doing the work exactly as God had specified.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 343:

> Chosen men were especially endowed by God with skill and wisdom for the construction of the sacred building. God himself gave to Moses the plan of that structure, with particular directions as to its size and form, the materials to be employed, and every article of furniture which it was to contain.
>
> The holy places made with hands were to be "figures of the true," "patterns of things in the heavens" (*Hebrews* 9:24, 23)—a miniature representation of the heavenly temple where Christ, our great High Priest, after offering His life as a sacrifice, was to minister in the sinner's behalf. God presented before Moses in the mount a view of the heavenly sanctuary, and commanded him to make all things according to the pattern shown him. All

these directions were carefully recorded by Moses, who communicated them to the leaders of the people.

Opening the Door to the Highest Development

Satan presents Gospel Order as a restriction of liberty and he says, when you accept Gospel Order, then your capabilities, your strength of mind, will diminish. Let's look at one example. In the world it is taught that in order to have a broad understanding, you must study everything so that you will be aware of what is going on around you. But God tells us everything we need to know in the messages He gives, and that is what we need to study.

When we listen to Satan's arguments they sound very logical, very conclusive. But when we look at the men who carried out God's order to the very letter, as in the construction of the sanctuary, what do find? We find that they were especially endowed by God with skill and wisdom for the construction of the sacred building. Likewise when Moses accepted the call and did only as God commanded him, his powers did not diminish, but rather grew stronger and stronger.

So it will always be for those who do likewise, as it was also in the life of Christ. Consider His life for a moment. Christ did nothing of himself, but only what the Father told Him to do and how wonderful was the physical, spiritual and mental development of Jesus! As we read the other day, He could have suggested thoughts that the greatest men had not understood up to that point of time. And not only in the spiritual realm, but also in scientific lines. What textbooks did He have for study? He had nature, He had the Word of God as far as it existed in His time, and He had God as His teacher.

When we accept Gospel Order and confine ourselves only to the message that God gives us, then the Holy Spirit will give us such depth of insight that our understanding, our talents, our capabilities will be mightily strengthened and developed. Christ is the best example for that. He concentrated only on the message

that God gave him. And yet when He was twelve years of age, He was already more advanced in understanding the Bible than were those men who had for sixty years or more, studied the Bible intensely. This should very clearly tell us that when we limit ourselves to what God gives us as a curriculum, we will not be at the bottom, but on top. We will not be the tail, but the head. This promise is for each and every one of us, not just the messenger alone.

Each Person Plays a Part

Let us see the line of communication, as it went on from Moses.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 343:**
> All these directions were carefully recorded by Moses, who communicated them to the leaders of the people.

So to whom did Moses give the message? To the leaders. It would have been impossible for Moses to give the message to each Israelite, because there were over a million: 600,000 men, along with women and children.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 303:**
> Moses returned to the camp, and having summoned the elders of Israel, he repeated to them the divine message.

To whom did Moses give the message? To the elders. Didn't the rest of the people receive it? They received it, but they received it from the elders. Christ was the heavenly messenger to Moses, and Moses was the messenger on earth, the primary messenger. The message then came through Christ to Moses, and he gave it to the elders, and the elders did not give it to each Israelite but they gave it to the heads of families, which are the parents, and they gave it to their families. And the families were to give it to the world. So each one had a share in the line of communication, Moses being the primary messenger, and all the others being secondary messengers.

Each one in God's cause is a worker. We don't have a one-man worker movement, but we have a one-man primary messenger-

ship. All of the people are workers because each one has his share in presenting the message to others. Why does God use this system? Why doesn't He use one man to give it to the whole world?

First of all, it would be technically impossible, but there is another reason as well: there is a great blessing in passing on that which we have received. First of all, we become more firmly grounded in it, which strengthens us very much. In passing on the message, we ourselves are richly blessed, and God would not rob us of this blessing. Everyone can and must have this blessing through giving the message on to others.

When we study the position and work of the primary messenger, it is in principle really the same work as that of the secondary messengers. We are really studying our own duty, the only difference being the level of responsibility. As was mentioned before, there are different levels in God's kingdom. There is one level in heaven, there is one level on earth. These levels should not be understood in the worldly sense, as if to indicate positions of greater or lesser importance, but they simply mark out different areas in the field of labor. For example, there is the area of the family, which is not less important than the area of the church.

Awakening to Our Duty

I want to tell you a practical experience that illustrates what a blessing it is when we awaken to our duty and pass on the message. In the German camp meetings, we were accustomed to having special children's studies. Fred was very good at this and the children liked to listen to his stories. But one day he became very reluctant to hold the studies, and the next year he did not attend them.

Then another young brother took over and kept on giving the children's studies. He was also very talented and the children liked to listen to him. As he became more and more enthusiastic in this work, he came to me one day and wondered if we should

erect an institution like the school of the prophets for our children, because the parents were not properly teaching them.

I told him that it was good that the children liked to listen to him, but if the idea of a "school of the prophets" tended to strengthen the responsibility of the parents towards their children, then it was good. But if it tended to weaken that responsibility, if they came to rely more and more on him to do the work they should be doing, then it was not so good. He immediately understood and stopped giving the children's studies to other children.

When the next camp meeting came and everybody requested him to give children's studies, he said no, the parents should do it instead. I supported him in this and suggested that during the breaks the parents should repeat to their children the studies that we had during the camp meetings.

At first the parents were a bit unhappy, thinking that they lacked the ability to do this. But they started doing it anyway, and at the end of the camp meeting they came to me and said that it had been a great blessing. They had found that as they repeated the studies to the children in simple language, so that the children could understand, then they themselves were also much better prepared for the next study because it kept the main thoughts fresh in their minds. They found that as they repeated the message to others, it was in turn a blessing to them.

This shows that the giving of the message brings with it a great blessing which no one must miss. We have missed this blessing in the past because we thought that the whole responsibility rested upon the primary messenger. That is not true, we are all workers in God's cause.

A Chain of Communication

There is another example in the Bible where the same principle is described:

Revelation 1

[1] The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants; things which must shortly take place.
[2] And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.
[3] Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.
[4] John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.

Who is the source of the Revelation of Jesus Christ? God. So God is the source and to whom is He giving this revelation? To Jesus Christ. That again shows very wonderfully how a primary messenger works. If anyone could give a revelation of Jesus Christ, it certainly would be Jesus Christ himself, wouldn't it? He would be the most qualified person for giving His own revelation. But He didn't give His own revelation, God gave it through Him. That is a wonderful thought isn't it? Jesus never even gave His own revelation; so humble is He, He surrendered himself to His Father.

Jesus Christ was the primary messenger in heaven, and He gave the revelation to the angel, and the angel gave it to John. That angel was Gabriel, wasn't it? And he gave it to John. And John gave it to the seven churches. Or to be more particular, as we read from chapter 2 onward, he gave it to the angel of the church, or to the seven stars, which is the same.

Revelation 2

[1] To the angel of the church of Ephesus write…
[8] And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write…

Who is the angel? A heavenly being? No! In this case, the angel represents the leaders of the churches, because the word angel in Greek, *angelos*, means also messenger. They were the messengers of the seven churches. In other words, the secondary messengers

who received it from John. Is this clear? And they gave it to the members of the seven churches and the members in turn were to give it on to the whole world. That is God's plan. Never is the message to stop flowing.

When you go to a pond where there is no fresh water flowing in, what do you find? It becomes stagnant. But if it is always flowing, then it stays fresh. And it can only flow constantly, if there is a constant well supplying it. Likewise, there must first be a constant revelation of truth to the church, and there must also be a constant flow. Think of the fresh mountain rivers, they are always flowing, flowing, flowing. In the same way, the message of truth is to be always ongoing.

There are different levels or areas of messengership, but in all areas, or all levels, the same principles apply. The same principles apply down here as they apply in heaven.

Matthew 6
[10] Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Let's take as an example, a member of the church of Laodicea. This member has received the message from the elder, or the angel of the church, who in turn had received it from John. This believer in Laodicea may say to the elder,

> "I won't accept the message from you, I want to hear it direct from John."

Would John be able to give this member the same service that the elder could? No! Of course not. When one person is not satisfied with the channel through which the message comes to him, he will not be blessed by God, for he is going against God's ordained way. Each person must first take hold of the message that he receives from the messenger who has been sent to him, even if it is a secondary messenger.

If you were sent out somewhere into a place where nobody had taken the message before, and the people refused to listen to you,

saying that they wanted to hear it direct from God, then what would God say to this? He would say,

> "If you don't accept it from this messenger which I sent to you, then you are in great peril. You are left in darkness."

Let's take another example. If the children would say to their parents,

> "I won't accept the message from you because you received it from the messenger and not direct from God,"

—would the Lord bless these children? No they would be left in darkness. So it is very essential that we understand that the same principles apply at every level of communication.

The Power of Binding and Loosing

Jesus asked the question:

> **Matthew 16**
> [15] Who do you say that I am?

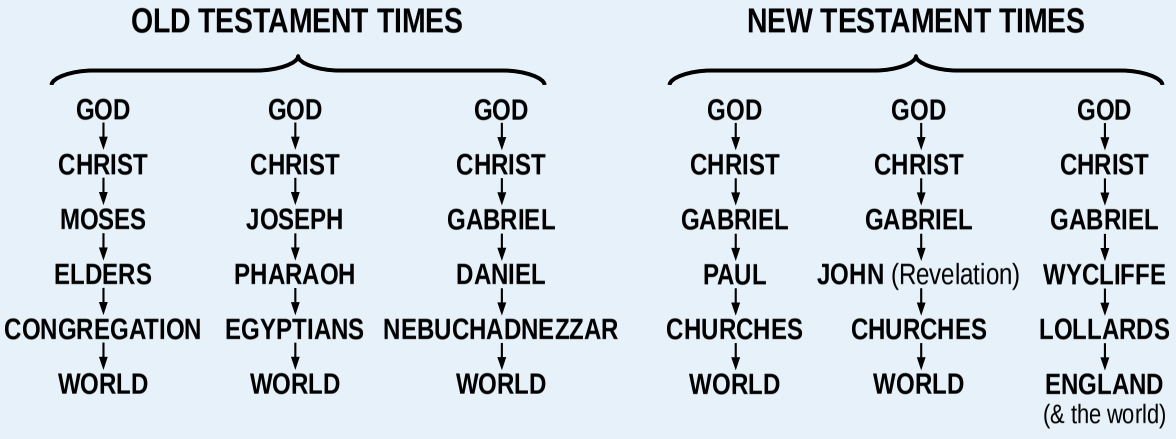
Peter said that Jesus was the Son of the living God. Jesus answered Peter saying,

> [17] Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven.
> [18] And I say also unto you, That you are Peter, and *upon this rock* I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

That is, "on this truth." Then He says:

> [19] And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.
> [20] Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

The One Way of Gospel Order



The diagram is simplified. In some cases there were more levels, such as in the training of Samson, John the Baptist, or Christ, where the Parents received instruction in how to raise the Children. And in the giving of the *Revelation*, the message went from John to the Angels (or messengers) of the Seven Churches, and from the Churches to the World.

The same principles apply at each level. The receiving agent must take the message from the one passing it to him, and faithfully transmit it to those in his sphere of influence. If he refuses to receive the message from the human messenger, but wishes to get it direct from God or Christ instead, or tries to form his own message, he cuts himself off from this living chain. To reject Christ's messengers is to reject Christ himself.

In other words, it was not yet time for that present truth to be loudly proclaimed.[24] But look at this verse:

Matthew 16

[19] I will give you the keys of the kingdom.

I have often wondered and puzzled about this text, but it becomes very clear now in the light of Gospel Order. The messenger has the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever he binds on earth is bound in heaven and whatever he loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven. This can be clearly seen when we follow up the story of the messengers, one after another.

When the message given through God's chosen messengers, is not received by the people, what happens to them? They are bound. And when they accept the message, they are loosed. Binding refers to being bound by the cords of sin. And the word *loose* means to be made free from sin.

So what happened to the people who rejected the message? They were bound in the sight of heaven as they were really bound on earth. God would not do anything to change the situation. And when they received the messenger, and the message, they were loosed. Jesus considers the work of the messenger so serious that He makes it clear that this work has validity in heaven. When the message from heaven is rejected on earth, heaven will respect it, and when it is accepted on earth, heaven will recognize it likewise. How we treat God's message at any level is a very serious matter, as it is by His authority that it has reached us.

[24] PP Editor's note: Jesus did not want himself proclaimed loudly as the Messiah at that time because the commonly-held concept of the Israelites, as to the work of the Messiah, was so far different from the reality as it would have caused an unnecessary excitement and an unhealthy enthusiasm. After the cross, when the character of Christ's work had been so clearly demonstrated that there could be no confusion, the time to proclaim this present truth had fully come.

"Give Them Something to Eat"

Another important principle can be seen in the story of the feeding of the five thousand. Christ had been preaching all day to a multitude of five thousand men, besides women and children. At the end of the day they became weary and tired but still had a long journey home. Before they went home they needed something to eat. They had not noticed any hunger all day long because the messages from Jesus were just too interesting. They were captivated by the wonderful words which they heard, but when evening drew on, they really needed something to eat and Jesus felt sorry for them.

According to the plan of God, He gave them something to eat, but the manner in which He gave them to eat is most interesting. It again confirms Gospel Order and God's way of working. Jesus told His disciples,

> **Luke 9**
> [13] Give them something to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

So the disciples replied,

> "How shall we give them something to eat? We have empty hands."

This is the situation in which we often find ourselves. When we hear the message and then have to give it to others, we feel that we have empty hands and have nothing to give. We feel that we cannot remember all the things that we have learned. Is this your feeling? That is my feeling too, I can comfort you. When I have to give the message of Gospel Order for a whole camp meeting, I fear that I will not remember all of it. So I have the same fear as you and we have the impression that we have nothing, that we have empty hands. So the disciples felt.

John 6

[8] One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said unto Him,

[9] There is a lad here, which has five barley loaves, and two small fishes: *but what are they among so many?*

And when we consider our task in giving the message to the whole world, then we may rightfully ask ourselves the question,

"What shall we give them [the whole world] to eat?"

Let's imagine that the latter rain would start now and God would command us,

"Go and give the message to all the world!"

Would you feel fit to do this? Would you think we had a full hand to give them? Truly, we have something to tell them, but we would fear of soon running empty because we cannot remember all the things. We have studied for years but how much would we remember of these things? That is an argument I hear very often,

"I cannot pass it on."

I remember also the parents at the German camp meeting when they were urged to teach their children the message; they said,

"We cannot do it."

They feared to do it at the beginning for the same reasons that we fear to do it in our sphere, and for the same reasons that the apostles feared to feed the multitude in their day.

16. Believers Do Not Teach Believers

WE MADE the point that God gave the message to Moses, Moses then gave it to the elders, the elders to the parents, the parents to the families, and so forth. In a perfectly organized system, that is, organized after Gospel Order, there is total harmony between all these messengers.

The primary messenger does not have direct access to every single individual in the whole world. For example, the primary messenger does not bear the primary responsibility for the children of believing parents. To a certain extent he has a responsibility, but he is not given the task of bringing about their rebirth. That is the task of the parents. If the parents neglect to do this work, then the messenger cannot step in and do the work for them.

This also means that when the children of the families reject the messages from their God-fearing parents, then they also reject the elders. That is a principle. And when they reject the elders, they reject the primary messenger, and they are also rejecting Christ. To reject Christ is the last step in the whole system.

We can view this also from another angle. There are people who reject the present messenger. They say,

> "I can receive the same truth if I read the writings of Waggoner and Jones, Ellen White and the Bible."

But soon these people also have their doubts about Waggoner and Jones, and when they have these doubts, then they also begin to have doubts in the Spirit of Prophecy.

In Germany there is a very critical attitude toward Ellen White as having the Spirit of Prophecy. She is viewed by many of the Adventist people there as a talented person, who could write very well, but that is all. She is not considered as a prophet of God. Those people who have this doubt in the Spirit of Prophecy soon

begin to doubt the Bible. And those who doubt the Bible, what have they left? Nothing.

To start throwing out one thing, means to throw out everything in the end because everything is linked together in a perfect chain in God's system of organization. To break one link in that chain of organization is to break the whole chain; it is to disconnect yourself from the whole chain. It is very serious, and I hope that all of us can see this clearly.

Those people who have their doubts about the validity of the Bible, and all the message from God through His messengers, will in the end reject everything except their own impressions. When they come to this point they really become fanatics, don't they? That is the end result and it always begins with the first step, with rejecting the messenger that is nearest, whether he is a primary or secondary messenger. It is like a domino game: you stand up the blocks and throw one down, and everything in the row falls down in turn. And so we must respect God's ordained means at whatever level we find them.

Feeding of the Five Thousand

Let's turn back to Chapter 39 in *The Desire of Ages*, "Give Ye Them to Eat." We were comparing the situation of the disciples with our situation. When Jesus told the disciples that they should feed the multitude, they said,

> "What do we have? We have only five fish and two loaves. That is not very much."

Jesus did this in order to test their faith. Here we read how the bread was distributed:

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 365:**
>
> The disciples finally came to Him, urging that for their own sake the people should be sent away. But Jesus said, "Give them to eat" and turning to Philip, questioned, "Where shall we buy bread that these may eat?" This He said to test the faith of the

disciple. He answered that two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be nearly enough that each might have a little.

Jesus inquired how much food could be found among the company. "There is a lad here," said Andrew, "which has five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" Jesus directed that these be brought to Him. Then He bade the disciples seat the people on the grass in parties of fifty or a hundred, to preserve order, and that all might witness what He was about to do.

When this was accomplished, Jesus took the food, "and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and broke, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

First of all, Jesus blessed the bread and then He gave to the disciples. Then the disciples gave to the multitude and they all ate. To whom did the multitude give the bread? To their neighbors. This is what we read as we continue:

The Desire of Ages, p. 368:

After the multitude had been fed, there was an abundance of food left. But He who had all the resources of infinite power at His command said, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." These words meant more than putting the bread into the baskets.

The lesson was twofold. Nothing is to be wasted. We are to let slip no temporal advantage. We should neglect nothing that will tend to benefit a human being. Let everything be gathered up that will relieve the necessity of earth's hungry ones. And there should be the same carefulness in spiritual things. When the baskets of fragments were collected, the people thought of their friends at home.

We should practice the same carefulness with those things that come from the right source. Some people are very careful to gather together everything that they can find from every source. We all have a tendency to collect a little bit, but we must select those things that come from the right source, that is, that come

from Jesus. Nothing must be wasted that comes from His hand. We must take full advantage of the messages that we receive.

The Desire of Ages, p. 368:

> When the baskets of fragments were collected, the people thought of their friends at home. They wanted them to share in the bread that Christ had blessed. The contents of the baskets were distributed among the eager throng, and were carried away into all the region round about.

Christ blessed the bread and then handed it out to the twelve disciples. While He handed it out, the supply did not diminish. As He took more bread out of the basket it increased more and more. The disciples took it and gave it to the multitude, but the twelve disciples could not give it to five thousand men plus women and children. It would have taken too long. Can you imagine it practically? About ten thousand people and twelve people to serve. That would take maybe at least half a day. It would be impractical. Instead, the disciples would have given to some representatives of the groups and they would distribute to the groups, and the groups shared among themselves. Finally there were twelve baskets left, and that was carried home to their neighbors.

The full picture then is this:

1. The Father in heaven gave to Christ;
2. Christ gave to the disciples who were the secondary messengers;
3. They gave to the parents;
4. The parents gave to their families;
5. And in turn the families took it home to their neighbors;
6. And they gave to the whole world.

The spiritual meaning is that all who are united with Jesus Christ will receive from Him the bread of life, the heavenly food, and impart it to others. Let's read a little bit further:

The Desire of Ages, p. 368:

The miracle of the loaves teaches a lesson of dependence upon God. When Christ fed the five thousand men, the food was not nigh at hand. Apparently He had no means at His command. Here He was, with five thousand men, besides women and children, in the wilderness. He had not invited the large multitude to follow Him; they came without invitation or command; but He knew that after they had listened so long to His instruction, they would feel hungry and faint; for He was one with them in their need of food.

And when we are brought into strait places, we are to depend on God. We are to exercise wisdom and judgment in every action of life, that we may not, by reckless movements, place ourselves in trial. We are not to plunge into difficulties, neglecting the means God has provided, and misusing the faculties He has given us. Christ's workers are to obey His instructions implicitly.

The application is very clearly made to our work. Let us come back for a moment to the situation of Moses. As we have learned, Moses took the bread of heaven (the message given him from Christ) and gave it to the elders who redistributed it to the heads of the families. If one of those elders was disobedient in his duty and gave his portion instead to others who had already received from one of the other elders, some would be fed twice, while the ones to whom the elder was originally sent to would be left neglected and hungry.

Just as in the case of the elders, God has appointed each one of us a work. This work requires all of our effort, and there is no free time left to do another work. If we try to do another work as well, it will result in our God-appointed work being neglected. In the example given, if the elder, instead of doing his appointed work in giving the message to the parents, gave the message to another elder, he would thereby feed one who was fed already, and starve those who should have been fed. That would be against Gospel Order; that would be in short, disorderly. The principle is this: we are to receive the message and then give it on to those who have not heard it before. When we pass on the message to those who

have heard the message before, then we feed them twice. This results in indigestion, and therefore they become weak.

Another result of departing from Gospel Order in the distribution of the message is that instead of God's people putting forth the effort to give the message to those who have not heard it, they just listen to it again. Or in other words, instead of being producers, they become consumers only. One of the greatest problems in God's church today is that the church members concentrate on feeding each other and therefore they become weaker and weaker. At the same time, those who really need to hear the message don't get to hear it.

In the established churches, the minister hovers over the same people week after week. Each week he gives sermons to the same people and they are quite satisfied to listen all the time. Compare this with our movement because the situation is a little bit different. We don't have an organized ministry and a paid minister who serves a certain church. Instead, what often happens is that one member of a local congregation, who shows some ability in presenting studies, is soon expected to do so from Sabbath to Sabbath while the others listen, and are quite happy to do so. Is this a common situation? Certainly. We have seen it happen again and again.

There was a time when I was satisfied with such an arrangement and thought it was an indication that things were going well. But now I must admit that we have become very weak by following this practice. Instead of seeing our duty to tell the message to those who have not heard it yet, we were content just to listen.

There has always been a tendency among God's people to gather together in one place. It is more pleasing to our human nature if we can live close to those of like faith than to be alone somewhere. As an example, take Battle Creek, a very well known place in Adventist church history. The first Adventist press was established there, and the famous Battle Creek Sanitarium. This

was also the regular meeting place of the General Conference, and so it was an attractive place for Adventists to live in. Because of this, one Adventist after another moved to Battle Creek until practically the whole city was Adventist.

The same tendency we also find among ourselves: the tendency to congregate rather than to spread out. But this is not God's plan. When there are believers in a very remote area, we occasionally hear them complaining about their solitary situation. They say,

> "You have it nice there in Palmwoods, you can meet every Sabbath with other believers, but I am all alone. I wish that I could be among other believers too!"

We would tell them that it was good for them to be alone, and now we understand much better why. It is God's plan that we disperse rather than congregate. It is God's plan that we found new centers of faith rather than congregating around an already existing center of faith.

In nature there is a wonderful example of this: the trees that are growing together in a forest. If they are surrounded with other trees, they grow tall and straight, and the wind has not much opportunity to attack them. But there is another tree which is on the mountain top, always exposed to a strong wind and it grows very crooked. One day a terrible storm comes and this storm rages and blows over all the trees with one exception: the one tree on the top of the hill, which stood fast. Why did this happen? Because the trees in the valley, which were surrounded by other trees, did not develop strength, they were weak trees. They depended on the other trees, while the tree on the top standing alone was very strong.

So it is likewise in the spiritual world. When we learn to stand alone in the place where God has put us, then we will develop strength. Also we will receive the blessing of giving the message to those who have not heard it, while those who continue to give

the message to those who have heard it will become weaker and weaker. And those who hear it also become weaker and weaker.

I must say from my own experience, to give the message to those who have already heard it is a very lifeless thing—very lifeless. In fact even sometimes when the conference message is heard twice,—although it is not bad to hear the truth twice,—but even then I sometimes find that people become very sleepy. In Kenya once, we had two camp meetings and most of the members of the first camp meeting came to the second camp meeting. I found it very difficult to keep up the interest. But the few who were there for the first time were very interested, and for their sakes I kept on, otherwise I would have almost lost courage as it was very hard.

So from my own experience, due to not observing the proper order in the past, I can tell you it is very hard to give the message again to those who have already heard it. A person who is expected to do this by other believers, is thus forced into a situation which he cannot handle. It is cruel toward him. This person then tries to keep up the interest, he tries to bring the message again and again, but the harder he tries, the less successful he is. Eventually he is tempted to bring up something new and exciting, a message which comes from himself and not through God's channel. These are the results of disobeying Gospel Order.

A Call to Missionary Work

Let us see from all this that it is not God's plan that we continually teach each other, but that we teach those who have not heard the message before. We must recognize the call to stop being consumers and to pass on the message. That is the call to missionary work really.

When we mention the call to missionary work, we tend to think of our experience in the Adventist church where we did not have it in us to do this work, and so it was an unpleasant thing. But this is not a repetition of that call. Please don't understand it like this. It is a very different call that the Lord is giving us in this

time. Since those days, we have learned the Sabbath Rest message, and this teaches us only to pass on the message where and when the Lord sends us. This is not only the Sabbath Rest message, it is also the Gospel Order message. In the commission given to Jeremiah, where was he to go?

Jeremiah 1
[7] You shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatsoever I command you, you shall speak.

He was to go only where God sent him. And so likewise we must be very careful not to go out on our own charge. Let us turn back for a moment to the chapter "Give Ye Them to Eat", where we read:

The Desire of Ages, p. 368:
The miracle of the loaves teaches a lesson of dependence upon God. When Christ fed the five thousand, the food was not nigh at hand.

Apparently He had no means at His command. Here He was, with five thousand men, besides women and children, in the wilderness.

He had not invited the large multitude to follow Him; they came without invitation or command.

So who arranged the preaching to the five thousand? God. And who arranged the feeding of the five thousand? Again God. It was God who arranged the situation and not man. And so likewise when we go out, we must go out only according to the special orders of God, according to His special leading.

The Desire of Ages, p. 369:
And when we are brought into straight places, we are to depend on God—Christ's workers are to obey His instructions implicitly.

If we pass on the message to those who have not heard it, but we do so without being sent, how much do we have to tell them? We would really have empty hands. If Jesus had arranged the sit-

uation by his own planning in order to make a miracle, how much food would the Father have given Him? Nothing. He would have had empty hands. And so it will always be when we make our own plans, then the work will not succeed. But when we go according to the plans of God, then the work will succeed.

The Desire of Ages, p. 369:

If we plan according to our own ideas, the Lord will leave us to our own mistakes. But when, after following His directions, we are brought into strait places, He will deliver us. We are not to give up in discouragement, but in every emergency we are to seek help from Him who has infinite resources at His command.

This puts us in a dilemma. On one hand, it is very essential that we do not give the message to those who have already heard it, but instead to those who have not heard it.

"Well," we may say, "we will do this according to God's plan, but so far He has not sent us."

So we want the blessing of passing on the message, but it seems that the doors are closed. That is the problem in which believers find themselves. In other words, they say,

"I want to give the message to those who have not heard, but in my city the people have no interest. My neighbors, they have no interest. My family, they don't listen to me. That is my problem."

When we hear of these problems, there is only one solution, and that is the solution which we must learn to apply. Let's open the book, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Chapter 11, "The Gospel in Samaria":

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:

This Ethiopian represented a large class who need to be taught by such missionaries as Philip—men who will hear the voice of God and go where He sends them.

So, we must become men "who will hear the voice of God and go where He sends" us. Naturally, there is a preparatory phase,

during which we are trained, educated, and prepared to go out, but we believe and hope and pray that this is at an end. We hope that God will be able to give us the latter rain soon and we will be sent out to those who are like the Ethiopian.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:

This Ethiopian represented a large class who need to be taught by such missionaries as Philip—men who will hear the voice of God and go where He sends them.

In other words, men who do not give their own message, but the message which they receive from God, and only go where He sends them. God will never send them into a place where another worker is working already because that would mean to double the work. We must go to those who have not heard the message. That is our call.



A Large Class

The Ethiopian was traveling from Jerusalem and Philip being a missionary of God in Samaria, was called by God to the road from Damascus and there he met the Ethiopian. It says here,

> This Ethiopian represented *a large class* who need to be taught by such missionaries as Philip.

Are there many people around you interested in the message? It doesn't look like it, does it? It really seems that around us the people are not interested. I can give you a similar experience when I think of Dickendorf and our neighbors. We have occasional contacts with them, but it seems very hard to find access to them. They are so wrapped up in their worldly pursuits that I tend to think that there are very few who are interested in the truth for our times.

But the prophet tells us something different. The prophet tells us that this Ethiopian represented *a large class* who need to be taught by such missionaries as Philip. So the word of God is telling us that there is a large class, but what we observe tells us that there is a small class. Shall we trust what we see, or what the word of God says? Believe the word of God. So let us with our spiritual vision now see what is the real fact of the case, that there is a large class who need such missionaries as Philip. The fact that this large class is not visible in our day, is because there are not such men as Philip. Philip built the kingdom of God in God's way.

Our great problem is that in the past we never properly understood Gospel Order. For this reason instead of concentrating on giving the message to those who have not heard it, we were always looking to preach the message to those who have heard it already. And instead of going out to where nobody had been before, we tended to congregate in places where there were other believers.

Therefore this large class is not visible today. We could not have success while we were trying to change the structure of God's kingdom.

A Weak People

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 299:

> As Aaron and Hur supported the hands of Moses, they showed the people their duty to sustain him in his arduous work while he should receive the word from God to speak to them. And the act of Moses also was significant, showing that God held their destiny in His hands; while they made Him their trust, He would fight for them and subdue their enemies; but when they should let go their hold upon Him, and trust in their own power, they would be even weaker than those who had not the knowledge of God, and their foes would prevail against them.

We should not have any difficulty seeing that we, like Israel was, are a weak people. Consider the gifts that have been given to us, and compare this with the strength that we possess. We have been given a messenger and a living message that contains such an unfolding of light that has never been so far in history.

If I think back in history, there may be one exception, during the time of the first advent of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. But apart from that I can see no time in history where there was so great a revelation of light as we have today. There were great revelations in history, but we have so many messages constantly coming and yet our strength does not match up to it. There is a strange contrast between the gifts given us by God and our accomplishments.

Think of those movements in the past who received less light than us and how strong they were. Think for example of the reformation. They really found the people, this "large class," and gathered them in. But do *we* find these people, do *we* see these people? Not at all. So that makes it very evident that we are a weak people and we must recognize and acknowledge this. In fact, just like Israel, we are even weaker than our enemies.

Let's compare ourselves with other churches, with the fallen churches. They gather in a lot of souls don't they? Not every church, but some do. Why are we weaker than they are? We shouldn't be weaker, we should be far stronger. The reason that we are weak is told us here:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 299:

> While they made Him their trust, He would fight for them and subdue their enemies; but when they should let go their hold upon Him, and trust in their own power, they would be even weaker than those who had not the knowledge of God, and their foes would prevail against them.

Why are the people of God weak? Because they do not make Him their trust. And why do they not make Him their trust? Because they would rather congregate among each other. Because they have changed the structure of God's kingdom, and therefore go in their own strength.

In our own strength we are weaker than our enemies because our enemies don't go in their own strength. They go in the strength of Satan and he is definitely stronger than we are. For this reason God's people are weaker than their foes when they trust in their own power. Let's read this again:

> While they made Him their trust, He would fight for them and subdue their enemies; but when they should let go their hold upon Him, and trust in their own power, they would be even weaker than those who had not the knowledge of God.

This is what will always happen when we do not obey Gospel Order: we will be even weaker than our enemies, and they will prevail against us.

17. Missionaries

WE WERE contemplating how Moses communicated the message to the people, and that Moses did not give the message to each Israelite individually, nor did he give the message directly to the world, but he gave it to the elders who in turn gave it to the parents, who in turn gave it to their families and they finally to the whole world. So while we have one primary messenger, everybody else who receives the message is a secondary messenger. Even those in the world who receive the message are secondary messengers again because they also have to pass it on to others. It is to be as a constantly flowing stream that never stops.

The Work of Secondary Messengers

This work of being secondary messengers is a work which we have neglected in the past because our main concern and attention was to teach each other, and for this reason we have been weak. Let's turn again to *Patriarchs and Prophets*, to refresh our minds:

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 299:**
> ...God held their destiny in His hands. While they made Him their trust, He would fight for them and subdue their enemies; but when they should let go their hold upon Him, and trust in their own power, they would be even weaker than those who had not the knowledge of God, and their foes would prevail against them.

This lesson applies to us also; as God held their destiny so He holds ours. Here we saw why the people of God are weaker than their foes. While they are found fighting "in their own power," their enemies fight in the strength of the arch rebel, which is Satan. He is definitely stronger than any human strength.

To fight in the strength of God requires that we fight according to His plans, in agreement with His procedures, and in agreement with the structure of His kingdom. When we concentrate our ef-

forts on teaching other believers, then we will never be able to finish the work because our attention is distracted and the structure is destroyed.

In order to understand how serious this destroying of God's structure is, we must consider that modifying the structure of God's kingdom is the very work of Satan. That is his main concern, his main purpose, and for this he works very diligently. In fact, it is his studied effort to induce the people of God to stop building God's kingdom God's way. For this reason, the people of God have not built His kingdom but instead have helped Satan to restructure the kingdom, just what he intended to do from the beginning. By working contrary to His order, they have helped Satan tear down what God tried to build up. But now God is making known to us the structure of His kingdom, and one important principle of it is that the message has to go to those who have not heard it before.

Let us see what this means. When we come together for a camp meeting, it is very much in Gospel Order because we are firsthand believers; we are receiving the message direct through God's channel. As the messenger is telling us the message, the Holy Spirit is personally teaching each one.

Then as we go from here it is our duty to pass the message on, not to keep it for ourselves. The first people to share it with are our family members. This is the first work that God has given us. After this come our neighbors, those whom we have contact with. How shall we share it with them? Shall we send out notices and gather them together in a church hall? This is not exactly the method which Christ used and it is not the method which we should use either, except when the Lord specifically directs us to do so. A much more promising way of passing on the message is the through the work of personal effort. Let us read some statements in the *The Desire of Ages* that make this very clear:

The Desire of Ages, p. 141:

With the calling of John and Andrew and Simon, of Philip and Nathanael, began the foundation of the Christian church. John directed two of his disciples to Christ. Then one of these, Andrew, found his brother, and called him to the Saviour. Philip was then called, and he went in search of Nathanael.

These examples should teach us the importance of personal effort, of making direct appeals to our kindred, friends, and neighbors. There are those who for a lifetime have professed to be acquainted with Christ, yet who have never made a personal effort to bring even one soul to the Saviour. They leave all the work for the minister. He may be well qualified for his calling, but he cannot do that which God has left for the members of the church.

In what way have we left the work for the messenger? Instead of putting forward the personal effort of bringing our neighbors the message, we have rather relied on bringing them to a camp meeting, and letting the messenger bring them the message. This is not exactly the way we should go about it. When somebody hears the message for the first time, it would be wise if he was established in the message a little bit so that he would be better prepared to benefit from the camp meetings. There are exceptions, and in the end we must see how God guides in each particular case. However one thing is clear, we must not rely on the minister to do our work for us.

Personal Effort

It also speaks here of personal effort. What does the word "personal" mean? It means direct from you and not through another person. One person is often the best audience, because you can present the truth just as fast as the person can grasp it; and they can ask questions when they need to. If I had to choose between preaching before a large audience or before one person, I would take the latter; I find it much easier. This is the method of Christ, and it is recommended here:

The Desire of Ages, p. 141:

Philip was then called, and he went in search of Nathanael. These examples should teach us the importance of personal effort, of making direct appeals to our kindred, friends, and neighbors.

To whom are these appeals to be made? Three classes are mentioned and the order in which they are mentioned should be noted:

1. Kindred
2. Friends
3. Neighbors

Here is represented a circle of nearness: first to those who are nearest, that is our kindred, our own family; and then to our friends; and then to our neighbors; then to the city, and the world. The method of God is to start first where we are.

The Desire of Ages, p. 822:

The disciples were to begin their work *where they were*. The hardest and most unpromising field was not to be passed by. So every one of Christ's workers is to begin where he is.

What do you think would be the most promising field for the disciples to start in after the ascension of the Saviour? Maybe Samaria or Antioch, but certainly not Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the very center of the resistance towards Christ. But that was exactly where they were to start. They were to begin the work where they were. And so when we have hard and tough neighbors, or a hard and tough family, still we must begin the work there. That is the first place to start. The hardest and most unpromising field was not to be passed by.

We all tend to become discouraged if when we have to give the message, things do not go very well, or if those whom we have a responsibility toward are not inclined to listen to the message. After a while we want to give up and we tend to think,

"My mission is in vain!"

The disciples could have thought the same way because they had to begin where they were and nowhere else. This is one of the reasons why the qualifications of an elder as described in *1 Timothy* 3 is his ability to rule well over his house. In other words, that he has worked successfully with his family. If he has not worked successfully with his family, if he has not started in the place where he is, then how can he successfully work in other fields?

The Desire of Ages, p. 822:

> The hardest and most unpromising field was not to be passed by. So everyone of Christ's workers is to begin where he is. In our own families may be souls hungry for sympathy, starving for the bread of life.

Is this so? Are there in our families souls hungering for the bread of life?

> There may be children to be trained for Christ. There are heathen at our very doors. Let us do faithfully the work that is nearest. Then let our efforts be extended as far as God's hand may lead the way. The work of many may appear to be restricted by circumstances; but, wherever it is, if performed with faith and diligence it will be felt to the uttermost parts of the earth. Christ's work when upon earth appeared to be confined to a narrow field, but multitudes from all lands heard His message.

When we build God's kingdom according to His structure, giving the message to those who have not heard it, those who lie nearest to us, then it seems that our field is very narrow. But so was Christ's field. It was very narrow and yet His work went to the utmost parts of the world. Then if we faithfully do that work which lies nearest, even if it is the most unpromising, the Lord will be able to bless His work in such a way that it will go to the whole world.

The secret does not lie in our dedication (which is however a very important part), or in our good purpose, or in our good motives. The secret lies in the fact that we build exactly according to

God's procedures, that we build God's structure as He wants to have it built.

The Desire of Ages, p. 479:

Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep.

This again speaks of personal work. Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if He were the only one for whom the Saviour died. So the first work to be done is the work which lies nearest, which is the work in the family. When this work is successfully done, then the families go out as a whole and bring the message to the world. This is the intention that God has. Let us see that we practice this and then the Lord will bless His work.

Hidden Souls

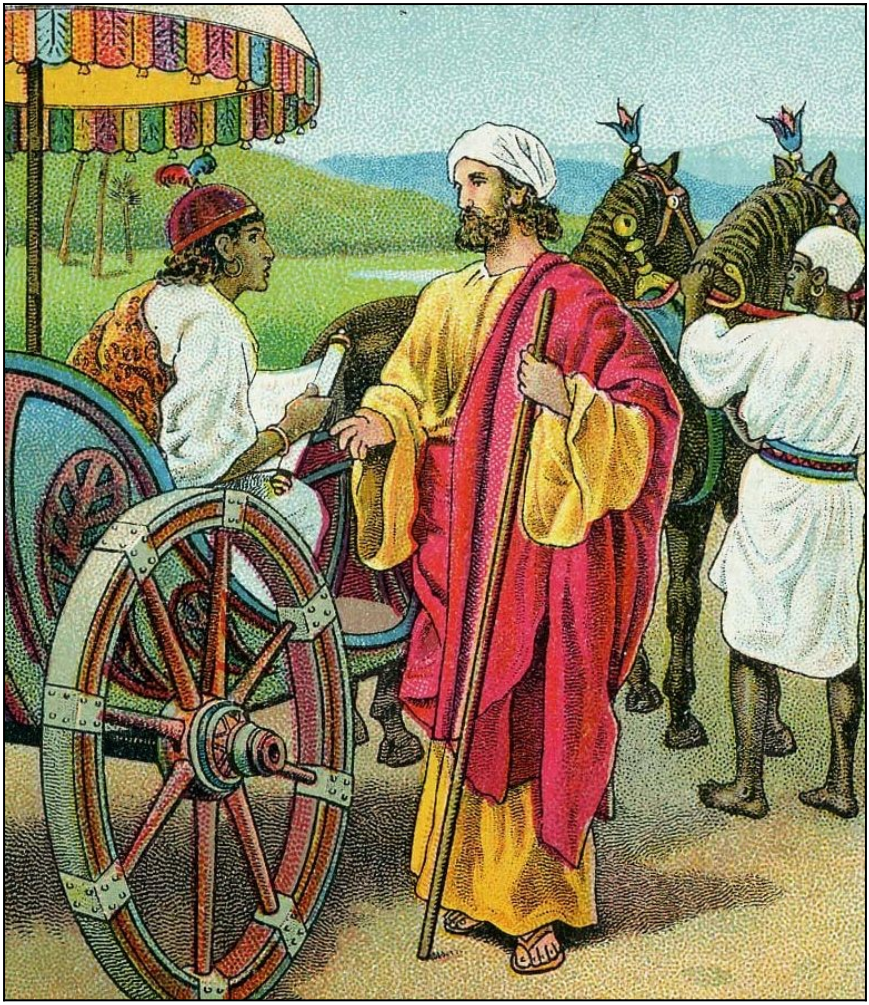
We need to get a real vision of the work that lies before us. We tend to think that there are not many souls which are interested, but this is not so.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:

This Ethiopian represented a large class who need to be taught by such missionaries as Philip—men who will hear the voice of God and go where He sends them. There are many who are reading the Scriptures who cannot understand their true import.

Are there many who are reading the Scriptures? Do you believe that? I find it difficult to believe because I don't see them. I believe what the Word of God says, but it seems to be against every sight and circumstance at times. Wouldn't it be nice if we were traveling in a plane, or train, or bus, and next to us there sat somebody busily reading *Romans* 7 and 8. Suddenly he asks you the question,

"What does this mean, can you explain it to me please?"



Wouldn't that be nice? That is what happened to Philip. There are many such people who are reading the Scriptures like this and they don't understand their import.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:

All over the world men and women are looking wistfully to heaven. Prayers and tears and inquiries go up from souls longing for light, for grace, for the Holy Spirit. Many are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in.

Why don't we find many? There are several reasons, but the principle reason always is transgression of Gospel Order, or attempting to restructure God's kingdom. Instead of giving the message to those who have not heard it, we concentrate on those who have heard it and have already received it.

We must have order in our families. It is impossible for the world to be reached when the messengers of the families are not respected, or not given their proper place. Let us turn for a moment to *John* 17. Here Jesus prayed for the unity of His followers. Bear in mind that the same counsels that apply to the church, also apply to the families:

John 17

[20] I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in me, and I in You;
[21] That they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that You sent me.
[22] And the glory which You gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as we are one.

Why shall we become one?

[21] ...That the world may believe that You sent me.

Before we are really one, the world can never see the work and position of Christ. The whole unity of God's church depends on their acceptance of Gospel Order. We really need to understand and accept the position of Christ, and also pass the tests that He has given us. We need to build His kingdom in His way, and not try, as Satan does, to restructure the kingdom. This requires us to concentrate our efforts on the work that God has given to us, which is to give the message to those who have not heard it yet.

Can you see how dangerous it was when the brother in Germany taught the children, when he gave the children studies? It seems to be a very harmless thing and perhaps it is in itself harmless, but the very act of doing this is a restructuring of God's

kingdom because instead of working in his field, he was working in the field of another.

We all have failed to work in Gospel Order to some extent. I have made my mistakes and others have too, I do not feel guiltless. I can see very clearly now that if we want to finish the work successfully, we must build God's kingdom according to God's way. It must be structured in His way, which means that we must do the work that God has given to us, instead of working for those who have received and accepted the message already.

The Sphere of the Family

We must concentrate on working in the sphere where God would have us work. This is first of all our family. And when this work is successfully accomplished, we can go to the next step. The next step is our friends, then after that our neighbors, then the city and so forth. And so we are to begin where we are placed, even if it is the hardest field.

> **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:**
> An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light and who was ready to receive the gospel, and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts. The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God's way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men.

To see how important it is to build God's kingdom His way, we need to see how easily God could go another way. For example, when men neglect the work He has given them, wouldn't it be a great temptation for God to step in and give the message himself? If the messenger saw that the parents didn't do their work properly, and that the children were uneducated, and not born again, and he tried to step in and teach the children, it would be a restructuring of God's kingdom.

And in like manner, God or Christ could very easily step in because the work is not done properly. Wouldn't this be under-

standable on the side of God? Imagine how God feels for mankind, how He loves them, how He wants to save them and yet He has to wait until His appointed agencies are ready. What pain this must cause to God!

Education, p. 263:

Those who think of the result of hastening or hindering the gospel think of it in relation to themselves and to the world. Few think of its relation to God. Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. All heaven suffered in Christ's agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God.

When we think of the results of hindering the gospel work, we tend to only see the loss of human souls that might have been saved. But we don't consider its relation to God, the pain that it causes Him when we try to restructure His kingdom, when we are disorderly and therefore do not do the work that He wants us to do for the fallen world. Some of you may be thinking,

"That is not true because every honest soul will be saved in the end, and God does not make himself dependent on the church."

Let us read:

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 122:

Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world.

Think of the terrible responsibility that parents have when they bring up children that are not born again. Think how God must feel. Not only do they suffer in this temporal life, but they also lose their eternal life, which is far worse. And what pain this must cause God. How much He must desire to step in and take the chil-

dren away from their parents. There are some cases of abuse where the state can take the children away from their parents.

Really God should take away almost all children from their parents in the world shouldn't He? And He should take away the work from us too, and give it to angels. That is what we deserve, because we have attempted to restructure His kingdom. But He does not do it. He respects the means that He has ordained. He respects them so much that He would rather suffer than step in and restructure His kingdom.

Creating Opportunities

Again let's come to this question,

> "Won't every honest soul be saved?"

Yes, certainly every honest soul will be saved in the end. But the facts of the case are this: when God's church has been strong (and there were times when it has been strong, as in the time of the early rain or in the time of the Reformation) then there was a mighty ingathering of souls. And as we read, these were all souls that were on the verge of God's kingdom, just waiting to be gathered in. When God's church was strong, they were gathered in.

But there were other times when the church was weak, such as today. And there were even weaker times than this, such as the middle ages, also termed the "Dark Ages." In that time how many souls were gathered in? Very, very few. How many souls at that time were hungering for the bread of life? Fewer than in the time when the church was strong? No, the people were not different. The people today are not different than in the times of Christ. We have the same people to deal with. The real reason why souls are not gathered in is that God's church has been strong at times and weak at other times. When God's church is weak, there is a tremendous loss of souls. When the church of God is strong there is a redeeming of souls.

When we think of truly honest souls we must see that there are actually very few honest souls in the world. Think of the heathen

in dark Africa where there was practically no knowledge of Christ. There were honest souls among them and these honest souls learned of God from nature. They worshiped Him from what they learned by His works, and therefore they will be in the kingdom of God as we are told in *Romans* 2. So there are some honest souls, but they are a rare exception.

Why is it that when God's church is strong more souls are gathered in? The reason is that when God's church is strong, those who are not honest by nature become honest through a change of heart, by accepting the gospel. And in the end they will be among the redeemed. So while it is true that every honest soul will be saved, there are very few honest souls in the world. But there is a great potential of honest souls in the world, and they only need to be wakened up.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:

> An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light and who was ready to receive the gospel, and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts.

When angels are guiding us, then we can be sure that we will be guided to exactly the spot where we are needed; to a hungry soul, a soul that is on the verge of God's kingdom. The angels would not lead us to any other place. When Christ was led on this earth through His Father's guidance, He was always successful. Haven't you marveled at times that each person, or almost each person, that came to Jesus was healed? Think of the disciples of John coming to Jesus and watching Him all day, how Jesus was constantly healing. He was casting out devils, He was making the blind see and so forth. How many healings do we have? We can count them on our fingers per year, isn't this so?

Are the people different? Because healing is given according to the faith of the people, do we therefore assume that people have less faith today than they had in the times of Jesus? Was it a time

of exceptional faith when all the people had such a faith that Christ could just go around and they were all healed like that? No, there must be another reason. The reason was that Jesus was not weak, but strong. And why was Jesus strong? Because He built God's kingdom God's way. He never once transgressed Gospel Order; that was the secret of His life of power. Or as He himself said,

John 5
[30] I can of my own self do nothing.

He went only where the Father sent Him, and He spoke only what the Father gave Him to speak. That is, He only gave the message to those who had not heard it before. This work included the training of His disciples. Jesus was the primary messenger and He gave to the disciples. The disciples gave to those who had not heard before and He taught them to do this. He sent them out in areas where there was a need, where there were hungering souls who needed the gospel because they had not heard and accepted it before. And so likewise after His departure they went on in the same manner, and how successful, how powerful was this church!

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:
In the trust given to the first disciples, believers in every age have shared. Everyone who has received the gospel has been given sacred truth to impart to the world. God's faithful people have always been aggressive missionaries, consecrating their resources to the honor of His name and wisely using their talents in His service.

What is an aggressive missionary? One who is intemperate? What does "aggressive" mean in this context? It means someone who is strong, someone who is pressing forward and not giving up, even if the battle is hard, even if the field that lies nearest (where we are to start) is very hard. When we are put in a place where we are all by ourselves, then it is hard to work there without the fellowship of a large group of believers. It is indeed hard

but this is God's appointed work and an aggressive missionary will not give up. He will work in this field because he is aggressive, that is, pressing forward, not giving up. An aggressive driver is one who drives fast, and so likewise, an aggressive missionary is one who presses the accelerator constantly. He always presses forward.

What does this mean with regards to our meetings? We need to have camp-meetings because we first need to hear the message before we can give it to others. But does that mean that we no longer need to meet with each other on Sabbath? Actually it is important to meet together because our meetings have a certain purpose. We need to understand what that purpose is. Jesus said,

> **Matthew 18**
> [20] Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.

He said this for a certain purpose. What is the purpose for our gatherings? It is the same as our camp-meeting. Our camp-meetings have a purpose and that purpose is to educate us and school us to be aggressive missionaries. We are here to learn how to pass on the message, or how to build God's kingdom; we must learn that we do not gather for self-satisfaction. We do not meet just to be consumers, but we are here for a very serious matter. We are here to be educated to be aggressive missionaries, and we must take every advantage of this schooling. We cannot miss this schooling otherwise we will have empty hands when we have to go to our work.

We all have many reasons to feel that we have empty hands, especially when we come to the hard places where God sends us, but the Lord is providing us with a very wonderful schooling in which He will train us to become effective missionaries.

18. Some Practical Applications

GOD'S people are weak because they have not built according to the procedures and principles of God's kingdom structure. Instead of concentrating on giving the message to those who have not heard it, we have been satisfied to congregate and give the message to each other. And not only a few, but rather all of us have been guilty of this to some degree. This includes those who have permitted themselves to be teachers and also those who pushed them into this position along with those who permitted them to stand in this position.

In order to understand more fully what responsibility each one has, we need to study many more Scriptures.

For example, when Miriam and Aaron murmured against Moses, we might think that it would have been a small thing for Moses to give Miriam or Aaron a higher position. But Moses did not have the authority to do this. Later, at Kadesh Barnea, Moses gave other people a position that should not have been given to them, and the result for Israel was disastrous. They really became weaker than their enemies. Whenever we do not work according to God's principles of kingdom building, God cannot go with us, and we can be sure that our enemies will be stronger than we are.

Many do not like a definite change to come into the present order of things because they are so satisfied with past accomplishments. When we think about the revelations of truth that have been given to us so far, we tend to feel that much has been accomplished. But this is more external. For the truth to become more internalized, there must be a definite change, a definite revival, otherwise the work cannot be finished.

In the Family

God's kingdom structure does not apply only to one level, but that it also applies to all the other levels. Let's take the family as an example of how the structure of God's kingdom must be maintained.

1 Corinthians 11

[2] Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.
[3] But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

The important text that we want to dwell upon is this:

[3] But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ.

We all know this, that the head of every man is Christ, so much so that we do not question it and we all believe that we really practice it. But it is one thing to confess to practice this order and another thing to really do it.

Ezekiel 33 [NKJV]

[30] As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.
[31] So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain.
[32] Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them.
[33] And when this comes to pass; surely it will come; then they will know that a prophet has been among them.

Here we have a people who are quite happy to listen to the message; they are so used to hearing it that they miss the true meaning. For instance, what does it mean that Christ is the head of every man? What is the real meaning of it? Do we really understand it? We have heard terms such as "heart obedience," and "being under God," so often that when these things are preached to us we tend to say, "Wonderful words!" but we fail to see their true meaning. When we are told that we do not obey Gospel Order, and that we will reap the harvest of disobedience, we agree intellectually. But because we do not understand the real spiritual

meaning, we go on to suffer the consequences of our wrong ways, and perhaps then, when it is too late, we finally understand what God was trying to say. Let us determine not to be like those men who show much love with their mouths, and yet their hearts are shut to the message.

1 Corinthians 11

[3] But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ.

When we read these words we are so familiar with them, that we fail to really think about them, and meditate to see how they apply to our lives. We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to work on our heart and show us where Christ is not our head.

One secret of making the Child Salvation[25] message work is that the parents not only know the words of the message, but also know their meaning and practice them. In Columbia I met a woman who was the owner of a health food factory, selling her goods in the big supermarkets. It was customary that young girls market the products. She thought that the best young girls would be from the Adventist church, as they were not so worldly-minded, and would therefore be true representatives of the products. So she employed them.

In the beginning this worked well but after a while the first girl became very worldly-minded. She became like all the other girls in the supermarket and the woman wondered. She thought she would take another Adventist girl. This also worked for a while but she also was captured by the influence that existed in the supermarket. There was music playing all the time, and the other girls that worked there dressed to show off their hair, and for display. This was a great influence on these Adventist girls. So one Adventist girl after another fell under this influence until she finally said to herself,

> "I can't continue like this. I feel responsible for the loss of these young ladies."

[25] See the book, *Child Salvation*.

So she employed worldly girls for the task. As it turned out, these worldly girls began to get interested in her religion. They asked her questions about it, and so they were influenced in the other direction. Then she became very concerned for her own children. She said,

> "I educate my children in the right way, but in what direction will they finally go?"

There was good reason for her to be worried and one key of getting the children in the right direction is the rebirth experience. But another equally essential key is the strict agreement of the actions of the parents with what they believe and say. In other words, they must see commitment and not just nice words. In fact, one of the secrets of the success of Jesus was that He not only said what He said, but He lived what He said.

Ministry of Healing, p. 469:

> There is an eloquence far more powerful than the eloquence of words in the quiet, consistent life of a pure, true Christian. What a man is has more influence than what he says. The officers who were sent to Jesus came back with the report that never man spoke as He spoke. But the reason for this was that never man lived as He lived. Had His life been other than it was, He could not have spoken as He did. His words bore with them a convincing power, because they came from a heart pure and holy, full of love and sympathy, benevolence and truth.
>
> It is our own character and experience that determine our influence upon others. In order to convince others of the power of Christ's grace, we must know its power in our own hearts and lives.

1 Corinthians 11

[3] But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ.

And now in the next sentence we can test or see in which way Christ is the head of every man:

[3] ...the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

In the same way that God or Christ is the head of every man, so man is the head of the woman. The same principles apply at all levels. The same relationship that Moses sustained to Christ, and Christ sustained to His Father, is to be maintained between the husband and wife. That places a tremendous responsibility on the husband as well as on the wife. Both really need to understand their role. Here is a verse that usually causes great rebellion, if I may say so:

1 Corinthians 14
29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.
30 But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.
31 For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.
32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.
33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.
34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.
35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

The husband needs to be the spiritual leader in the framework of his family, and the wife needs to recognize this, which means that before marrying, these issues need to be settled very surely. To women we can give this sure counsel: never marry a man who cannot take the spiritual lead in the family. And to men we cannot counsel strongly enough: never marry a woman that will not submit in spiritual matters.

This submission cannot be given in a situation where the husband is abusing his rights and suppressing the other partner. This submission also cannot be given if the husband is worldly. Therefore such alliances, of believers with unbelievers, should never be made.

The husband and the messenger to the church stand in the same relative position. They need to hold very firmly to the position they have been appointed, which in the case of the husband is the spiritual leadership of the family, and in the case of the messenger is the spiritual leadership of the church. Likewise they need to see their responsibility. If I disregard my responsibility, then I give a false testimony to the world and it is impossible for me to pass on the message to others. The first field to work at is the field that lies nearest.

When Gospel Order is understood and practiced at all levels, then the church will truly become one and this is what Christ is praying for. It is very essential that we all do everything we can in order to fulfill the prayer of Christ who prayed:

John 17
[22] ...that they may be one, even as we are one.

This unity is established by building God's kingdom in His way and ceasing all efforts to restructure His kingdom. It is very essential that each person understands their place and fills it to perfection.

In Sabbath Meetings

Let's now turn again to the question that we asked yesterday. The question was,

> "How shall we meet on the Sabbath day? How shall we come together when there is no teaching of believers among believers? How shall we conduct our services then?"

Every member of the group has been at the camp meeting and has heard the message on Gospel Order, and now we meet again after camp, and what shall we do? There is a wonderful statement in the *Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, under the sub-heading, "One Person Not to Do All the Witnessing," that gives some very practical instruction concerning this:

SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1183:

The fact that the Lord has been represented as hearkening to the words spoken by His witnesses, tells us that Jesus is in our very midst. He says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst."

These words of Jesus, "where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst," show clearly that gathering together is not a sin. Rather the opposite; it is a necessity. When we emphasize that God's people must not congregate but rather go out to the places where nobody has been before, at the same time we must recognize that it is necessary from time to time, to come together again.

Jesus himself enjoined this principle when He educated His disciples to be aggressive missionaries. He sent them out to places where they were apart from Him and the other disciples. He sent them out two by two, but they also had to go alone.

Early Writings, p. 103-104:

I have seen that it is now time for the messengers to move out wherever there is an opening, and that God will go before them and open the hearts of some to hear. New places must be entered, and, wherever this is done, it would be well, if consistent, to go two and two, so as to hold up each other's hands. A plan like this was presented: It would be well for two brethren to start together and travel in company to the darkest places, where there is much opposition and where the most labor is needed, and with united efforts and strong faith set the truth before those in darkness.

We tend to go to the easiest places, don't we? But here it says, "to the darkest places."

And then, if they could accomplish more by visiting many places, to go separately, but often meet, while on the tour, to encourage each other by their faith, and thereby strengthen and hold up each other's hands. Also, let them consult upon the places opened for them, and decide which of their gifts will be the most needed, and in what way they can have the most suc-

cess in reaching the heart. Then as they separate again their courage and energy will be renewed to meet the opposition and darkness and to labor with feeling hearts to save perishing souls.

I saw that the servants of God should not go over and over the same field of labor, but should be searching out souls in new places. Those who are already established in the truth should not demand so much of their labor; for they ought to be able to stand alone, and strengthen others about them, while the messengers of God visit the dark and lonely places, setting the truth before those who are not now enlightened as to the present truth.

This is the method that Jesus followed with His disciples. And from time to time, as described in *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 38 "Come Rest Awhile," He called them together again and they told all their troubles and their perplexities to Jesus, as well as their experiences. Their happy experiences, they told Him with joy, and so they encouraged each other. And their perplexities they also told Jesus and they could talk about it, and be enlightened. And so likewise it is necessary to follow God's instruction, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in the midst of them," in order to encourage each other again.

However, this must not be done for selfish reasons, because the disciples did not meet for selfish pursuits, but for a purpose. And that purpose was to talk about the work; to talk about how they could more efficiently work in the future. Even so our gatherings must have a definite purpose, and that purpose must be kept strictly in mind. And that purpose is to be trained to do the work wherever we are placed. Let's read on now:

SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1183:

One person is not to do all the witnessing for Jesus; but everyone who loves God is to testify of the preciousness of His grace and truth. Those who receive the light of truth are to have lesson upon lesson to educate them not to keep silent, but to speak often one to another. They are to keep in mind the Sabbath meeting, when those who love and fear God, and who think upon His

name, can have opportunity to express their thoughts in speaking one to another.

Therefore we need lesson upon lesson to educate us, and not to keep silent. In our meetings, there has been too much tendency for the believers to put the responsibility of speaking on one person. And when this person spoke, he was expected to speak the next Sabbath, also. Instead, we need lesson upon lesson to educate us, not to keep silent, but to give our testimony.

I think it requires great skill to give these lessons. It is of no use to just talk something, we must talk intelligently, so as to encourage each other. It says here, they are to keep in mind the Sabbath meeting. When a young brother had the responsibility to take up the study on the Sabbath (and I know myself how this is, so I can talk with experience here), then during the week he would think,

"What shall I bring to study on the Sabbath?"

And while studying his Bible he would have an interesting thought and then think,

"Okay, I can present this on the Sabbath day."

But this task should not be left to one person. Every person should keep the Sabbath meeting in mind. Each one should contemplate how to contribute so that the Sabbath meeting may be interesting.

That does not mean that we now must give each other studies, that is not our task when we come together; but it speaks here of giving testimonies, and also of sharing our advanced understanding of the message. When we come to the camp meeting, we often miss a lot and then later as we go over the studies again, a light dawns and we say,

"Now I understand it!"

When we have such a happy experience, the Sabbath meeting provides an opportunity to share it with others so that they also

may be blessed by this knowledge. So let us keep in mind the Sabbath meeting when those who love and fear God can have an opportunity to express their thoughts in speaking one to another.

SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1183:

Let each one seek to become an intelligent Christian bearing his responsibility, and acting his personal part to make the meeting interesting and profitable.

Each member then has the responsibility of making the meeting interesting and profitable. When we come to the meeting just to listen, and go out again as we came in, then we fail to make the meeting interesting and profitable. Instead we contribute to making the meeting boring and unprofitable.

We all know of the kind of church meetings where there is a large congregation, and the minister comes in, delivers a fine and polished sermon, and then goes out and all the people say,

"That was a good sermon!"

These are not the kind of meetings that we want and need. We need schools in which we are educated to work better in the place where God has put us. God has not appointed us to be teachers to those who are fed already, but to feed those who have not been fed. Foremost is the family, and then, like the disciples, we are to go into the other fields that God gives us.

SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1183:

The majesty of heaven identifies His interests with those of the believers, however humble may be their circumstances. And wherever they are privileged to meet together, it is appropriate that they speak often one to another, giving utterance to the gratitude and love that is a result of thinking upon the name of the Lord. Thus shall God be glorified as He hearkens and hears, and the testimony meeting will be considered the most precious of all meetings; for the words spoken are recorded in the book of remembrance.

When we meet together from time to time, in order to go out again to our appointed place, we will come to consider it the most precious of meetings. Can you at least imagine how wonderful this must be? Here and there are people isolated and living in lonely places; they go about their daily work with it's burdens and cares, but find very few, or perhaps none, with whom they can freely express their thoughts. Then from time to time they come together with each other to tell of their experiences, and perplexities; then they encourage each other, and pray together. Finally they leave the profitable meeting, greatly strengthened to take up their work again. How wonderful this must be!

From my own experience I can say that such a meeting is really interesting and profitable. In Dickendorf, I used to give a regular study during the Sabbath school, which I understand now was not building God's kingdom in His way. Everybody was quite satisfied to listen to the studies, until one day we introduced a new practice of reading a chapter from the Spirit of Prophecy. The first book we read from was *The Desire of Ages*, and more recently it is *The Acts of the Apostles*. One person would lead (we had two or three persons who would take turns leading), and everybody had to contribute. This meant that all the people had to prepare themselves by reading the chapter that was going to be studied on the next Sabbath. Then as we came together, the one who was leading asked a few questions, and then everybody told how they saw Gospel Order, or whatever the present theme was, in the paragraph under consideration. This was most profitable and interesting. It became even more blessed after I completely stopped giving studies.

The only exception to this style of meeting is when there is a definite new light coming through the messenger, and all need to be silent and listen to the new truths. But apart from this, we have made it a habit now to conduct the meetings according to the counsel that we are reading here. To hear what experiences the other believers have, makes for a highly interesting and profitable meeting. I am very glad for this because I can see that

Gospel Order has liberated us to a great extent. So it shall be. What we need still more, is a closer connection with God so that He can really lead us to those souls who are hungering for the bread of life, and are on the verge of God's kingdom.

So in very practical terms we read here, in the Spirit of Prophecy, how our meetings can be made interesting and profitable. It is a wonderful counsel. Let us turn again to the book, *The Acts of the Apostles* and read a little bit further in the chapter that talked about the many souls that are on the verge of God's kingdom.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:

In the trust given to the first disciples, believers in every age have shared. Everyone who has received the gospel has been given sacred truth to impart to the world. God's faithful people have always been aggressive missionaries, consecrating their resources to the honor of His name and wisely using their talents in His service.

When it speaks here of "aggressive missionaries," who are they? Is this only the messenger? It says here that they are "God's faithful people."

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109-110:

The unselfish labor of Christians in the past should be to us an object lesson and an inspiration. The members of God's church are to be zealous of good works, separating from worldly ambition and walking in the footsteps of Him who went about doing good. With hearts filled with sympathy and compassion, they are to minister to those in need of help, bringing to sinners a knowledge of the Saviour's love. Such work calls for laborious effort, but it brings a rich reward. Those who engage in it with sincerity of purpose will see souls won to the Saviour, for the influence that attends the practical carrying out of the divine commission is irresistible.

Why was Christ's life so irresistible? Because He lived what He taught and He built God's kingdom exactly according to the divine structure of kingdom building.

19. Witnesses of the Message

IN THE last study, we looked at the practical aspects of meeting together, and a question was asked which I would like to clarify because it might be misunderstood by some. The question was in connection with giving studies. I want to emphasize that there is no need of giving studies during the Sabbath meetings because the studies on the message have already been given. Instead there is a need for testimonies, personal insights, and understandings which help to encourage each other.

Let us turn for a moment to another question which was connected, and that was,

> "Can women speak in such a meeting, or can they lead out in the studies?"

We had mentioned *1 Corinthians* 11, which says that women shall not speak. I would suggest the following procedure: when the wife has a question, let her go to her husband and talk with him about it first; if the answer cannot be found, let both come to the messenger and ask him. Such a procedure would greatly unify the family. Instead of them independently going and asking questions, let them first come together. I can say from my own experience that such a procedure always unifies, it helps very much. Order must be observed in every respect.

One more thing before we continue. I just want to repeat another thought that was mentioned to me. In the world we have a pyramid structure, where there is a boss and so forth. But the structure of God's kingdom is quite opposite. In God's kingdom, He is the servant and He serves. It is the opposite of the structure in the world. Outwardly it looks very similar, we must admit this too; but in reality it is quite the opposite.

John the Baptist

For a moment let us again open *The Desire of Ages*, we turn to the chapter about the imprisonment and death of John the Baptist.

There is one important thought we want to develop in this and the next study: the manner in which the message is carried forward to others. This manner is not only by words, it is also by life, by the example. John the Baptist is a wonderful example of this, as was Jesus.

The Desire of Ages, p. 217:

The works of Christ not only declared Him to be the Messiah, but showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established.

That is a very important sentence. His works not only showed that He was the Messiah, but showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established. This is Gospel Order. In *The Ministry of Healing*, the same statement can be found on pages 35-36.

But let us now for a moment consider the story of John the Baptist and see in what context this statement is written. John, as you know, was the forerunner of Christ, and he was put into prison. In prison he had a very difficult time. He did not fully understand why he needed to be there. John the Baptist, no doubt, was a man who was used to hardship and he was not one to complain. Nor was he in great distress due to his physical discomfort. But the great problem for John the Baptist was,

"Is being in prison really God's manner of building the kingdom?"

What burdened him were the questions:

"Am I really doing God's work in prison?"

"Have I made a mistake because I am here?"

"Why can't I continue to give my message?"

When we experience an obvious defeat, we naturally ask ourselves the question, over and over,

"Where have I failed that I have experienced such a defeat?"

And being cast into prison certainly looked like defeat didn't it? Very much so.

The Desire of Ages, p. 215:

> Like the Saviour's disciples, John the Baptist did not understand the nature of Christ's kingdom.

In other words, he did not understand the structure of Christ's kingdom.

> He expected Jesus to take the throne of David; and as time passed, and the Saviour made no claim to kingly authority, John became perplexed and troubled. He had declared to the people that in order for the way to be prepared before the Lord, the prophecy of Isaiah must be fulfilled; the mountains and hills must be brought low, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain. He had looked for the high places of human pride and power to be cast down. He had pointed to the Messiah as the One whose fan was in His hand, and who would thoroughly purge His floor, who would gather the wheat into His garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Like the prophet Elijah, in whose spirit and power he had come to Israel, he looked for the Lord to reveal himself as a God that answers by fire.

So John the Baptist was here, and he was not seeing Christ do the things he expected Him to do. He was in prison and his disciples told him,

> "If Jesus really was the one whom you foretold, then you should not be in prison; He should deliver you at least."

These thoughts burdened John a lot. Satan also tempted him with the question,

> "Have you made a mistake? Have you in the end followed a fable, an imagination?"

However, these were not questions that were very deeply embedded in John, rather they were suggested to him by Satan. And there is real difference whether these types of questions come from within ourselves, because we ourselves are in rebellion against Gospel Order, or whether these questions are suggested to us by Satan. In the case of John the Baptist, these questions came

from outside, but he did not give up his faith in Jesus. He remained very firm, as we read here:

The Desire of Ages, p. 215:
John was troubled to see that through love for him, his own disciples were cherishing unbelief in regard to Jesus.

And then it says in the next paragraph:

The Desire of Ages, p. 216:
But the Baptist did not surrender his faith in Christ.

The next few paragraphs describe how John tried to solve his problem. He sent some of his disciples to Jesus with the question,

Matthew 11
[3] Are You He that should come, or do we look for another?



And the commentary given to this question is the following:

The Desire of Ages, p. 216:

How short the time since the Baptist had pointed to Jesus, and proclaimed,

John 1

[29] Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.

[27] He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me.

And now the question, "Are You He that should come?" It was keenly bitter and disappointing to human nature. If John the faithful forerunner, failed to discern Christ's mission, what could be expected from the self-seeking multitude?

This question was very hard for Jesus to bear. It inferred doubts about His mission. He was just coming out of the wilderness, and there Satan had tempted Him with:

Matthew 4

[3] *If you are the Son of God* then…

–and here we have a similar doubt coming from His best follower. And although John asked the question mainly for the sake of his disciples, it was not easy for the human nature of Christ to hear such words.

How did the Saviour answer this question? He did not answer right away, did He? He answered in a different way than they expected. He told them to come with Him so they could watch Him all day healing the people.

The Desire of Ages, p. 216-217:

The blind were groping their way through the crowd; diseased ones of all classes, some urging their own way, some borne by their friends, were eagerly pressing into the presence of Jesus. The voice of the mighty Healer penetrated the deaf ear. A word, a touch of His hand, opened the blind eyes to behold the light of day, the scenes of nature, the faces of friends, and the face of the Deliverer. Jesus rebuked disease and banished fever. His voice reached the ears of the dying, and they arose in health and vigor. Paralyzed demoniacs obeyed His word, their madness left them,

and they worshiped Him. While He healed their diseases, He taught the people. The poor peasants and laborers, who were shunned by the rabbis as unclean, gathered close about Him, and He spoke to them the words of eternal life.

This was the answer for John and his disciples. We read here that this not only showed "Him to be the Messiah" but "showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established." John needed both. He needed the assurance that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, but he also needed to understand in what way the kingdom of God would be established, for this would help him fully accept his calling as a messenger. You may think that John was a messenger who really accepted his call, but at this stage, because he did not understand clearly how Christ builds His kingdom, he refused for a moment to be God's messenger. In what way did he refuse to be God's messenger? He had doubts.

The Desire of Ages, p. 217:

The disciples bore the message, and it was enough. John recalled the prophecy concerning the Messiah,

Isaiah 61

[1] The Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

[2] To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

The works of Christ not only declared Him to be the Messiah, but showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established. To John was opened the same truth that had come to Elijah in the desert, when...

1 Kings 19

[11] ...a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake: but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

[12] And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire,

–God spoke to the prophet by "a still small voice." So Jesus was to do His work, not with the clash of arms and the overturning

of thrones and kingdoms, but through speaking to the hearts of men by a life of mercy and self-sacrifice.

So the manner in which Christ builds His kingdom is not with the clashing of arms, but, by a life of self-sacrifice. We read on:

The Desire of Ages, p. 218:

The principle of the Baptist's own life of self-abnegation was the principle of the Messiah's kingdom. John well knew how foreign all this was to the principles and hopes of the leaders in Israel. That which was to him convincing evidence of Christ's divinity would be no evidence to them. They were looking for a Messiah who had not been promised. John saw that the Saviour's mission could win from them only hatred and condemnation. He, the forerunner, was but drinking of the cup which Christ himself must drain to its dregs.

John began to see that the kingdom the Jews wanted to establish, was actually a restructuring of the kingdom of God. And in order to build the kingdom according to God's pattern, he had to accept his call in any place that God would choose to put him. So it says:

The Saviour's words, "blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me," were a gentle reproof to John. It was not lost upon him. Understanding more clearly now the nature of Christ's mission,

–which is, in other words, the way of kingdom-building,

...he yielded himself to God for life or for death, as should best serve the interests of the cause he loved.

John the Baptist fully accepted his calling as a messenger at this point, and his message was now to give a demonstration of loyalty even unto death. This is a message that is not always given in words only but also by demonstration. Not everybody in the chain by which God's message is passed on will pass on the message in words. Some are to pass on the message by demonstration.

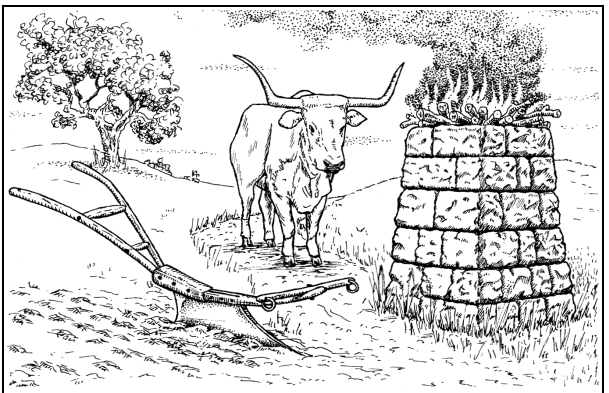
In giving a message by demonstration, who is the source of the message? God is the source. He must be the source, not man. So who chooses what kind of demonstration we are to give? God, not us. So if this demonstration includes loyalty unto death, who makes this decision? God. That is right. When it says here,

> Understanding more clearly now the nature of Christ's mission, he yielded himself to God for life or for death, as should best serve the interests of the cause he loved,

–it means:

> "I will go where ever You send me, and I will speak what ever You give me to say. I do not give my own message, but I give the message that God gives me. And when this message includes the demonstration of loyalty unto death, then I will also give this message."

The type of obedience rendered by the primary and the secondary messengers must involve a complete surrender, going wherever the Lord sends them, and saying whatever the Lord gives them to say. The message may even include death. It was so in the life of Jesus and John the Baptist, and will be especially true of the last generation, as we will see later. That reminds me of this picture:[26]



READY FOR EITHER

[26] See the next page. The picture is from the first printing of the book, *God's Sabbath Rest*, in the chapter, "God's Witnesses."

Ready for either: pulling the plow, or to be sacrificed. A true messenger who understands his mission, will be ready for every message which the Lord may want to give through him.

This principle goes very deeply into our life. It even covers questions such as where we are to work, whether we are to marry, and whom we are to marry, because in everything we do, we give a message to those around us. In giving the message we must be absolutely faithful messengers, in order to carry forward the exact work which God has given to us. There must not be even the least allowance for selfish thoughts in this work. Not the least. If we think only of our comfort, our profit, our benefit, then we will not be ready for either. We will be ready only for one way and not for the other way. As long as we refuse to be God's messenger, whether it be primary or secondary, and we refuse to step out of our way and into the structure of Gospel Order, then God cannot unify us.

Even such a great man as John the Baptist, was brought to the place where he, for a short while, did not accept his messengership because he did not understand fully these principles, until it became clear to him through the special testimony of Christ. Let us observe how Christ answered the question of John's,

> "Are you the one?"

In His answer he gave a clear demonstration of how the kingdom should be built. Christ gave this message to John the Baptist, not in words, but in demonstration. In fact Christ spent more time in healing than in preaching. It would almost seem to us as a waste of His time, since His message was so greatly needed by the hungering crowd. But the Father directed Him in His work, whether it involved preaching, or healing, or going down to Jerusalem to be crucified.

Compare the readiness of John the Baptist for either work, with the readiness of Christ to do everything:

The Desire of Ages, p. 486:

> To the heart of Christ it was a bitter task to press His way against the fears, disappointment, and unbelief of His beloved disciples. It was hard to lead them forward to the anguish and despair that awaited them at Jerusalem. And Satan was at hand to press his temptations upon the Son of man. Why should He now go to Jerusalem, to certain death? All around Him were souls hungering for the bread of life. On every hand were suffering ones waiting for His word of healing. The work to be wrought by the gospel of His grace was but just begun. And He was full of the vigor of manhood's prime. Why not go forward to the vast fields of the world with the words of His grace, the touch of His healing power? Why not take to himself the joy of giving light and gladness to those darkened and sorrowing millions? Why leave the harvest gathering to His disciples, so weak in faith, so dull of understanding, so slow to act? Why face death now, and leave the work in its infancy?

Those were the questions. When we consider the great desire that Jesus had to help the people, it must have been a powerful temptation to Him when Satan suggested,

> "Go and help them."

Furthermore, if we also consider how weak the church was, then it is not hard to imagine that Jesus must have dreaded the thought of leaving them alone. But that was the Father's plan and Christ was building the kingdom of God in every particular, and without exception, exactly as God had specified, even if the sacrifice was great.

We must also be ready for the same, regardless of the sacrifice. Even if the work demands the giving up of our life, we must be as faithful to the principles of building God's kingdom as Christ was. If in the little things of this life we do what we please, instead of what God is directing us to do, then will we be able to seal our testimony even unto death? Impossible! But this is the level of fitness to which we must attain, in all things like unto Jesus.

The Desire of Ages, p. 486:

> The foe who in the wilderness had confronted Christ assailed Him now with fierce and subtle temptations. Had Jesus yielded for a moment, had He changed His course in the least particular to save himself, Satan's agencies would have triumphed, and the world would have been lost.

Seemingly, it would have been a small thing for Christ to just make one detour, and heal a few people in the city. So it often seems to us of little consequence when in our life we do what we please. It seems of little consequence because we think that we can redeem this later. But, we must never forget that if we in any particular do not build God's kingdom in His way, then we incur losses, definite losses. And since we are a weak church, and weakness is a result of not following God's ways explicitly, we may know that we have already incurred losses.

> But Jesus had "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."[27] The one law of His life was the Father's will.

That is a wonderful statement,

> The one law of His life was the Father's will.

So absolutely fixed was Christ in building God's kingdom His way, that when they tried to force Him to build the structure another way, in other words when they tried to force Him to be king, Christ did not permit it. He firmly refused. And when it cost Christ's life to walk in God's way, He accepted it.

John the Baptist possessed the same spirit that Christ had, and had been prepared in the same way, to give the same testimony as Christ. After being led to understand that messengership also included being ready to give up his life, if that's what God required, he willingly surrendered himself. So messengership includes much more than just faithfully passing on some words that we have received. It also includes being a living demonstration of the truth that God gives us.

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[27] *Luke* 9:51.

The Desire of Ages, p. 218-220:

After the messengers had departed, Jesus spoke to the people concerning John...

Luke 7

[24] What went you out in the wilderness to see? [He said,] A reed shaken with the wind?

He then spoke of John the Baptist as being a very firm and great prophet. He was not like the false prophets, who one day did this and the other day did that, however the popular opinion would sway them. John the Baptist was a faithful messenger to the end, after he fully accepted his calling.

Luke 7

[26] But what, [said Jesus,] went you out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.
[27] For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, which shall prepare your way before You.
[28] Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist.

In the announcement to Zacharias before the birth of John, the angel had declared,

Luke 1

[15] He shall be great in the sight of the Lord.

How could Jesus say that John was greater than all the other prophets, and that none had arisen who was greater than John? Wasn't Elijah a very great prophet, who was finally translated? And wasn't Moses a very great prophet, and Isaiah and Jeremiah? But Jesus says that there was no prophet greater than John. What made him so great?

In the estimation of Heaven, what is it that constitutes greatness? Not that which the world accounts greatness; not wealth, or rank, or noble descent, or intellectual gifts, in themselves considered. If intellectual greatness, apart from any higher consideration, is worthy of honor, then our homage is due to Satan, whose intellectual power no man has ever equaled. But when perverted to self-serving, the greater the gift, the greater curse it becomes. It is moral worth that God values. Love and purity are

the attributes He prizes most. John was great in the sight of the Lord, when, before the messengers from the Sanhedrin, before the people, and before his own disciples, he refrained from seeking honor for himself, but pointed all to Jesus as the Promised One. His unselfish joy in the ministry of Christ presents the highest type of nobility ever revealed in man.

Character is true greatness. And what are the specifics in John the Baptist's character that made him great? They are his *faithfulness* and *exactness* in passing on the message.

The Desire of Ages, p. 220:

The witness borne of him after his death, by those who had heard his testimony to Jesus, was,

John 10

[41] John did no miracle: but all things that John spoke of this Man were true.

It was not given to John to call down fire from heaven, or to raise the dead, as Elijah did, nor to wield Moses' rod of power in the name of God. He was sent to herald the Saviour's advent, and to call upon the people to prepare for His coming. So faithfully did he fulfill his mission, that as the people recalled what he had taught them of Jesus, they could say, "All things that John spoke of this Man were true." Such witness to Christ every disciple of the Master is called upon to bear.

So we are called to be the greatest people of all times, aren't we? We are called to give the greatest demonstration of God's character. This is the work given to the church before Jesus returns. So what do we need to be? Great like the prophet John. We need to be greater than all the prophets of the past. That means that we need to give the message with such faithfulness that everyone can clearly see Christ. That is what God requires of us as the last church. Therefore, it is very important that we understand in what way John the Baptist was faithful.

He was faithful in giving the message exactly as God gave it to him, both in words, and in life. He was the one who foreshadowed what would happen to Christ, and who prepared the disci-

ples and all others for the coming sufferings of Christ. In the fate of John, they could see that the kingdom of God was not to be built as they expected, with a Messiah who would give them dominion over the Romans. Instead, it was to be built with a Messiah who was faithful in all things, even unto death.

John the Baptist's presentation of the principles of the Messiah's kingdom was the clearest representation given up to that time. The other prophets had also pointed forward to Christ but they could not do it as clearly; they saw the kingdom from a distance. They could only do it through pictures and symbols, but John could do it very correctly through his life.

The Desire of Ages, p. 220:

As the Messiah's herald, John was "much more than a prophet."[28] For while prophets had seen from afar Christ's advent, to John it was given to behold Him, to hear the testimony from heaven to His Messiahship, and to present Him to Israel as the Sent of God. Yet Jesus said,

Luke 7

[28] He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

That sounds like too much doesn't it? The "least in the kingdom"? The kingdom that is referred to here is the church, where God's order and ways are to be represented to the world. The "least" are those who are in agreement with it's principles, the principles of Gospel Order. In what way? We read this in the next paragraph:

The prophet John was the connecting link between the two dispensations. As God's representative he stood forth to show the relation of the law and the prophets to the Christian dispensation. He was the lesser light, which was to be followed by a greater. The mind of John was illuminated by the Holy Spirit, that he might shed light upon his people; but no other light ever has shone or ever will shine so clearly upon fallen man as that which emanated from the teaching and example of Jesus.

[28] *Luke* 7:26.

So not only the teaching of Jesus, but also the example; both are a part of giving the message faithfully.

The Desire of Ages, p. 220:

Christ and His mission had been but dimly understood as typified in the shadowy sacrifices. Even John had not fully comprehended the future, immortal life through the Saviour.

We can be even more privileged than John the Baptist because we can give a clearer picture today of the Rock, which is Christ; in words, and in experience. Just like John, we must be ready to live or to die; ready to stay single, or to be married; ready to work as a carpenter, or to work as a blacksmith; ready to live in Australia, or to live in Romania, or what ever. Ready for either. In every aspect of life, we are not to seek our own advantage, but ask the question,

"What is God's will?"

Having ascertained His will we then must do it and so become a faithful secondary messenger. Then some day we will also become faithful primary messengers, as we will see later.

But first of all let us see that we must really fulfill our present position and not desire another position that God has not given us yet. The desire to step out of our place is an effort to restructure God's kingdom, and this is the very purpose of Satan. If we do not wish to help him, then we need to understand these principles, and then Jesus will call us great, just as he called John the Baptist great. Then indeed we will be the greatest people that ever lived on earth.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 36:

The works of Christ not only declared Him to be the Messiah, but showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established. To John was opened the same truth that had come to Elijah in the desert, when...

1 Kings 19

[11] ...a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the

wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:
12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire…

–God spoke to the prophet by "a still, small voice." So Jesus was to do His work, not by the overturning of thrones and kingdoms, not with pomp and outward display, but through speaking to the hearts of men by a life of mercy and self-sacrifice.

This is the same statement we read earlier from *The Desire of Ages*, but now let us read the next paragraph, which is not found in the other book:

The Ministry of Healing, p. 36:

The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. It comes through the gentleness of the inspiration of His word, through the inward working of His Spirit, the fellowship of the soul with Him who is its life. The greatest manifestation of its power is seen in human nature brought to the perfection of the character of Christ.

So in what way is God's kingdom established? On the Rock. Notice the statement,

…through the gentleness of the inspiration of His word.

When the messenger preaches the message, this message must be a message of revelation, something revealed by God to him. Therefore it is inspired, it comes through the gentleness of the inspired word. But furthermore, the statement also says:

…through the inward working of the His Spirit, the fellowship of the soul with Him who is its life.

While we receive the message from the messenger with the Holy Spirit convicting us, then our soul has fellowship with Him who is life. That is, with God through Jesus Christ. And then there will be a transformation of life in those who hear, as it goes on to say,

The Ministry of Healing, p. 36:

The greatest manifestation of its power is seen in human nature brought to the perfection of the character of Christ.

So by this very means which God employs to give the message, is His way of kingdom building revealed. It does not come through a powerful vessel. The vessel is fragile, earthen. It comes through the inward working of the Holy Spirit who inspires the messenger and works on the heart of the hearer, in order to make the message a power; not just words, but a power that transforms his life. This is the requirement for us as God's people: not just to give a message which is logical, but to pass on that which is life, and in such a way will the message be a very mighty testimony to the whole world. It will truly unify God's people and thus the world will know that Christ is sent.

John 17

[22] And the glory which You gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:
[23] I in them, and You in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them, as You have loved me.

I like this statement of Jesus very much and it becomes dearer and dearer to me as I think about it. Jesus says,

[22] ...that they may be one...
[23] ...that the world may know that You have sent me.

In other words, how does the world understand Gospel Order, which is the position of Christ? How do they understand it? Through the church building God's kingdom in God's way; through the church being structured exactly as God intends.

Gospel order, as we have seen, is the mystery of God; it is the law of God; it is God's way of kingdom building. The principles that we are learning show us that we must look at what God has done and learn from it. At the beginning of this theme we stated that each of the principles of Gospel Order must be found in the Rock, because it is on this Rock that Christ builds his church. If a

principle cannot be found there, then we must not try to use it to build God's kingdom. Only the principles that are found in the Rock can be of validity. Let us list these principles, as we have covered them so far:

Building on the Rock: The Principles

1. We must look at what God has done, and learn from it.
   Do we find this principle in the Rock? Certainly, because Jesus is the person through whom God communicated all the messages from the beginning. He was the only messenger from the beginning, and, so we look at what God has done, and this helps us to see how God is acting today. So we must look at what God has done, that is the first principle.

2. God works only through creatures to approach creatures. The treasure in the earthen vessels.
   Do we find this principle in the Rock? Certainly, in Jesus we find it.

3. God is the only channel to creatures.
   Do we find this in the Rock? Certainly.

4. God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.
   Do we find this in the Rock? Again, certainly, because Christ founded the same church on this earth in the same way as it was founded in heaven.

5. God gives the message only through one messenger.
   This was the order in the kingdom of heaven, against which Satan rebelled, and upon which man joined him in his rebellion. Since the fall, Jesus has built his church up consistently through a series of single messengers, such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, etc.

6. God chooses this messenger.
   The messenger is not elected by a committee, or by popular vote. God personally chooses the person, and gives him his message. The church is then to recognize God's appointment by the evidence of the Holy Spirit's working which attends the message, to change the lives of those who listen.

7. Every one of God's people is a worker.

   Is this a principle that we find in the Rock? Again, Jesus made it very clear that to each one is given a denarius, or a talent, and that they are therefore all workers.

8. The messenger is only a channel.

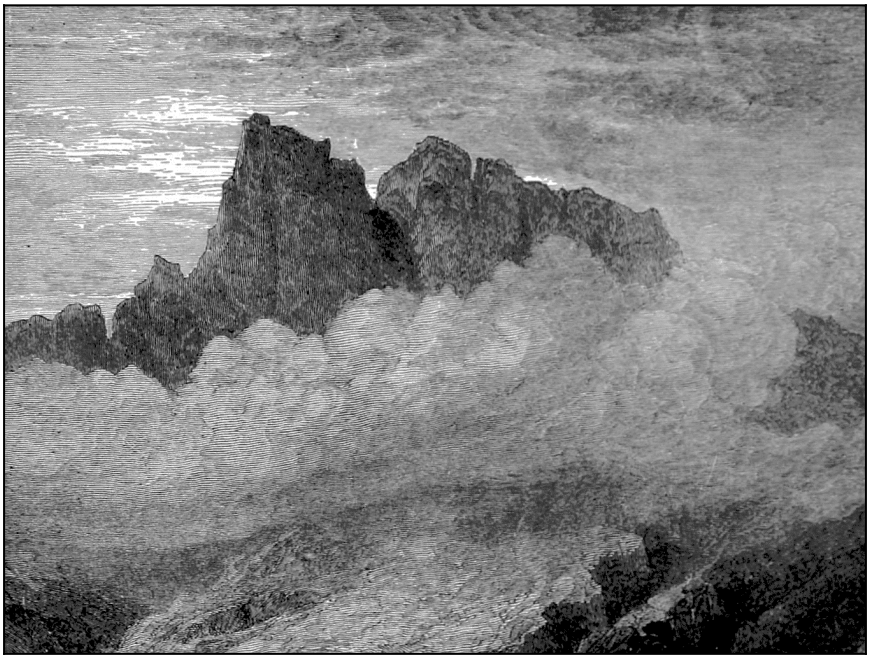
   This is again a principle that we find in the Rock. We see very clearly how Jesus only passed on that which He received.

9. God is the teacher of His people.

   This is a truth founded in the Rock, because Christ said,

Matthew 16

[17] Flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but my Father which is in heaven.



20. The Danger of Deviation

HOW do we build God's kingdom His way? In this study we want to consider how a deviation from Gospel Order leads to ruin.

Adam and Eve

The story of Adam and Eve illustrates this clearly. Their fall has been repeated again and again by mankind afterwards, and that is the reason why God's work in the world has never been finished.

Adam and Eve had received messages, through God's appointed channel, that they should avoid the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that Eve should stay by the side of her husband. Eve's course was against Gospel Order when she decided that she had enough strength and wisdom to stand alone. This idea did not come from Christ, or from His helpers, the angels; it came from within herself. Her only safe course would have been to accept the message that came through God's approved channels. At this moment it was very critical that the proper decision be made.

But instead she decided to trust more in what was coming from within herself, and so she soon found herself near the tree. When there, somebody addressed her as though he had read all her thoughts, and that was the serpent. He immediately said,

Genesis 3

[1] Yea, has God said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

These were the first words spoken to Eve and she should have seen in this address the words of the enemy. Would you say that he disguised himself by these words or did he expose himself? On some ground at least she should have seen that this was the enemy and that it was not the place where she would hear the words of her appointed messengers: Christ and His helpers. It was the place of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, a place that Adam and Eve had been warned to keep away from, because the enemy would be there. Eve knew this.

It is one thing to get into such a situation when we do not know better, or without any fault on our part; but Eve placed herself on the ground of temptation which was inexcusable. Why do you suppose that she lingered in this place even though it was known as a dangerous place? Why did she go there even after being warned not to go there?

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 52-53:

Our first parents were not left without a warning of the danger that threatened them. Heavenly messengers opened to them the history of Satan's fall and his plots for their destruction, unfolding more fully the nature of the divine government, which the prince of evil was trying to overthrow. It was by disobedience to the just commands of God that Satan and his host had fallen. How important, then, that Adam and Eve should honor that law by which alone it was possible for order and equity to be maintained.

The law of God is as sacred as God himself. It is a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, the expression of divine love and wisdom. The harmony of creation depends upon the perfect conformity of all beings, of everything, animate and inanimate, to the law of the Creator. God has ordained laws for the government, not only of living beings, but of all the operations of nature. Everything is under fixed laws, which cannot be disregarded. But while everything in nature is governed by natural laws, man alone, of all that inhabits the earth, is amenable to moral law. To man, the crowning work of creation, God has given power to understand His requirements, to comprehend the justice and beneficence of His law, and its sacred claims upon him; and of man unswerving obedience is required.

Like the angels, the dwellers in Eden had been placed upon probation; their happy estate could be retained only on condition of fidelity to the Creator's law. They could obey and live, or disobey and perish. God had made them the recipients of rich blessings; but should they disregard His will, He who spared not the angels that sinned, could not spare them; transgression would forfeit His gifts and bring upon them misery and ruin.

> The angels warned them to be on their guard against the devices of Satan, for his efforts to ensnare them would be unwearied. While they were obedient to God the evil one could not harm them; for, if need be, every angel in heaven would be sent to their help. If they steadfastly repelled his first insinuations, they would be as secure as the heavenly messengers. But should they once yield to temptation, their nature would become so depraved that in themselves they would have no power and no disposition to resist Satan.
>
> The tree of knowledge had been made a test of their obedience and their love to God. The Lord had seen fit to lay upon them but one prohibition as to the use of all that was in the garden; but if they should disregard His will in this particular, they would incur the guilt of transgression. Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree. Should they attempt to investigate its nature, they would be exposed to his wiles. They were admonished to give careful heed to the warning which God had sent them and to be content with the instruction which He had seen fit to impart.

If it were still like this, that we had only one place in this world where Satan could reach us, it would be much easier. But now there are many more trees like this in the world today, and the good trees are few. Adam and Eve had the freedom to choose, but they were given a clear warning that to exercise their freedom in the way of disobedience would incur great losses.

Freedom to choose was a gift. God's intention in giving this gift was that His creatures, like himself, would have the ability and experience the joy of choosing the right way. Freedom and law are inseparable, for freedom involves the directing of power, and power can only be safe when it is under the control of law. This is the same with every other gift. Take the gift of electricity for example. If this gift is used without heeding the safety instructions, then a shock will be received from the electricity. In order to handle it safely, the laws of safety must be obeyed. And so it is with the gift of freedom as well.

Eve first separated from her husband, and now she was at this tree, knowing that Satan would be there. How could she go there in spite of the warning?

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53-54:

The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone. But absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger, but dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it. Unmindful of the angels' caution, she soon found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the forbidden tree. The fruit was very beautiful, and she questioned with herself why God had withheld it from them.

She decided that "she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it": that was the basis of her being at this tree. So confident had she become in her own strength, that she did not fear anymore, because her own mind told her that she was not in danger. However, the clear message that came from God had said:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53:

Should they attempt to investigate its nature, they would be exposed to his wiles. They were admonished to give careful heed to the warning which God had sent them and to be content with the instruction which He had seen fit to impart.

The next step was that Satan asked a question, implying that God had withheld from her some very important information.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 54:

Now was the tempter's opportunity. As if he were able to discern the workings of her mind, he addressed her: "Yea, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Eve was surprised and startled as she thus seemed to hear the echo of her thoughts. But the serpent continued, in a musical voice, with

subtle praise of her surpassing loveliness; and his words were not displeasing. Instead of fleeing from the spot she lingered wonderingly to hear a serpent speak. Had she been addressed by a being like the angels, her fears would have been excited; but she had no thought that the fascinating serpent could become the medium of the fallen foe.

To the tempter's ensnaring question she replied: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die." And the serpent said unto the woman, "You shall not surely die: for God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

By partaking of this tree, he declared, they would attain to a more exalted sphere of existence and enter a broader field of knowledge. He himself had eaten of the forbidden fruit, and as a result had acquired the power of speech. And he insinuated that the Lord jealously desired to withhold it from them, lest they should be exalted to equality with himself. It was because of its wonderful properties, imparting wisdom and power, that He had prohibited them from tasting or even touching it. The tempter intimated that the divine warning was not to be actually fulfilled; it was designed merely to intimidate them. How could it be possible for them to die? Had they not eaten of the tree of life? God had been seeking to prevent them from reaching a nobler development and finding greater happiness.

He implied that in order for her to advance and reach her full potential she would need to avail herself of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

"You are limited and narrow minded."

These were his insinuations, and she really believed him because she felt well able to discern evil and to withstand it. Then she actually took of the fruit and ate, again because she believed she had the wisdom and power not to be deceived. And then finally she came so far as to believe Satan's word above God's, and

by this action she declared God to be a liar when He had warned them:

Genesis 2
17 ...in the day that you eat [of this fruit] you shall surely die.

Today we are in the same situation. First of all, if we want to be saved we must very carefully obey Gospel Order and its warnings. The Eves of today, who are the wives of husbands who are firmly rooted in the message, must really stay by the side of their husbands. The believing husband, who is really standing in the truth, must be the first counselor to the wife. That is her safety precaution. We read this in *Ephesians* 5 and also in *1 Corinthians* 11 and *1 Corinthians* 14. The Bible is full of similar instruction.

1 Corinthians 11
3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Ephesians 5
22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

When a wife today has questions regarding the message, she should go to her God-fearing husband and ask him the question. If he cannot answer, they can both go together to the messenger and ask him. And when he cannot answer the question, then all three can go to God, and wait until the answer comes. If all would follow this course there would be a firmer union in the marriage as well as in the church.

Eve took her first step in disobedience by leaving the side of her husband. The second step was that she really strengthened her ideas that she was wise enough to understand what is evil and good. This is now a feeling which, to a certain extent, every human has, and for this reason, people have no fear attending meet-

ings where they suspect, or even know, that error will be taught. They do not fear to go there because they think that they have enough wisdom to discern evil and to withstand it.

False Shepherds

Let us now turn to the book *Early Writings*, to the chapter "False Shepherds":

> **Early Writings, p. 124:**
> The different parties of professed Advent believers have each a little truth, but God has given all these truths to His children who are being prepared for the day of God.

The reference to "professed Advent believers" tends to make us think of the different splinter groups of the Seventh-day Adventist church, but the same principle applies generally to all religious groups. So when it refers to "different parties" we can say that the "different parties of professed believers" can be any church. They "have each a little truth." Is this so? Certainly. Because each party has a little truth, and every truth comes from God, some have thought that we should go study all these different messages to get a full picture. And as a justification for their course, they would quote verses such as this:

> **1 Thessalonians 5**
> [21] Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.
> [22] Abstain from all appearance of evil.

And then explain it like this:

> "So, because the different parties of professed believers each have a little truth, we will go to them and test them and what is good in these groups, that we will keep. The evil things we will abstain from and so we will gather together the truths little by little, until we have the perfect structure of truth."

Is this the way God is leading His children? Does God work in this way? Does He send us to all these groups to gather together all these little things? I want to compare this idea with an object lesson that is very suitable. Some of you are fathers of families

and you have children. Imagine that when mealtime comes, instead of giving your children a wonderful meal, you say to them,

> "Today I have a different plan for you to get food. You go to the neighbors and they have rubbish bins; there you must look to see what you can find for food. Take only the good, and refuse the bad. You will surely get together a good meal if you look there."

What would you think of such a father? He would be cruel wouldn't he? When I compare the doctrines of these fallen churches, who have a little bit of truth, with rubbish bins, am I justified in doing this? Certainly, because a rubbish bin is full of fermented food, some food is good in there, a little bit maybe, but it is spoiled by the bad food. If you try to get together a meal from these rubbish bins, you will have a lot of difficulty separating the good from the bad. How cruel would such a father be, instead of presenting to his children a nice meal for lunch. God does not do this with His children.

But then the question is asked,

> "What does it mean then to 'test all things, hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil'?"

In testing all things, do we test errors? Do we have to test the teachings of Babylon? If the text would mean this, then we need to study modern theology, for example, because we are to test it. It would really mean falsification in the end, to go with doubt to all these subjects, and try to prove them wrong.[29]

Instead, let us see that the "all things" which we are to test are within the framework of God's revealed truth, because one Scripture cannot contradict another Scripture. When God tells us to study only the things that come through His appointed channel, then He will not tell us in another scripture to go and study the other things also. The things that we must study, are "all things" that come from His appointed source.

[29] To review the discussion on falsification, look again at chapter 14, in the subheading: "Testing is Not Done With Doubt."

And we shall test them, like the noble Bereans did. We shall study them by comparing the teachings with the other scriptures of the Bible; to fix them in our minds and be convinced more deeply of their truthfulness; to increase our faith in them. And we shall test them by seeing how they work in our lives.

Then we shall "hold fast that which is good," that which God gives us in His way; but "abstain from all appearance of evil" by avoiding the channels He is not using. That is, we have to test these things, and the context here is with prophets. We shall not despise prophecies, but these prophecies must be within God's framework, that is, within God's church.

Early Writings, p. 124:

The different parties of professed Advent believers have each a little truth, but God has given all these truths to His children who are being prepared for the day of God.

So there is no need to go into the rubbish bins of the neighbors because God has prepared a meal for His children. We just need to sit at the table and eat. He invites us,

"Here, come and eat, I have a feast for you."

What would you think of the children who say,

"Well I don't like the food today, I prefer to go into the rubbish bin of the neighbor."

Wouldn't that be despising the effort that the parents have made to prepare the food? The parents would be very sad if the children would act like this.

Early Writings, p. 124:

He has also given them truths that none of these parties know, neither will they understand.

So, all these snippets of truth that are in the different parties, are also found in God's true church, plus there are truths which are not found in any other than the true body of Christ. And we can verify this. For example, think of the message of *The Seven*

Angels.[30] In which other church do you find this message? In no other church. And in fact we could name almost everything: *God's Sabbath Rest*,[31] *God's Character*,[32] *Child Salvation*,[33] the *Health Message*,[34] etc. You may say,

> "Well there are little groups here and there that teach this or that truth too."

But because it is so mixed up with error, they don't teach the same thing after all. This has been demonstrated again and again when people leave the church and think that they can enrich themselves with these fallen churches. Then when we see them again they have picked up all sorts of fantastic ideas which are full of error.

> **Early Writings, p. 124:**
> He has also given them truths that none of these parties know, neither will they understand.

Why won't they understand? Because they do not have the spiritual eyesight. *Gospel Order* is one of the truths that God has given and they will not understand it because they do not have the spiritual eyesight.

> Things which are sealed up to them, the Lord has opened to those who will see and are ready to understand. If God has any new light to communicate, He will let His chosen and beloved understand it, without their going to have their minds enlightened by hearing those who are in darkness and error.

This is a very serious and important warning. There is no need to go to the rubbish bins of the neighbors. Why not? Because God has given all these truths to His children who are being prepared for the day of final battle. Let's continue in the next paragraph:

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[30] See the book, *The Seven Angels*.
[31] See the book, *Entering into God's Sabbath Rest*.
[32] See the book, *Behold Your God*.
[33] See the book, *Child Salvation*.
[34] See the book, *Your Doctor*.

Early Writings, p. 124:

I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors.

Here we are told of something that is very important. You know that the fallen churches are Babylon, this we are clearly told:

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 61:

The fallen denominational churches are Babylon.

Because these churches have a little truth mixed with many errors, it is necessary that we remain separate. These are churches who once walked in the light that God sent through His messengers, but came to the place where they resisted the light, and those who wished to continue following it had to form a new body.

Every person who consciously resists the message, thereby goes down another path and is daily imbibing new errors. We have seen this happen again and again. Especially those who once had contact with the truth and shared its beliefs, and then left, they are particularly persons who are daily imbibing new errors.

I am thinking of one example, which happened recently. A person started speaking a message that was contrary to the fundamentals that God has taught us, and from that point on he absorbed new errors daily. Each new idea he came up with was a further departure from the truth. It is necessary that we be separate from such practices, and from those who practice them. Some people are tempted to think,

"Well these are good people, they are honest,"

For this reason they say,

"We should fellowship with them."

But we cannot go willingly to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil without being influenced.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53:

> Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree. Should they attempt to investigate its nature, they would be exposed to his wiles. They were admonished to give careful heed to the warning which God had sent them and to be content with the instruction which He had seen fit to impart.

Likewise today, people think that they have enough wisdom, they can safely fellowship with those who are daily imbibing new errors, but this cannot be done. God has clearly warned us and if we do it, then we do it at our own risk and our own peril.

Early Writings, p. 124:

> I saw that neither young nor old should attend their meetings; for it is wrong to thus encourage them while they teach error that is a deadly poison to the soul and teach for doctrines the commandments of men.

You may think that this sounds very heartless, but consider: what is a "commandment of men"? Anything that doesn't come up to the teaching of God. I would draw the line even closer: anything that does not come through God's ordained way; anything that comes from a human channel, even if it is well meant, even if it sounds very nice, it is still a "commandment of men." When a "commandment of men" is preached and we place ourselves under its influence by attending the meeting, then we can be sure that we will be influenced.

Why am I so sure? First, because the word of God says so. But secondly, because I know it is so from my own experience. As long as I attended the meetings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I never saw a clear distinction between our message and what they taught. I always thought that I could harmonize these two; that I could go along with both. I believed this seriously and

honestly, and this was because my vision was not clear; it was marred to a certain extent.

And so I know that these meetings have an influence upon us, and we can believe what the prophet says. Even if we don't see it ourselves, we can believe it. Or do we feel, like Eve, that we have "sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it"?[35]

Another reason given for not attending their meetings is,

> **Early Writings, p. 124:**
> ...for it is wrong thus *to encourage them* while they teach error that is deadly poison to the soul and teach for doctrines the commandments of men.

In other words, we should not encourage them to teach for doctrines the "commandments of men." When we attend meetings where people stand up who are not called by God to give a certain message, but who give their own message, then we can be sure that we encourage them and at the same time influence ourselves. So we weaken our stand and strengthen theirs. That is the sure result.

> **Early Writings, p. 124-125:**
> The influence of such gatherings is not good. If God has delivered us from such darkness and error, we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has set us free and rejoice in the truth. God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go; for unless He sends us to those meetings where error is forced home to the people by the power of the will, He will not keep us. The angels cease their watchful care over us, and we are left to the buffetings of the enemy, to be darkened and weakened by him and the power of his evil angels; and the light around us becomes contaminated with the darkness.

It always causes me great pain to see people who have questions go and ask those who are standing against the message in-

[35] *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 54.

stead of asking the messenger. I know the outcome, and I know where they will go. It causes tremendous pain to see this. Then let us give careful heed to what the Spirit of God tells us here. If we follow such a course we will…

Early Writings, p. 125:

…be darkened and weakened…by the power of evil angels; and the light around us will become contaminated with darkness.

That is a very serious statement. Once the light that is around us becomes contaminated with darkness, then we will call light darkness, and darkness light.

This principle of separation will cause many difficult situations to arise, especially involving families who are divided over their acceptance of the message. In these cases, where some of the relations or family members are actually involved in other churches, the question that will often arise is:

"Can we visit or stay in their homes?"

We must ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in these situations. Our task is to believe the message as we read it here and then to apply it; the particulars for individual cases must be obtained from God, and may differ slightly depending on the circumstances.

Early Writings, p. 125:

I saw that we have no time to throw away in listening to fables. Our minds should not be thus diverted, but should be occupied with the present truth, and seeking wisdom that we may obtain a more thorough knowledge of our position, that with meekness we may be able to give a reason of our hope from the Scriptures. While false doctrines and dangerous errors are pressed upon the mind, it cannot be dwelling upon the truth which is to fit and prepare the house of Israel to stand in the day of the Lord.

Again we read another very important warning:

I saw that we have no time to throw away in listening to fables.

Apart from the fact that it is very dangerous to be under the influence of these false teachings, we do not have the time. We need to concentrate our minds fully on studying present truth, and not be diverted in the least. When we take the time to study all the rubbish, which is the commandments of men, perhaps with the intention of helping those who believe these things; even though we have good intentions, we will find that we are contaminated. The light around us becomes contaminated, and we will eventually call light darkness, and darkness light. We will have wasted a great deal of time that should have been used to study the truth. This is a warning we must not forget:

Early Writings, p. 125:
Our minds should not be thus diverted.

God has spread before us a real feast in the messages He has given us. I marvel at times, and the angels must marvel even more, at how easily we can set aside present truth, because we think we have it safe in our pocket, and then go on to waste our time dealing with these other things.

This applies first of all in the spiritual field, but also in the medical field. It is also very essential that we do not study the books of the so-called healers, who tell us how to be healed, but in a way contrary to the message God has given us. It is very essential that we concentrate on that which God is telling us through His chosen source.

We have no time to study the other things, because if we do this we will miss out on a lot of time that could have been devoted to establishing us in the truth. Of all people, we should understand very well that we have very limited time before the hour of probation is over. Let us make the most of it.

21. Turning Away from Error

Early Writings, p. 125:

I saw that we have no time to throw away in listening to fables. Our minds should not be thus diverted.

WE HAVE only so much time that we can use, not more. This is the time that we are alive, or the time until the end of probation. This time is so measured by God that we need every moment of it. God has not designated extra time that may be thrown away, and if we divert our minds to study those things which do not come in God's appointed way to us, then we will surely miss much of the time that God has allowed for us. The result will be that we fall short in studying and knowing the present truth.

Surface Learners

There are some persons who seem to be very fast learners. We met some in Germany, and they studied through all our camp meeting reports and all the books we have within half a year. That is a lot of material. I was visiting with them one day, and this was their first contact with a church member. They had only studied our literature, and when I was there they said to me,

"We have learned it all; what now?"

When we think that we can learn the message so quickly, then it seems that we have plenty of time to study other things. Then we think to ourselves,

"Well, what can I study next?"

We wander around and then encounter wonderful offers at the tree of knowledge of good and evil which promise us more. In many areas, in spiritual, educational, medical or in psychological fields, everywhere there are a lot of offers. There is not only one tree of knowledge of good and evil in our world, but there are many. In fact almost everywhere we can find them except where God has established His true channel.

To complete the story, these three young men did not stay in the message. Soon they found out that this was not according to their taste and they left it, never having really understood it at all.

It is a hard thing to really understand the message. Why is it such a hard thing? Is it so complicated? Why is it so hard? It is such a simple message, and simple things should be understood quickly, shouldn't they? The reason why the message is difficult to understand is that it is hard for us to unlearn what we have learned before. We cannot understand present truth unless we give up our preconceived ideas, until we give up everything that we like and that we prefer. To really understand present truth we must submit to it, and this is a hard work for human nature to do.

Think of Paul, this intelligent capable mind spending three years in the wilderness of Arabia, studying, studying, studying; all to unlearn what he had learned previously.[36] Likewise Moses took forty years to learn the message and unlearn the influences that had shaped his character in Egypt. We could consider other messengers of God who took a long time and went through many struggles to really understand the truth.

And so it will be with us: we have no time to waste, we must study present truth. So when this camp meeting is over, what subject do we have to occupy our minds with? Gospel Order. We must study it until it becomes a part of us, and we must learn to practice it until it becomes habitual. In my own life, I have found that it is not so easy to immediately practice it. Some time is needed to establish new habits and patterns of thought, but as we begin to practice it, the Lord will bless us.

Distractions

Early Writings, p. 125:

> I saw that we have no time to throw away in listening to fables. Our minds should not be thus diverted, but should be occupied with the present truth, and seeking wisdom that we may obtain a more thorough knowledge of our position that with

[36] *Galatians* 1:17-18.

meekness we may be able to give a reason for our hope from the Scriptures.

Can we give a reason for our hope from the Scriptures? Let's suppose that you have the task of explaining Gospel Order to a hungry soul that is on the verge of the kingdom. Could you do it in an intelligent way? We can, if we have studied the message, and have made full use of our time. I must say that I too feel guilty for not having used my time the best way at all times, in studying the message, because then I would be more able to present it. This is a shortcoming which must be overcome.

Early Writings, p. 125:

While false doctrines and dangerous errors are pressed upon the mind, it cannot be dwelling upon the truth which is to fit and prepare the house of Israel to stand in the day of the Lord.

God has given us a rich feast and in this rich feast He has put a lot of material for us which He invites us to take and eat. Instead of doing this, there is always the tendency to go and look in the neighbors rubbish bins:

"Maybe they have something in there which we don't have on our table."

This tendency must be overcome. We must see that there is a sufficient supply of the best food in the information that God gives us. Adam and Eve were admonished to give careful heed to the warning that God had sent them and to be content with the instruction which He had seen fit to impart.

There are things that He has seen fit not to impart, and these things we do not need to search out. This applies to spiritual books, first of all, that try to explain to us the way to freedom from sin. Then there are educational books; and I know that there are very good educational books on the market, according to the standard of the world, but we must take a stand. I took a firm step and tossed these things away at home. It really cost me something to do this, but I believe it was right.

We have one source of unmingled truth, and this source is God's source. All the other sources are coming from the devil. They are a distraction. We have no time to waste on these. This also applies to the medical field, books that tell us how we should be healed from sickness. It also applies to books on psychological theory, and to many other topics. There is a list of these in *The Ministry of Healing* in one of the last chapters about seeking true knowledge:

The Ministry of Healing, p. 439:

In order to obtain an education, many think it essential to study the writings of infidel authors, because these works contain many bright gems of thought. But who was the originator of these gems of thought? It was God, and God only. He is the source of all light. Why then should we wade through the mass of error contained in the works of infidels for the sake of a few intellectual truths, when all truth is at our command.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 441:

As a preparation for Christian work, many think it essential to acquire an extensive knowledge of historical and theological writings. They suppose that this knowledge will be an aid to them in teaching the gospel. But their laborious study of the opinions of men tends to the enfeebling of their ministry, rather than to its strengthening. As I see the libraries filled with ponderous volumes of historical and theological lore, I think, Why spend money for that which is not bread?

For this reason I threw out my big history volumes, which were from infidel authors. It was a struggle, but I believe it was right, as they were from the wrong source.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 443:

In the colleges and universities thousands of youth devote a large part of the best years of life to the study of Greek and Latin. And while they are engaged in these studies, mind and character are molded by the evil sentiments of pagan literature.

So these are the classics, Plato and so forth. Then it goes on the next page talking of sensational literature:

The Ministry of Healing, p. 444:

Many of the popular publications of the day are filled with sensational stories that are educating the youth in wickedness and leading them in the path to perdition.

And then on to Myths and Fairy Tales. It is a custom to tell children fairy tales. When you tell them fairy tales, and later they discover that these are not true stories, what will they think of the Bible stories? They will tend to think that these are the same:

The Ministry of Healing, p. 446:

In the education of children and youth, fairy tales, myths, and fictitious stories are now given a large place. Books of this character are used in the schools, and they are to be found in many homes. How can Christian parents permit their children to use books so filled with falsehood? When the children ask the meaning of stories so contrary to the teaching of their parents, the answer is that the stories are not true; but this does not do away with the evil results of their use. The ideas presented in these books mislead the children. They impart false views of life and beget and foster a desire for the unreal.

The widespread use of such books at this time is one of the cunning devices of Satan. He is seeking to divert the minds of old and young from the great work of character building. He means that our children and youth shall be swept away by the soul-destroying deceptions with which he is filling the world. Therefore he seeks to divert their minds from the word of God and thus prevent them from obtaining a knowledge of those truths that would be their safeguard.

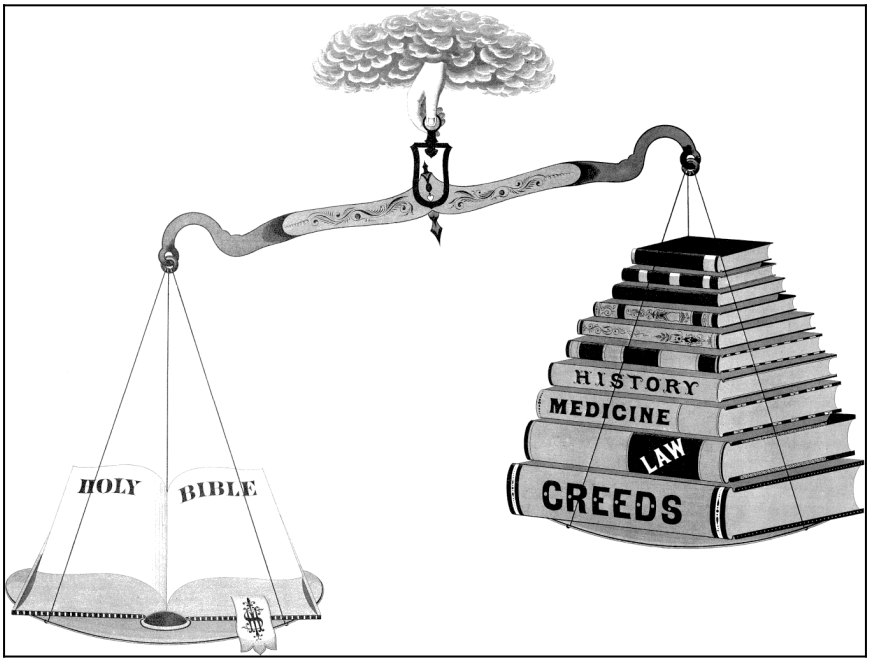
Eating at the Lord's Table

In contrast to this is placed Christ's teaching:

The Ministry of Healing, p. 448:

So also Christ presented the principles of truth in the gospel. In His teaching we may drink of the pure streams that flow from the throne of God. Christ could have imparted to men knowledge that would have surpassed any previous disclosures, and put in the background every other discovery. He could have unlocked mystery after mystery, and could have concentrated

around these wonderful revelations the active, earnest thought of successive generations till the close of time. But He would not spare a moment from teaching the science of salvation. His time, His faculties, and His life were appreciated and used only as the means for working out the salvation of the souls of men. He had come to seek and to save that which was lost, and He would not be turned from His purpose. He allowed nothing to divert Him.



We should carefully consider how God is teaching us. Through His appointed channel He has prepared a feast at the table and it is necessary for those who believe that we have present truth, to be separate from those who are daily imbibing errors. Let us learn this and by faith accept it. Then the Lord will bless us in a mighty way as He never could have before.

Before we leave this chapter in *Early Writings*, another important point should be considered. These false messengers not only preach with words, but they also preach by their actions. It is absolutely unsafe to fellowship with those who are against the mes-

sage, for the following reason: when someone turns against the message, he has the spirit of rebellion in himself. You may say,

> "But I don't talk with him about spiritual matters; I fellowship with him socially."

I have found through my own observation and experience that because the spirit of rebellion is in these persons, their influence even in social matters is not good. It tends to weaken the stand of those who fellowship with them. For this reason, we must believe what the prophet tells us, that it is necessary to be separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors. So not only by the words do the false messengers teach us, but also by their actions.

We all need to learn a lesson in this respect because not only through our words can we be false teachers, but also by our actions. If we do not faithfully practice the message, our influence on others is bad, and by our example we thereby teach them errors.

22. The Rebellion of Miriam and Aaron

LET us turn now to the stories of the Bible again, to find examples of the stand of separation we need to take today. There is one story that comes to mind, in the life of Moses. That is the story of the rebellion of Aaron and Miriam. In this story we find a direct attack on Gospel Order.

We have studied the situation of Moses; we have seen how he was the only messenger that God had chosen, and how the people rebelled against him again and again. God took each rebellion as another opportunity to teach them again, how He would speak to them. Each rebellion ended in the confirmation of Moses as their messenger.

After He confirmed Moses at Mount Sinai, by calling him alone into the mountain and speaking to him the message for the people, they moved on from Sinai towards Kadesh. There, seventy elders were chosen, which was a lack of faith on Moses' part.

A Bitter Trial

Soon afterwards Moses received a very heart-breaking experience.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 382:**
>
> At Hazeroth, the next encampment after leaving Taberah, a still more bitter trial awaited Moses. Aaron and Miriam had occupied a position of high honor and leadership in Israel. Both were endowed with the prophetic gift, and both had been divinely associated with Moses in the deliverance of the Hebrews. "I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam" (Micah 6:4), are the words of the Lord by the prophet Micah.
>
> Miriam's force of character had been early displayed when as a child she watched beside the Nile the little basket in which was hidden the infant Moses. Her self-control and tact God had made instrumental in preserving the deliverer of His people. Richly endowed with the gifts of poetry and music, Miriam had led the women of Israel in song and dance on the shore of the Red Sea.



In the affections of the people and the honor of Heaven she stood second only to Moses and Aaron. But the same evil that first brought discord in heaven sprang up in the heart of this woman of Israel, and she did not fail to find a sympathizer in her dissatisfaction.

It says here, "a still more bitter trial awaited Moses." In what way was this a bitter trial for Moses? Was it a bitter trial for him because his position was attacked? Or because he liked his position so much? No! Not at all. Moses was initially reluctant to accept his position when God called him. He did not choose this position, but God gave it to him. In Gospel Order, positions are not granted according to the desires or ambitions of men, but according to God's choice. Once Moses accepted the call, he accepted it with his whole heart. He surrendered his own desires and his will was in agreement with God. And yet he would have been just as content to remain in his humble position as shepherd and father of his family than to be the leader of Israel.

So in what way was it a bitter trial for Moses, that Aaron and Miriam rebelled against him? Moses knew that the outcome of such trials meant separation from God and disaster to those who rebelled. Since Aaron and Miriam were so close to him, being his brother and sister, it must have been very hard for Moses to deal straightly with them. It would have seemed a small thing for Moses to accept them and say,

"Okay, you want my position? Have it for a while, and see how it works; see what the outcome is."

Would this have been a reasonable course for Moses to follow? No, it would have meant restructuring God's kingdom and he would have severely sinned against God and against the people. God's servants do not have the authority to give their position to another. Therefore it was a very bitter trial for Moses to stand firm in this situation.

Jealousy of Moses' Position

Aaron and Miriam had occupied high positions. The real instigator in this situation was Miriam, Aaron was only going along with her. Miriam started the whole thing and it is worthy of note that she occupied a high position in Israel, only second to Moses and Aaron as it says here:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 382-383:

In the affections of the people and the honor of Heaven she stood second only to Moses and Aaron. But the same evil that first brought discord in heaven sprang up in the heart of this woman of Israel…

What was the cause for the discord in Heaven? It was the transgression of Gospel Order. So therefore what was the problem here? The transgression of Gospel Order, and it was the position of Moses that was being challenged, to be exact. The position of God's messenger is the very nerve center of Gospel Order.

But the same evil that first brought discord in heaven sprang up in the heart of this woman of Israel, and she did not fail to find a sympathizer in her dissatisfaction.

For a woman to stand up like this, was quite something. She was highly regarded in the view of heaven, but her position was below that of Moses. For a moment, let's compare this with the family situation. In the family, the wife stands only second after her husband. She has authority in the family as the mother, but she cannot occupy the position of the husband. That is just not

possible. But how often women, like Miriam, think that the authority they have is not enough. They cannot be content with it. Then they soon find other sympathizers in this situation.

Let us look more closely at the situation to see what the problem was:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 383:

In the appointment of the seventy elders Miriam and Aaron had not been consulted, and their jealousy was excited against Moses. At the time of Jethro's visit, while the Israelites were on the way to Sinai, the ready acceptance by Moses of the counsel of his father-in-law had aroused in Aaron and Miriam a fear that his influence with the great leader exceeded theirs. In the organization of the council of elders they felt that their position and authority had been ignored. Miriam and Aaron had never known the weight of care and responsibility which had rested upon Moses; yet because they had been chosen to aid him they regarded themselves as sharing equally with him the burden of leadership, and they regarded the appointment of further assistants as uncalled for.

What was the problem? It was that their counsel was not asked for. This is the problem which humanity faces so often. Miriam thought that it was not necessary to choose other helpers since there were already rulers over 1000's, 100's and 50's. And because Moses received this counsel, she became suspicious. She said in her heart,

"I was not asked; my opinion was not sought."

In this situation however, Moses had to look to God alone, and did not need Miriam's advice. In the other matter, he had accepted the counsel of his father-in-law as from God, seeing much wisdom in the advice. Therefore it was not necessary for him to go and ask others, such as Miriam or Aaron, for counsel also. He may have received contradictory answers if he had done it anyway. That sometimes happens when you ask many people for counsel, and then it is very difficult to make the right decision.

But to sum up Miriam's problem, it was over the position of Moses.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 383:

Moses felt the importance of the great work committed to him as no other man had ever felt it. He realized his own weakness, and he made God his counselor. Aaron esteemed himself more highly, and trusted less in God. He had failed when entrusted with responsibility, giving evidence of the weakness of his character by his base compliance in the matter of the idolatrous worship at Sinai. But Miriam and Aaron, blinded by jealousy and ambition, lost sight of this. Aaron had been highly honored by God in the appointment of his family to the sacred office of the priesthood; yet even this now added to the desire for self-exaltation.

Numbers 12

[2] And they said, Has the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? has He not spoken also by us?

Regarding themselves as equally favored by God, they felt that they were entitled to the same position and authority.

When they said, "Has the Lord only spoken by Moses, has He not also spoken by us?" did they say the truth, or did they say a lie? God had spoken to them personally. Indeed, doesn't He speak to each church member individually through the Holy Spirit, so that we can understand the message, and get deeper insight into it? So not only must we receive the message through the messenger, we must also be personally taught by God as was Peter. But when we are taught by God personally, as Peter was, that does not mean that we are placed on equality with the primary messenger in his position.

A great problem that people often have is that they say,

"Okay, God must be our personal teacher, therefore we all can have this position which the primary messenger has."

And so they stand up and give messages of their own making. That is the consequence, that is the result of this idea. And so likewise here with Miriam and Aaron, God had definitely talked

with them; He even honored them by making them prophets. Aaron and Miriam were prophets, and they definitely received further insights into the message that Moses had delivered to them. This all happened through their personal connection of God.

But because of this honor and blessing, they regarded themselves equally favored by God; they regarded themselves as being in that position, the position of the primary messenger. This is a common saying today,

> **Numbers 12**
> [2] Has the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses, has He not also spoken also by us?

The same situation we can again see in the family. Here we have the husband, here we have the wife. The wife can be justified in saying,

> "I must have my personal connection with God."

She must, otherwise she cannot be a good wife. But even though she has her personal connection with God, still the husband is her head. I again emphasize that we are speaking about a believing husband, one who really stands in the message. And she is not equal to him in all respects, even though she is blessed by a personal relationship with God.

So when a difficult question comes up, where shall she go? To her husband. It is not right for her to speak to others about it, but first to counsel with her husband. This is the only way to unify families. And likewise to unify the church. When women have a problem, let them go to their husbands. If the husband cannot answer the question and they need to get the information in order to teach their families properly, let them go to the messenger. This will help to unify. If we do not follow these procedures, then it will not unify but scatter.

The problem with Miriam concerned the level of messengership.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 383-384:

Yielding to the spirit of dissatisfaction, Miriam found cause of complaint in events that God had especially overruled. The marriage of Moses had been displeasing to her. That he should choose a woman of another nation, instead of taking a wife from among the Hebrews, was an offense to her family and national pride. Zipporah was treated with ill-disguised contempt.

Though called a "Cushite woman" (Numbers 12:1, RV), the wife of Moses was a Midianite, and thus a descendant of Abraham. In personal appearance she differed from the Hebrews in being of a somewhat darker complexion. Though not an Israelite, Zipporah was a worshiper of the true God. She was of a timid, retiring disposition, gentle and affectionate, and greatly distressed at the sight of suffering; and it was for this reason that Moses, when on the way to Egypt, had consented to her return to Midian. He desired to spare her the pain of witnessing the judgments that were to fall on the Egyptians.

When Zipporah rejoined her husband in the wilderness, she saw that his burdens were wearing away his strength, and she made known her fears to Jethro, who suggested measures for his relief. Here was the chief reason for Miriam's antipathy to Zipporah. Smarting under the supposed neglect shown to herself and Aaron, she regarded the wife of Moses as the cause, concluding that her influence had prevented him from taking them into his counsels as formerly. Had Aaron stood up firmly for the right, he might have checked the evil; but instead of showing Miriam the sinfulness of her conduct, he sympathized with her, listened to her words of complaint, and thus came to share her jealousy.

Their accusations were borne by Moses in uncomplaining silence.

That is a wonderful spirit. It shows that Moses had no desire to defend his position. Moses was not always silent when the people transgressed Gospel Order, because sometimes it was necessary to speak. There are times to be silent, and times to speak. There

were times when it was right for Moses to keep silent, and times when he was to speak. When it concerned his own position, it was right for him to keep silent and let God do the defending, just as Christ had not defended His own position in heaven, but God had defended it. Yet Christ defended the position of God when it was challenged.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 384:

It was the experience gained during the years of toil and waiting in Midian—the spirit of humility and long-suffering there developed—that prepared Moses to meet with patience the unbelief and murmuring of the people and the pride and envy of those who should have been his unswerving helpers.

Numbers 12

[3] Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth,

–and this is why he was granted divine wisdom and guidance above all others, Says the Scripture,

Psalm 25

[9] The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.

The meek are guided by the Lord, because they are teachable, willing to be instructed. They have a sincere desire to know and to do the will of God. The Saviour's promise is,

John 7

[17] If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.

And He declares by the apostle James,

James 1

[5] If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.

But His promise is only to those who are willing to follow the Lord wholly.

If Miriam and Aaron really shared the same position as Moses, then they would have been content with their position. If they had been as meek as Moses, there would never have been a contention.

Lucifer in heaven desired to have the position of Christ. Let's imagine he really would have wanted to be like Christ, what would he have been then? He would have been very content with his own position. How do we know it? Because Christ was content to step down from His position and become like we are, and even become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and therefore God raised Him up again.[37]

If Lucifer been filled with the same spirit, then he would have been very happy to be in the situation where he was. He would not have left his position, being secondary to Christ. Likewise, Miriam and Aaron would have been very happy and content, if they had really been like Moses. Moses was very willing to give up his messengership when God called him to rest. And then the messengership passed on to Joshua. So that was the real spirit of Moses: the meek will He lead in His ways.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 384-385:

God had chosen Moses, and had put His Spirit upon him; and Miriam and Aaron, by their murmurings, were guilty of disloyalty, not only to their appointed leader, but to God himself.

When we read that they were guilty of disloyalty to God himself, it sounds very bad. If we today murmur against our appointed leader, then we are disloyal to God also. It is a very serious matter. And likewise in the family situation, when each family member does not keep their appointed position, then it is disloyalty to God himself. The same applies if there is not the right relationship in the church. If instead of going to the messenger when we have questions, we put them before other believers, and unsettle their faith, it means that we are disloyal to God himself. When we do this, it may not seem like a big thing to us, yet it is disloyalty to God himself.

God's Judgment

How did God deal with this situation?

[37] *Philippians* 2:6-9.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 385:

The seditious whisperers were summoned to the tabernacle, and brought face to face with Moses.

Numbers 12

[5] And Jehovah came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam.

Their claim to the prophetic gift was not denied;...

As we have seen, they had their personal connection with God, they even had the Spirit of Prophecy:

...God might have spoken to them in visions and dreams. But to Moses, whom the Lord himself declared "faithful in all my house,"[38] a nearer communion had been granted.

Did they see this nearer communion? Could they see it with their eyes? They couldn't really, they just saw him escape in the cloud and what happened in there, nobody knew. So by faith they had to accept that God had this deep communion with Moses, or Moses with God.

With *him* God spoke mouth to mouth.

Numbers 12

[8] ...wherefore then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

[9] And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and He departed.

The cloud disappeared from the tabernacle in token of God's displeasure, and Miriam was smitten.

[10] [She] became leprous, white as snow.

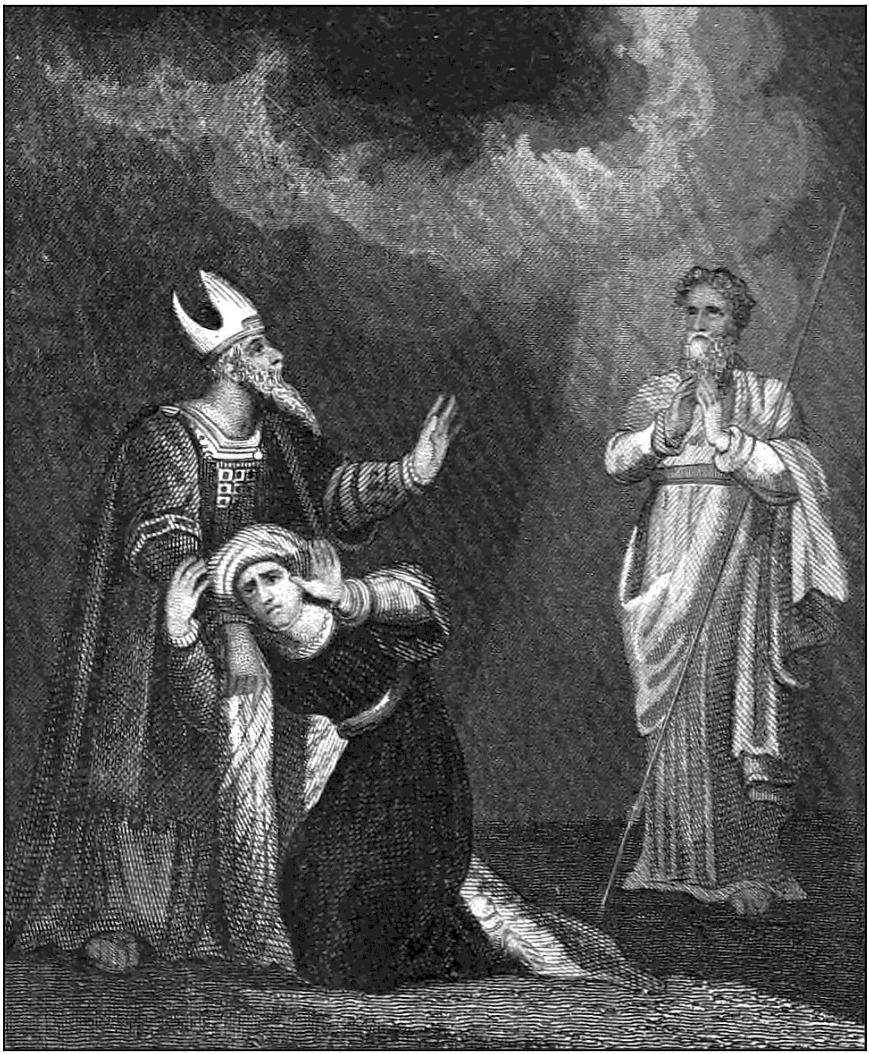
Aaron was spared, but he was severely rebuked in Miriam's punishment. Now, their pride humbled in the dust, Aaron confessed their sin, and entreated that his sister might not be left to perish by that loathsome and deadly scourge. In answer to the prayers of Moses the leprosy was cleansed. Miriam was, however, shut out of the camp for seven days. Not until she was banished from the encampment did the symbol of God's favor again rest upon the tabernacle. In respect for her high position, and in

[38] *Numbers* 12:7.

grief at the blow that had fallen upon her, the whole company abode in Hazeroth, awaiting her return.

What we read here is very important and it goes together with what we read on page 124 and 125 in *Early Writings*. Let's read this sentence again:

> Not until she was banished from the encampment did the symbol of God's favor again rest upon the tabernacle.



So what was necessary? It was necessary that she was banished from the encampment, and only then God's favor came back. God regarded it as a very serious thing, especially as Miriam was the sister of Moses. We can be so glad that these two people, Aaron and Miriam, reacted correctly in the situation. Aaron confessed his sin and asked for reinstatement. The whole church abode in Hazeroth awaiting Miriam's return. They all prayed and this participation of the whole church was also very essential.

Here there is a parallel. In *Early Writings* it said,

> **Early Writings, p. 124:**
> I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors.

And here in the camp of Israel it was necessary that there was a separation.

Comparison to Lucifer's Fall

Often in past history, those who have stood closest to the messenger have been tempted to fall. So it was with Lucifer. He was the angel next to Christ in the heavenly order. For this reason we can compare the fall of Miriam, and of Aaron who sympathized with her, with that of Lucifer. Like Miriam, Lucifer did not fail to find sympathizers for his cause. A third of the angels openly joined him, and all of the others had a certain link of sympathy with him, even though they remained loyal to God. It finally took the revelation on Calvary to break the last link of sympathy between the loyal angels and Satan.

This separation, or breaking of the link of sympathy, is very necessary in our day also. That does not mean that we do not care for those who are rebellious. Rather we will find that as we partake more fully of the spirit of Christ we will feel a greater love and concern for them. In the beginning of the great controversy, the loyal angels felt very sorry for those who were disloyal. And not only did they feel sorry for them, there was also a certain amount of sympathy with them. This sympathy with Satan and

his cohorts was an open door whereby Satan was able to argue with them concerning his ideas. How long was Satan able to discuss with the loyal angels his ideas and thoughts about restructuring the kingdom? It was until Calvary. This truth is revealed to us in *Revelation* 12:10 where it tells us that Satan was cast down from heaven.

Revelation 12

[10] And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

But how was Lucifer cast down? We understand it was through the revelation of God in Jesus, especially upon the cross. But in what manner was he cast down? To understand this better, let us open the chapter "It Is Finished" in *The Desire of Ages:*

The Desire of Ages, p. 761:

Could one sin have been found in Christ, had He in one particular yielded to Satan to escape the terrible torture, the enemy of God and man would have triumphed. Christ bowed His head and died, but He held fast His faith and His submission to God.

Revelation 12

[10] And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings.

Up to this point of time there were sympathies between Satan and the heavenly angels, but now:

Henceforth his work was restricted.

The casting down of Satan meant that his work was restricted. What kind of freedom did he first enjoy which was afterwards restricted? Let's read on:

The Desire of Ages, p. 761:

Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. *The last link of sympathy* between Satan and the heavenly world *was broken.*

Again I emphasis that it was necessary that this link of sympathy be broken. As we read also here in *Early Writings:*

Early Writings, p. 124:

I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, of being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors.

Just as it was necessary for the loyal angels to be absolutely separate from Satan, so is it also necessary that we be separate from those who indulge in errors.

"But," someone might say, "the loyal angels were already separate from Satan."

True, they were in heaven and Satan was not allowed free access to heaven anymore, but there was still a link of sympathy between them and Satan.

Satan is not the ugly person as he is represented in pictures. He was a shining angel of light and his arguments were very convincing. They were not foolish; his arguments were very refined, very subtle, very logical, and very powerful too. Whenever Satan had an opportunity to talk with an angel from heaven, he took it. Such a talk would never have helped the loyal angel. It must have been quite a burden for the angels to listen to these arguments. In this way, Satan still had access to heaven, and by it he tried to win the battle up there; he tried to restructure heaven according to his ideas. While he did not succeed, still he had a foot in the

door, and that door was not fully closed to him. The angels did not see the necessity of being completely separate.

But when Jesus came down, and the great controversy raged on this earth, revealing the character of God on the one side and the true character of Satan on the other, then the last link of sympathy was broken. Then it became very clear to the angels that Satan was on the wrong side and that he could not be trusted. There was no point anymore in even listening to him. The separation became complete. If Satan now waited for the angels at the gates of heaven, hoping to talk with them again, he would find that they had no interest at all, and that they just passed on without paying heed to him. So his work became confined to this world.

It was not therefore by physical force that God prevented the loyal angels from speaking with Satan. He first of all warned them to give no heed to the enemy's suggestions, and then brought them to such a clear understanding of the issues of the great controversy, that they themselves made the decision to have nothing to do with Satan's arguments. So likewise when we, through Gospel Order, begin to understand the true nature of rebellion against God's cause, we should act as the loyal angels did; we should remove the last link of sympathy with the rebellious. That is our only safety and it is both the best and the only thing that we can do.

Look again at this text in *Revelation* 12:10. It says that Satan was "cast down." Now we see precisely in what manner he was cast down: he was cast down through a clear revelation of the issues that were involved in the case.

The Desire of Ages, p. 761:

> Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.

The reason why we are studying the chapter on Miriam and Aaron's rebellion is to gain a better understanding of the nature of rebellion. We saw that they both had a personal connection with God and were definitely receiving revelations from God. Because of this they considered themselves as practically equal with Moses.

In our day as well, it is true that secondary messengers will have their personal connection with God, and they will have personal revelations which give deeper insight into the message. But this does not give them the place of the primary messenger. That was the place that Satan had coveted in heaven. Satan wanted to change God's order so that he could occupy the position of the primary messenger. Miriam and Aaron did exactly the same thing. God had appointed Moses as the primary messenger through whom He revealed His messages to Miriam, Aaron and others. They said,

> "No we don't want this order. We want God to speak to us directly and not through this man Moses. We want to receive the messages direct from God."

In following this course they were walking in Satan's steps, and re-enacting his fall. In their actions, the true nature of rebellion is clearly revealed, and because this rebellion was so clear cut, the Lord commanded that they should go out of the camp.

We might think the judgment of separating them from the rest of the camp was a harsh measure, but this was the strict command from God. It was designed to impress us with the fact that when rebellion is clearly revealed, a separation is required. Let me emphasize that we cannot give specific orders and say,

> "Now the time has come to separate!"

This is a matter that only God can reveal to us when the situation arises. It is the work of the Holy Spirit who is to…

John 16

[8] ...reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

[11] ...because the prince of this world is judged.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 385:

This manifestation of the Lord's displeasure was designed to be a warning to all Israel, to check the growing spirit of discontent and insubordination. If Miriam's envy and dissatisfaction had not been signally rebuked, it would have resulted in great evil. Envy is one of the most satanic traits that can exist in the human heart, and it is one of the most baleful in its effects. Says the wise man,

Proverbs 27

[4] Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?

It was envy that first caused discord in heaven, and its indulgence has wrought untold evil among men.

James 3

[16] Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

Envy is the true nature of rebellion. When a person is in such a state of rebellion, he will not realize that he is envious. He will think that he fights for a righteous cause and that he is wonderfully selfless, while in reality he is envious. This envy is always based upon the desire to have another position.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 385-386:

It should not be regarded as a light thing to speak evil of others or to make ourselves judges of their motives or actions.

James 4

[11] He that speaks evil of his brother, and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge.

There is but one judge—

1 Corinthians 4

[5] [He] who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.

And whoever takes it upon himself to judge and condemn his fellow men is usurping the prerogative of the Creator.

It is not a light thing to speak evil against our brother, which is what Aaron and Miriam did. But it goes even further:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 386:

The Bible specially teaches us to beware of lightly bringing accusation against those whom God has called to act as His ambassadors. The apostle Peter, describing a class who are abandoned sinners, says,

2 Peter 2

[10] Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

[11] Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.

And Paul, in his instruction for those who are placed over the church, says,

1 Timothy 5

[19] Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

He who has placed upon men the heavy responsibility of leaders and teachers of His people will hold the people accountable for the manner in which they treat His servants. We are to honor those whom God has honored. The judgment visited upon Miriam should be a rebuke to all who yield to jealousy, and murmur against those upon whom God lays the burden of His work.

This tells us that we must not under any circumstances speak evil, especially against those whom God has called to act as His ambassadors: in the first case the primary messenger. If these principles were acted out, many things would be left unspoken. Even before I came to this movement, I heard many rumors against the leaders, especially the messenger. This is not surprising, as he is the main target of Satan and those who are actuated by his spirit. But it is very essential that we pay no heed to these things, and have nothing to do with spreading them. Gossiping is a sin that was first committed by Lucifer when he started the re-

bellion in heaven, and was spreading all sorts of rumors about Christ, so that he could gather sympathy for himself.

I hope we can see, in the story of Aaron and Miriam, the true character, the true nature of their sin. It was the same rebellion that Lucifer began in heaven. There is a significant statement from the *SDA Bible Commentary*, in an article entitled "Lessons from the Rebellion":

SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1114:
I question whether genuine rebellion is ever curable.

This means that there is a real unity that takes place between the person who rebels, and the spirit of rebellion. The prophet says, "I question whether it is ever curable." This is spoken from her own experience. Again and again she had seen men stand up and rebel against God's order. From this experience she says,

I question whether genuine rebellion is every curable.

We can confirm this as we look at our own history. We have also sometimes seen people rescued from rebellion who were not fully identified with its spirit.

23. The Rebellion of Korah

LET us now turn to another story which concerns rebellion. This story reveals something of the subtleness of rebellion and how quickly such a spirit can be spread. I suppose we all feel fairly secure in our hold on the truth, don't we? However, when the spirit of rebellion arises with subtlety, it can go very quickly through the church like a fire, and not even be recognized until it breaks out openly. So it was in the story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

A Carefully Laid Plan

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 395:

> The judgments visited upon the Israelites served for a time to restrain their murmuring and insubordination, but the spirit of rebellion was still in the heart and eventually brought forth the bitterest fruits. The former rebellions had been mere popular tumults, arising from the sudden impulse of the excited multitude; but now a deep laid conspiracy was formed, the result of a determined purpose to overthrow the authority of the leaders appointed by God himself.

Note that there was a difference between this rebellion and all the other uprisings. The other uprisings were based on sudden impulses, or tempers flaring up. But here a real plan was laid very carefully. How do we tend to view Korah, Dathan, and Abiram? We tend to think of them as the very worst sort of people, even a lot like Lucifer. But in their own sight they thought that they were there to save the cause from an overpowering Moses.

> Korah, the leading spirit in this movement, was a Levite, of the family of Kohath, and a cousin of Moses; he was a man of ability and influence. Though appointed to the service of the tabernacle, he had become dissatisfied with his position and aspired to the dignity of the priesthood. The bestowal upon Aaron and his house of the priestly office, which had formerly devolved upon the first-born son of every family, had given rise to jealousy and dissatisfaction, and for some time Korah had been secretly op-

posing the authority of Moses and Aaron, though he had not ventured upon any open act of rebellion. He finally conceived the bold design of overthrowing both the civil and the religious authority. He did not fail to find sympathizers. Close to the tents of Korah and the Kohathites, on the south side of the tabernacle, was the encampment of the tribe of Reuben, the tents of Dathan and Abiram, two princes of this tribe, being near that of Korah. These princes readily joined in his ambitious schemes. Being descendants from the eldest son of Jacob, they claimed that the civil authority belonged to them, and they determined to divide with Korah the honors of the priesthood.

An Attack on the Position of Moses

And now consider the thoughts of the rest of Israel:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 395-396:

The state of feeling among the people favored the designs of Korah. In the bitterness of their disappointment, their former doubts, jealousy, and hatred had returned, and again their complaints were directed against their patient leader. The Israelites were continually losing sight of the fact that they were under divine guidance. They forgot that the Angel of the covenant was their invisible leader, that, veiled by the cloudy pillar, that presence of Christ went before them, and that from Him Moses received all his directions.

Again and again the people forgot that not Moses but God was leading them. So likewise today we tend to forget that it is not the messenger who is leading us, but God. That is a natural tendency because we only see the vessel and not the invisible treasure.

They were unwilling to submit to the terrible sentence that they must all die in the wilderness, and hence they were ready to seize upon every pretext for believing that it was not God but Moses who was leading them and who had pronounced their doom. The best efforts of the meekest man upon the earth could not quell the insubordination of this people; and although the marks of God's displeasure at their former perverseness were still before them in their broken ranks and missing numbers,

they did not take the lesson to heart. Again they were overcome by temptation.

It goes on to say that Moses did not strive for the position he held. He had been much happier as a shepherd than he was as the leader of these rebellious people. His spirit of humility was contrary to that of Korah and his companions, but God understood the spirit of Korah, as we read in the next paragraph:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 396:

He who reads the secrets of all hearts had marked the purposes of Korah and his companions and had given His people such warning and instruction as might have enabled them to escape the deception of these designing men. They had seen the judgment of God fall upon Miriam because of her jealousy and complaints against Moses. The Lord had declared that Moses was greater than a prophet.

Numbers 12

[8] With him will I speak mouth to mouth...wherefore, then, [He added,] were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

These instructions were not intended for Aaron and Miriam alone, but for all Israel.

Korah and his fellow conspirators were men who had been favored with special manifestations of God's power and greatness. They were of the number who went up with Moses into the mount and beheld the divine glory. But since that time a change had come. A temptation, slight at first, had been harbored, and had strengthened as it was encouraged, until their minds were controlled by Satan, and they ventured upon their work of disaffection. Professing great interest in the prosperity of the people, they first whispered their discontent to one another and then to leading men of Israel.

Marks of Genuine Rebellion

In what way did they transgress Gospel Order? By not going to the messenger with the problem. If you have problems with the message, then go to the messenger whom God has used to lead His people. But this is one mark of genuine rebellion, or conspiracy:

1. When it starts, the rebellious persons never openly come to the front, but will first of all talk among themselves.
2. Then they will talk with their nearest friends and criticize the messenger and the message.
3. When they have a little bit of success and they think it is safe, they will also draw others into their circle, but they will avoid the messenger and any who they know to be very loyal to the messenger.

So they will utter their complaints to those whom they suppose will sympathize with them. This is exactly what Satan did in heaven, and this is also what Korah, Dathan, and Abiram did.

If such problems would be brought openly to the messenger, then the persons involved could be helped. God, through the messenger, would correct their errors. But if they avoid God's messenger and those who are loyal to Gospel Order, and only seek out those whom they feel will sympathize with them, then they are in the process of starting a very serious rebellion. Furthermore it says:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 396-397:

Their insinuations were so readily received that they ventured still further...

What are insinuations? They are suggestions, such as Satan put forth to Eve when he said,

"Couldn't it be that maybe God didn't mean it just like He said it?"

Insinuations are not straight to the point. They are brought up carefully so that the real design or intention is not seen. That is a mark of rebellion.

Their insinuations were so readily received that they ventured still further,...

The next step comes after this,

...and at last they really believed themselves to be actuated by the zeal for God.

Were the motives of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, good or bad? They really believed that they were actuated by zeal for God, so were their motives good? Definitely, they were very good. They really believed that they were doing the work of God.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 397:

They were successful in alienating two hundred and fifty princes, men of renown in the congregation. With these strong and influential supporters they felt confident of making a radical change in the government and greatly improving upon the administration of Moses and Aaron.

They really wanted improvement, that is, they wanted to restructure the whole organization of Israel. They didn't want to go out and start a new movement. No, they wanted to remain in the movement and restructure it. This is another aspect of rebellion. Let's continue.

Jealousy had given rise to envy, and envy to rebellion. They had discussed the question of the right of Moses to so great authority and honor, until they had come to regard him as occupying a very enviable position, which any of them could fill as well as he. And they deceived themselves and one another into thinking that Moses and Aaron had themselves assumed the positions they held. The discontented ones said that these leaders had exalted themselves above the congregation of the Lord, in taking upon them the priesthood and government, but their house was not entitled to distinction above others in Israel; they were no more holy than the people, and it should be enough for them to be on a level with their brethren, who were equally favored with God's special presence and protection.

Even though they put forth these charges, they never once had spoken with Moses. This was not honest dealing because if they really believed that Moses was out of place, they should have talked to him directly. This is what they should have done and then God could have helped them.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 397-398:

The next work of the conspirators was with the people.

So first they talked among themselves, and then to the people.

> To those who are in the wrong, and deserving of reproof, there is nothing more pleasing than to receive sympathy and praise. And thus Korah and his associates gained the attention and enlisted the support of the congregation. The charge that the murmuring of the people had brought upon them the wrath of God was declared to be a mistake. They said that the congregation were not at fault, since they desired nothing more than their rights; but that Moses was an overbearing ruler; that he had reproved the people as sinners, when they were a holy people, and the Lord was among them.

In their minds Moses was an overbearing ruler. That was the opposite of the truth. This shows how far the mind can be distorted. When a person is in rebellion, nothing is so pleasing as sympathy and praise. That is the reason why he is not satisfied to keep his rebellion to himself. He tries to spread it further and further. He tries to gain sympathy for his cause, and this is all done *within* the kingdom of God.

> Korah reviewed the history of their travels through the wilderness, where they had been brought into straight places, and many had perished because of their murmuring and disobedience. His hearers thought they saw clearly that their troubles might have been prevented if Moses had pursued a different course. They decided that all their disasters were chargeable to him, and that their exclusion from Canaan was in consequence of the mismanagement of Moses and Aaron; that if Korah would be their leader, and would encourage them by dwelling upon their good deeds instead of reproving their sins, they would have a very peaceful, prosperous journey; instead of wandering to and fro in the wilderness, they would proceed directly to the Promised Land.

So it will always be. A restructuring of God's kingdom is represented by Satan as a wonderful liberation. He presents true

Gospel Order as a dictatorship, as a narrowing of our real possibilities.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 398:

In this work of disaffection there was a greater union and harmony among the discordant elements of the congregation than had ever before existed.

We are seeking unity aren't we? And through what means? Gospel order. Here was a transgression of Gospel Order and what do we find? A "greater unity…than had ever before existed" in the camp. Isn't this strange? We have studied in the beginning, two kinds of unity. The one unity which is available in Christ, and the other unity which is available outside of Christ. The unity caused by Korah was a unity outside of Christ. Therefore this unity would eventually break down as it was only a unity of rebellion against Gospel Order, a unity for a wicked purpose.

A Warning for Us

The purpose for studying the history of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram is manifold. First of all, it is a clear warning to each person, and each believer in particular, of the danger of becoming involved in a similar movement of rebellion. If it could happen to the high standing men, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and to most of Israel, then we are all liable to be caught in such a rebellion. We usually tend to think that we are quite safe against rebellion and that we don't need so much warning about it. But the Spirit of Prophecy warns us very clearly:

SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1114:

Rebellion and apostasy are in the very air we breathe. We shall be affected by it unless we by faith hang our helpless souls upon Christ.

The faith that we need is faith in Gospel Order: faith in the fact that God speaks through His appointed channel to us. It is not enough to accept some parts of truth that we receive through this channel, we must accept the whole message. If we don't do this, if we only select the bits of truth that we think are good for us, then

we break a link in the chain of truth. All the messages that we have received in the past, including this present one, are all one wonderful chain of truth. Take one link from it and the whole chain is destroyed. When we feel at liberty to select out a few things here and there, then we destroy the whole system of truth and separate the spirit and life from the form of sound doctrine. Therefore if we are not on guard against any deviation from Gospel Order, we will find ourselves in the same category as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

Another reason why we can't select a few things and reject others out of the message is because this course would be against the direct counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy. This counsel is against attending meetings where truth and error are mixed:

Early Writings, p. 124-125:

I saw that neither young nor old should attend their meetings; for it is wrong to thus encourage them while they teach error that is a deadly poison to the soul and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The influence of such gatherings is not good. If God has delivered us from such darkness and error, we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has set us free and rejoice in the truth. God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go; for unless He sends us to those meetings where error is forced home to the people by the power of the will, He will not keep us.

So, anybody who claims that the message being presented at this time has errors in it,—which is what they do when they take one part of the message, but not the other part,—should not attend these meetings. To do so would be against the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy.

Korah's rebellion is a clear warning for all of us. Not that God would threaten us to make us serve Him out of fear, but rather that He has foretold the fate that awaits us if we take the same course of action. It was not to frighten Eve into obedience that God told her not to taste the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but out of love for her He foretold what would

happen if she did. God loves us too much to permit us to take the path to perdition without warning us.

Another reason for studying the story of Korah's rebellion is so that we can draw a very clear line between us and the spirit of rebellion. And to draw this line of distinction, we must know the character of this rebellion so that when it arises we will realize its seriousness, and clearly see that it is leading away from the path of God.

A third reason for studying this event is to help those who are taking a similar course and may not be aware of it. This gives us a chance to lead them back into the path of truth. If that proves impossible, then we must separate from them.

The Progress of Rebellion

Let us turn again to the story, "The Rebellion of Korah."

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 396:**
> Korah and his fellow conspirators were men who had been favored with special manifestations of God's power and greatness. They were of the number who went up with Moses into the mount and beheld the divine glory. But since that time a change had come. A temptation, slight at first, had been harbored, and had strengthened as it was encouraged, until their minds were controlled by Satan, and they ventured upon their work of disaffection.

This first temptation was slight. Likewise when Eve went away from the side of her husband, she dismissed her fears, thinking that she had enough wisdom to discern evil and to withstand it. This was a very slight temptation but because it was harbored it overtook them.

> A temptation, slight at first, had been harbored, and had strengthened as it was encouraged, until their minds were controlled by Satan, and they ventured upon their work of disaffection. Professing great interest in the prosperity of the people, they first whispered their discontent to one another and then to leading men of Israel.

First of all they did not show their discontent openly, but murmured it among each other until it was so strong that they dared to show it openly.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 396-397:

Their insinuations were so readily received that they ventured still further, and at last they really believed themselves to be actuated by zeal for God. They were successful in alienating two hundred and fifty princes, men of renown in the congregation. Jealousy had given rise to envy, and envy to rebellion.

So the first step was jealousy, then came envy, then came rebellion. The path to rebellion starts with a very slight deviation. First there is jealousy. When the spirit of jealousy arises, it is still possible for the sinner to be saved. God appeals to him not to be jealous for the position and work of another worker. If this appeal is not heeded, the next step is envy, which is a stronger type of jealousy. If the evil work proceeds further, the third step is rebellion. If the rebellion continues then eventually the case becomes one of "genuine rebellion," which is hopeless. The last paragraphs of the chapter describe this condition:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 405:

They had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, a sin by which man's heart is effectually hardened against the influence of divine grace.

Matthew 12

[32] Whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man, [said Christ,] it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaks against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him.

These words were spoken by our Saviour when the gracious works which He had performed through the power of God were attributed by the Jews to Beelzebub. It is through the agency of the Holy Spirit that God communicates with man; and those who deliberately reject this agency as satanic, have cut off the channel of communication between the soul and Heaven.

When the Holy Spirit gives more light to lead the sinners out of darkness, this light is looked upon as darkness. And when Satan

fastens the deception upon them and sends real darkness, they take this to be real light. So they call that which is darkness light and that which is light darkness. The more God would try to save them, the more they would call it a deception of Satan. And the more Satan tries to capture them, the more they call this the wonderful redeeming light of God. That is how the mind becomes perverted. And so what can God do? The more light He sends, the more they reject Him until they reach the point of no return. This is when rebellion becomes genuine.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 397-398:

They had discussed the question of the right of Moses to so great authority and honor, until they had come to regard him as occupying a very enviable position, which any of them could fill as well as he.

Anybody who really realizes how hard the work of the messenger is, would not be envious of the position. This applies as well to every other position in the work of God. The people who bear responsibilities that God has given them must be respected in their positions, and any envy of those positions will lead to rebellion.

And they deceived themselves and one another into thinking that Moses and Aaron had themselves assumed the positions they held. . . .

For a time this work was carried on secretly. As soon however, as the movement had gained sufficient strength to warrant an open rupture, Korah appeared at the head of the faction, and publicly accused Moses and Aaron of usurping authority which Korah and his associates were equally entitled to share. It was charged, further, that the people had been deprived of their liberty and independence.

Numbers 16

[3] You take too much upon you, [said the conspirators,] seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?

Yet they had evidence upon evidence that God had given Moses the position and that Moses had not exalted himself to it, but they were not able to see this due to the darkness into which rebellion had placed them. When difficulties arose, they always complained that it was Moses who led them. And this same complaint is often heard today, that it is man and not God who is leading, even though it is emphasized again and again that the message is not made up by the messenger, but it is God's message. Because people today are unable or unwilling to see the divine leading, they feel at liberty to reject some parts of the message while they accept other parts of it that do not offend them.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 398:

Moses had not suspected this deep-laid plot, and when its terrible significance burst upon him, he fell upon his face in silent appeal to God. He arose sorrowful indeed, but calm and strong.

Why was Moses so sorrowful? Not because his position was attacked, but because he saw what would be the end result of the rebellion. Moses strove to save them from this result, but it was impossible. Finally he thought that perhaps Dathan and Abiram had not taken so bold a stand as Korah and so he called them to come to him and present their requests before him, but they refused to come. And so the whole thing ended with a total separation of these rebellious people from the camp. The 250 princes who wanted to go into the sanctuary were immediately destroyed. Then the other rebellious persons who sympathized with them also perished.

The Danger of Misguided Sympathy

For a time no more rebellion appeared in Israel. But this didn't last long and soon it arose again. They accused Moses of having killed Korah and his company:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 404-405:

Korah would not have taken the course he did had he *known* that all the directions and reproofs communicated to Israel were from God. But he might have known this. God had given over-

whelming evidence that He was leading Israel. But Korah and his companions rejected light until they became so blinded that the most striking manifestations of His power were not sufficient to convince them; they attributed them all to human or satanic agency. The same thing was done by the people, who the day after the destruction of Korah and his company came to Moses and Aaron, saying,

Numbers 16

[41] You have killed the people of the Lord.

So if Korah had known that it was God speaking through Moses, he would not have entered into rebellion. This seems to imply that Korah was lost because of ignorance, and that he might have been saved if he had been instructed. However, he had many opportunities of being instructed in this knowledge:

> God had given overwhelming evidence that He was leading Israel. But Korah and his companions rejected light until they became so blinded that the most striking manifestations of His power were not sufficient to convince them; they attributed them all to human or satanic agency.

There is one thing we need to be wary of, and that is having unwise sympathy with those who enter into rebellion. Some people, in misguided love, feel that it is their duty to go and help the rebellious by trying to convince them of truths that the rebels have already had opportunity to hear. In doing this, they are placing themselves on the tempter's ground, and are often confused as the rebellious turn upon them instead with their deceptive arguments. In this way, some well-meaning souls have been lost.

When attempting to help the ignorant, we need to discern between those who are ignorant because they have never heard the message, and those who are willingly ignorant because they have rejected the light. When a man has never heard the message, then God does not hold him accountable for his ignorance, and we are free to help him into the knowledge of truth, as God directs. But once he has heard the message, and then turns against it into darkness, there is nothing that can be done to help him. Espe-

cially is this so if he has heard the message directly from the messenger, since he thereby rejects the witness of a greater light, and therefore cannot be helped by a lesser light, such as another believer. If he rejects the greater light he will also reject the lesser.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 397:

The next work of the conspirators was with the people. To those who are in the wrong, and deserving of reproof, there is nothing more pleasing than to receive sympathy and praise.

The people felt sympathy for Korah and his conspirators. They felt that it was an injustice that Korah came to such an end. Didn't he only want the best for Israel? Wasn't he just a poor soul that did not know the truth? When God gives clear light and evidence that even the poorest soul can understand, and then someone turns against that light, what does he deserved? Sympathy or praise? It says here,

...those who are...deserving of reproof.

So he deserves reproof. Not that we despise or hate the person, or that there is a lack of love on the side of God. Rather it is an evidence of His love that He gives reproof. This is revealed in the message to the Laodicean church as recorded in the book of *Revelation.*

Revelation 3

[19] As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Those who take their stand against the light of God deserve rebuke. Not only that, they also need it because that is the only way they can be helped. But what do they usually receive instead? Sympathy, and even praise. Giving sympathy to someone who fights against the message does not help him, but strengthens and encourages him in his wrong course, and endangers the soul of him who tries to help. So to prevent souls from being lost, reproof is very necessary, and reveals God's love.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 397:

To those who are in the wrong, and deserving of reproof, there is nothing more pleasing than to receive sympathy and praise. And thus Korah and his associates gained the attention and enlisted the support of the congregation. The charge that the murmuring of the people had brought upon them the wrath of God was declared to be a mistake. They said that the congregation were not at fault, since they desired nothing more than their rights; but that Moses was an overbearing ruler; that he had reproved the people as sinners, when they were a holy people, and the Lord was among them.

The people of Israel were on the same level as Korah, also calling light darkness, because they felt sympathy with Korah. Instead of giving him a rebuke according to God's love, they gave him sympathy out of human love. When Jesus was coming down from Galilee to Jerusalem on His last journey, Satan tempted him to avoid going down to Jerusalem and instead to go elsewhere and continue healing the sick. But the love of God demanded, and the plan of God demanded that He should go straightforward to Jerusalem. Jesus went the way God was directing Him to go, and left these suffering souls without immediate help. Satan presented this as a lack of love, a lack of sympathy. But what is more important, obedience or human sympathy? Obedience. We must stay in our place, and our place is to follow the way that God has given to us. And when a person has rejected the greater light, there is no point for us, with a smaller light, trying to help him.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 405:

The same thing was done by the people who the day after the destruction of Korah and company, came to Moses and Aaron saying,

Numbers 16

[41] You have killed the people of the Lord.

Notwithstanding they had had the most convincing evidence of God's displeasure at their course, in the destruction of the men who had deceived them, they dared to attribute His judgments to Satan, declaring that through the power of the evil one,

Moses and Aaron had caused the death of good and holy men. It was this act that sealed their doom.

And so came the plague in the camp, and then it says in the last paragraph:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 405:

God works by the manifestation of His Spirit to reprove and convict the sinner; and if the Spirit's work is finally rejected, there is no more that God can do for the soul. The last resource of divine mercy has been employed. The transgressor has cut himself off from God, and sin has no remedy to cure itself. There is no reserved power by which God can work to convict and convert the sinner.

Hosea 4

17 Let him alone,

–is the divine command. Then...

Hebrews 10

26 ...there remains no more sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

So that was the story of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. From the mistake made by the Israelites, we should be able to see that God does not want us to be deceived by human sympathy. When people who have heard the message turn against it, God has not given us the task of trying to help those people. If we would try to help them, we would instead endanger our own souls, encourage the rebellious, and make a link of sympathy between ourselves and the rebellious.

This has always been a hazard for God's true people, it always has. This misguided work must come to an end. There must be a clear line of distinction between God's true people and those who are against the message. It is high time that this happened among us. So that we do not forget this lesson, we need to study the chapter about Korah's rebellion again and again.

24. The Saving Power in Gospel Order

WE WILL now turn to some other examples from history which illustrate the saving power in Gospel Order. Some people take offense to lessons drawn from the history of Israel, thinking that the Old Testament order has passed away and does not apply to us since we live in the New Testament times. If this was really so, then why was *Patriarchs and Prophets* written? For what purpose? For what purpose do we have the Old Testament in our Bible?

There is a definite purpose for the Old Testament stories; they were written for our admonition.[39] They show us what to do, and what not to do; they reveal Gospel Order, the very same order that God had established in heaven.

Kadesh Barnea: Theocracy or Democracy?

One example where the people of Israel transgressed Gospel Order was at Kadesh Barnea. Turn with me to the book of *Deuteronomy:*

> **Deuteronomy 1**
> [19] And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which you saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea.
> [20] And I said unto you, You are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God does give unto us.
> [21] Behold, the Lord your God has set the land before you: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of your fathers has said unto you; fear not, neither be discouraged.

The command to go and possess the land was not just an idea of Moses, but was a command of God, as verse 21 shows:

> [21] ...as the Lord God of your fathers has said.

In verse 22 we read the reaction of the people:

[39] *1 Corinthians* 10:1-13.

Deuteronomy 1 [NKJV]
[22] And every one of you came near to me and said, Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.
[23] The plan pleased me well.

This story demonstrates the working of a democracy. Here we have the people; the majority, it says,

> "And everyone of you came near to me."

The people had a certain desire, they wanted something, and they suggested this to Moses, and Moses accepted it as the will of the people. That is a democracy isn't it? It is government by the will of the people. Is God's government in anyway democratic? No! It is not democratic. God's people are not democratic. To be democratic means to have a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. That is, that the people are the decision-making power.

In the world, there are really only two forms of government: autocracy and democracy. In autocracy, a king or dictator rules. He is the decision-making institution in the government and his will is the law. We know by experience that this can be a very dangerous situation. Think for example of Hitler, and others like him. There were also other milder kings in history who were not as bad as these infamous dictators, but usually an autocracy tends to the suppression of the people. For this reason the people have endeavoured to form another kind of government, namely democracy, which can be much better. Democracy means that the people are the decision-making body.

Because men only know these two kinds of government, they think that the church should be governed after the democratic order. And when we say that our church is not governed by a democracy, they think that we have an autocracy, where one man rules over us and does with us what he wants.

In the world today there are some religious bodies who have an autocracy, and this usually involves people who deceive other people into following them and then misuse their power. So when we say our church is not a democracy, this makes us very unpopular. But Israel, when God was leading them by Moses, did not have a democracy.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 603:

> The government of Israel was administered in the name and by the authority of God. The work of Moses, of the seventy elders, of the rulers and judges, was simply to enforce the laws that God had given; they had no authority to legislate for the nation. This was, and continued to be, the condition of Israel's existence as a nation. From age to age men inspired by God were sent to instruct the people and to direct in the enforcement of the laws.

What type of government did Israel have? A theocracy. And in a theocracy, not the people, nor a man, but the Lord is the only giver of the laws for the kingdom. In the time of Moses, Israel was a theocracy in secular and in religious matters.

We do not have a theocracy in secular matters today. Instead, most countries are governed in secular matters by a democracy. But in the religious area, what must we have? A theocracy, for this means that not the messenger, nor the people, nor anybody else, but God alone is the giver of the laws for the kingdom. He alone can formulate the principles of Gospel Order. It is not from man, it is from God. The Lord is the only lawgiver.

> From age to age men inspired by God were sent to instruct the people and to direct in the enforcement of the laws.

God uses human instruments to explain His laws to the people, but He alone can give them. He is the originator, and this is a theocracy. God's true church must be a theocracy, and nothing else.

When the Israelites had the idea of sending out spies, and they all came to Moses with the plan, was this in agreement with a theocracy? It was not, it was in direct contradiction to it. Only

God is to formulate the plans and the laws. God had formulated the plan that they should go up and possess the land, and they as a people, proposed something else. But the government of God is a theocracy, not a democracy.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 374:

> The government of Israel was characterized by the most thorough organization, wonderful alike for its completeness and its simplicity. The order so strikingly displayed in the perfection and arrangement of all God's created works was manifest in the Hebrew economy.
>
> God was the center of authority and government, the sovereign of Israel. Moses stood as their visible leader, by God's appointment, to administer the laws in His name. From the elders of the tribes a council of seventy was afterward chosen to assist Moses in the general affairs of the nation.
>
> Next came the priests, who consulted the Lord in the sanctuary. Chiefs, or princes, ruled over the tribes. Under these were "captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens," and, lastly, officers who might be employed for special duties. *Deuteronomy* 1:15.

The arrangement of the ruling bodies reveals the government of Israel to be a theocracy:

> God was the center of authority and government, the sovereign of Israel.

God was the one who was formulating and dispensing the laws; He was the sovereign. A sovereign is the head, the one who rules the affairs, and so it was. Even though Moses and others were the visible leaders, they were simply carrying out God's will; He was their Head. The fact that God always appoints a human as the messenger for His church does not make the government an autocracy, as some people mistakenly think. Instead, it means that God uses an instrument to make His will known to the church.

Let's come back to democracy. The people practiced democracy when they came together and made the plan to send spies in the land of Canaan:

Deuteronomy 1 [NKJV]
[22] And every one of you came near to me and said, Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.

They said,

> "We want to go, but let us make some plans first."

Whenever the people as a whole want something, it is very tempting to do it because we are so used to the democratic order. We think,

> "This is what the people want, therefore it must be good for them."

But this is not always the case, and here it was definitely not good for them to make alternative plans. The situation was even more deceptive because the plan that the people made seemed to be in agreement with God's command. Let's look at this again. The command of God was,

> "Go up and possess the country."

And the people said,

> "Yes, we will do this. But first let us send out spies to search out the way that we shall go."

When the people made this suggestion, they were enthusiastic. They were saying,

> "Wonderful! Now the Lord is finally giving us the country after these many days of wandering through the wilderness. Now we can go in, but let us be wise, let us be reasonable and make good plans for our entry."

Because their zeal made the plan look so genuine, Moses said,

[23] The plan pleased me well.

Moses should have realized that this was not according to God's order because it did not come in the way God constructs His kingdom. All the general messages and all the information that the people received from God had been given through Moses. There were other specific directions which God did not give through Moses, such as the revelations that God gave to Aaron, and the specific directions or spiritual lessons that each Israelite could receive through communion with God. But these instructions were not of the same magnitude or scope. All the general moves, God gave through Moses.

Along came another plan which was from the people; from man. By this fact alone, Moses should have understood that this was not the voice of God, but the voice of man because it did not come through God's channel. So when we hear a new message, we must not only ask whether it is truth, but also does it come in God's way or not? And the way that God uses is this: He always uses his appointed channel to give a message to the church.

Even though the message that the people brought to Moses sounded like the truth, it did not come in God's appointed way and therefore should have been rejected. God's plans do not come through a democratic form of government, but through a theocratic form of government. The Lord makes the laws and He appoints certain chosen men to direct in making them known to the people.

When Moses said, it pleased me well, then he himself transgressed Gospel Order. We should learn from his mistake. Today, if we see Gospel Order being transgressed, we should take a very firm stand against it. It is not always an easy thing to do because we don't want to offend people, we don't want to make enemies. For this reason we sometimes tend to compromise, and say,

> "Okay, have your way for a while, we will see how it goes."

Moses could have taken this position and said, "Okay, it is a wrong procedure, it comes through the wrong channel, but let

them have their way this time, and they shall see what the outcome is." But this would have been compromise. Even the messenger must stand very firmly on the principles of Gospel Order. We cannot afford to neglect or despise these principles because then we will incur severe losses, as was demonstrated in the experience of Israel.

These spies were sent out, and when they surveyed the country they came back. They were twelve in number, and at first they all gave a glowing report of the wonderful country. But then ten of them suddenly changed their tone and said,

> "We can't take it. It is too difficult. The walls are too high, the people are too strong, they are giants…"

–and so forth. They spoke directly against what God had said before:

> "Go, and possess the country."[40]

And all the people, except the two spies, Joshua and Caleb, turned against the plan of God. Their evil report had such an effect on the people that none of them believed that it was possible to enter into the land anymore.

Compare the Israelites at Kadesh and at the Red Sea. At the Red Sea they went through by faith. What kind of faith? Faith in God's word as spoken through Moses. To take Canaan they needed the same faith. When they were at the Red Sea, and received the word of God through Moses, they obeyed and went ahead. What would have happened if they had said,

> "Yes, but first let us look at how deep the water is. Let us first send someone to check the temperature…"

–and so forth? They would have been overtaken right there and would never have reached the borders of the Promised Land. In-

[40] *Deuteronomy* 1:21.

stead they believed the word as it came through the appointed channel, and so they advanced.

When they came to Kadesh they did not believe the word of God as it came through His appointed channel and therefore they incurred a severe loss. The Lord told them,

> "Because you have no faith, you must go back to the wilderness."

This was not an arbitrary decree. God foresaw that these people had so little faith in God's kingdom-building principles, that it would not be possible for Him to lead them safely into the country.

God relies upon His people to build His kingdom in His way. If the people do not build His kingdom in His way, He simply cannot lead them further, for they refuse to be led. He has no alternative form of government for them. And so He has to wait until He can lead the movement again. God has no alternative; absolutely none. It is either His way, or a delay until He can again raise up another people who will trust Him.

When the spies saw the giants and the big walls, and compared them with their own strength, they committed a common mistake; they looked at the vessel and not the treasure. The visible vessel is what they saw, and the invisible treasure is what they could not see. Here on this side were the giants and the big walls, the strong people, the armed forces of the Canaanites; and here were the Israelites. If only the outward vessel was considered, who appeared stronger? The giants appeared stronger. And so the spies lost sight of Gospel Order and viewed their own strength and not God's strength that would have been with them.

2 Corinthians 4

[7] But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

They should have remembered this; that the excellency of the power of God was from God and not from them. They only saw

themselves and measured themselves with the strength of the enemy. So likewise when we make our own plans and measure our own strength with the task that lies ahead of us, we will also be very discouraged indeed. But instead we may be like Caleb and Joshua, the two spies who were not discouraged about the tremendous task that was before them, for they saw the treasure that was with them, even the presence and power of God.

Israel rejected God's plan to go in and possess the country because they compared their earthen vessel with the strength of the enemy instead of comparing the treasure with it. Then later when God told them that they could not enter the land, they decided that they would now go in. But it was too late, because the messages and plans of God are conditional, and when conditions are not fulfilled at the right time, then the message does not apply anymore until the conditions are once again fulfilled.

Ecclesiastes 3
[1] To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

The message to go in and possess the country was valid only as long as they were ready when God told them to go. As their faith was turned into unbelief it was impossible for them to go in, for God could only protect them as long as they trusted in Him. Without His protection they would be slaughtered by the enemy. They were in direct transgression of Gospel Order when they tried to go in, and so incurred a terrible defeat. So likewise when we do not build according to the principles and procedures of God's kingdom structure, then we will certainly be weaker than our enemies.

There are many other stories we could study in the light of Gospel Order. The time between Kadesh and the entrance into Canaan is full of lessons. It is up to you to restudy it after the camp is over. That is what we all should do: take up our Bibles and Spirit of Prophecy books and restudy the stories in order to

see and to prove Gospel Order. Let us not be diverted from this task.

The Conquest of Canaan

Let's consider the conquest of Canaan, and the first city to be overthrown, Jericho. Before it was conquered, Joshua went to have a private communion with Christ. The divinely appointed primary messenger by that time was Joshua. How was he called to this position? Was he voted in by the people? Did he simply take up the position thinking that he was capable or worthy for it? Since God is the lawmaker in His kingdom, He is also the one who appoints messengers to their position. Therefore it must have been God who installed Joshua.

How would the people know that Joshua was to be their messenger after Moses died? God always informs His church about these appointments. It was not just through the words of Moses that Joshua was confirmed to the people, but God gave a visible sign so that everybody could see. Let's turn to the chapter, "The Law Repeated" in *Patriarchs and Prophets:*

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 462-463:

The Lord hearkened to the prayer of His servant; and the answer came,

Numbers 27

[18] Take Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand upon him;

[19] And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight.

[20] And you shall put some of your honor upon him, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may be obedient.

Joshua had long attended Moses; and being a man of wisdom, ability, and faith, he was chosen to succeed him.

By whom was he chosen? By God.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 463:

Through the laying on of hands by Moses, accompanied by a most impressive charge, Joshua was solemnly set apart as the

leader of Israel. He was also admitted to a present share in the government. The words of the Lord concerning Joshua came through Moses to the congregation,

Numbers 27

[21] He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him, after the judgment of Urim before the Lord. At his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation.

In this way God made it very clear that He had chosen another messenger for them. At the same time, we can be sure that Joshua was also informed by God so that there was a mutual agreement between both parties. There was perfect agreement between the old and the new messengers. So when a person stands up and says,

"I am now the next messenger,"

–and he finds himself in conflict with the present messenger, then we would have good reason to be suspicious about his claim. When a messenger appointed by God is going to be replaced he will definitely acknowledge the replacement. We find this supported in the case of Moses and Joshua, as well as other instances such as John the Baptist and Christ or Elijah and Elisha.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 487:

To reduce Jericho was seen by Joshua to be the first step in the conquest of Canaan. But first of all he sought an assurance of divine guidance, and it was granted him. Withdrawing from the encampment to meditate and to pray that the God of Israel would go before His people, he beheld an armed warrior, of lofty stature and commanding presence, "with his sword drawn in his hand."

The heavenly warrior was Christ, the primary messenger of heaven, and the messenger for Joshua as well. And what did Christ tell Joshua in this instance? He gave him the plan of how to overcome Jericho. He told Joshua that Israel should walk around the city once each day for six days. On the seventh day

they should walk around seven times, and then they would be given the city. Joshua could have said,

> "I can't tell them that! By the third day they will rebel against me and say, 'We've had enough of walking around this city because nothing is happening!'"

Could Joshua and the people have reacted like this? Yes. Did the people see Christ talking to Joshua and giving him the plan for capturing Jericho? They did not see it. So when they received the word from Joshua, how did they need to receive it? By faith.

> **Hebrews 11**
> [30] By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.

What kind of faith was it that brought the walls of Jericho down? Faith in God's word as spoken through Joshua. In other words, faith in Gospel Order. Faith in the way God was leading His people. If Joshua had not been confirmed to the people as the messenger of God, there would have been good reason to say to Joshua,

> "Well you had a bad dream. You tell us to walk around seven times, no, that must be wrong, you must be mistaken. We don't know what you received but it may have been Satan, or your own fantasy, or whatever."

Once God had revealed that Joshua was His channel through whom He would communicate, it was their duty and their privilege to accept the word that came through this channel. I consider it not only as a duty, but much more as a privilege that we can have such a channel of communication from the Lord.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:**
> **Hebrews 11**
> [30] By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.
> The Captain of the Lord's host communicated only with Joshua.

Was this in agreement with Gospel Order? Yes.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:

He did not reveal himself to all the congregation, and it rested with them to believe or doubt the words of Joshua, to obey the commands given by him in the name of the Lord, or to deny his authority. They could not see the host of angels who attended them under the leadership of the Son of God.

Note that they had the choice to obey, or to deny his authority. That was their freedom. What would have been the result of denying his authority? Defeat, they would never have got the victory in Ai. But obedience, to his authority meant victory, success.

Joshua was given authority. The word "authority" tends to conjure up images of overbearing rulership, dictatorship, limitations on freedom, and so forth, but that is the word the Spirit of Prophecy uses. There are two kinds of authority there is human authority, which is often despotic, and there is another authority, which is the authority of God. We must learn to respect true authority. We must also learn to exercise true authority. Especially fathers and parents, who are placed in a similar position over their families as the messenger is placed over the church. True authority is exercised by maintaining a calm but firm adherence to the way of Gospel Order. I know it is very difficult to come before the people and stand on the authority you are called to; it is very difficult, but when God calls us to this place of authority, we must exercise this influence if we want to be successful. And the people must obey this authority.

What was this authority that Joshua had? His authority was not to direct each individual Israelite in his personal plans. His authority was not to minister in the sanctuary. That was the authority of Aaron. His authority was to communicate to them what the Lord had told him and to insist that these directions were carried out.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:

They could not see the host of angels who attended them under the leadership of the Son of God.

They could only see the vessel and not the treasure, but by faith they believed it was there.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:

They might have reasoned: "What unmeaning movements are these, and how ridiculous the performance of marching daily around the walls of the city, blowing trumpets of rams' horns. This can have no effect upon those towering fortifications." But the very plan of continuing this ceremony through so long a time prior to the final overthrow of the walls afforded opportunity for the development of faith among the Israelites.

The plan of marching around the city gave opportunity for the development of faith. Put yourself into the position of an Israelite. In the morning you stand up and you hear the word of the Lord, march around the city.

"Okay," you say, "I will obey because that is the message which we have received. Joshua is the messenger, we know that God has confirmed him. Therefore I will obey, but nothing is happening, not even a crack in the wall. The people are standing as defiantly on the top as ever, the doors are just as tightly closed and absolutely nothing is happening. At the end of the day I wonder why we marched around? Well, I did it because God said to."

What usually happens to us when such a pattern occurs? Our faith gets weaker and weaker because we think that if this is really God's message then something must happen now. That is what we expect, but instead nothing happens. We find it a little difficult to understand how faith can be developed through such a procedure. Let's read it again:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:

But the very plan, of continuing this ceremony through so long a time prior to the final overthrow of the walls afforded opportunity for the development of faith among the Israelites.

This experience has a parallel with that of Elijah. He prayed and prayed and nothing happened for a while. But Elijah's faith became stronger with each prayer. So we have a parallel between

the prayer of Elijah and the marching of Israel around the city walls.

God gave them this plan so that they would have an opportunity to develop faith. So when we do not see immediate results come from the message, we do not need to be discouraged and in the very act of carrying on, our faith will be strengthened, provided that we do it with the right spirit. In these times of waiting for the promise, we should search our own hearts instead of searching the hearts of others, and thereby see in what area we need cleansing. This will strengthen our faith more and more as it did for the Israelites. As we practice the message, it becomes part of us.

Furthermore, the waiting makes it evident that the strength does not lie in the earthen vessel. When the Israelites walked around and nothing happened, this thought must have been very firmly embedded into their minds: not in my own strength do I overcome the city. Not by the power of arms, not by the clashing of weapons, but by the spirit of God, by the strength of God alone will the kingdom of God be established. This was the great lesson that John the Baptist needed to learn when he sent the message to Jesus,

Matthew 11

[3] Are you He that should come, or do we look for another?

And Jesus directed John's disciples simply to observe the work He was doing, for this work taught the same lesson, that not by the clashing of arms, but by the gentleness of the inspiration of His word does Christ erect His kingdom.

And here was the gentleness of the inspiration of His word telling them to march around Jericho. The faith that they needed to develop, and which we need to develop too, is faith in the power of God, and not in their own strength. The time afforded by the delay provided an opportunity for heart-searching.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:

It was to be impressed upon their minds that their strength was not in the wisdom of man, nor in his might, but only in the God of their salvation. They were thus to become accustomed to relying wholly upon their divine Leader.

We need to accustom ourselves to rely wholly upon our divine Leader. When we let the mistakes of others or the sins of the messenger cast doubt upon the message he brings, we really show a lack of faith in God as the leader of His church. However, God would have us learn that He is the leader and not man. For this reason He sends his message by a fragile vessel, a vessel that can break very easily; in this type of vessel He puts His message.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:

God will do great things for those who trust in Him. The reason why His professed people have no greater strength is that they trust so much to their own wisdom, and do not give the Lord opportunity to reveal His power in their behalf. He will help His believing children in every emergency if they will place their entire confidence in Him and faithfully obey Him.

We should not worry about the vessel, but trust more fully in God. The plan for the Israelites to march seven times around the city before something happened was not the kind of strategy that an earthly commander of an army would have thought of. This was one of the evidences that the plan came from God. And when the walls finally came down, it was also done in such a way as to make it evident that it was the work of God, and not man. This experience should have confirmed to the Israelites that God was their real leader and not Joshua. May we learn the same lesson from this story and draw comfort from the fact that God is also the real leader of His people today.

25. Trusting God's Messengers

Believing the Word of God

IN OUR last study we reviewed the events of Israel at Kadesh Barnea and Jericho. We now look again at a statement from *Patriarchs and Prophets:*

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:**
>
> **Hebrews 11**
>
> [30] By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.
>
> The Captain of the Lord's host communicated only with Joshua; He did not reveal himself to all the congregation, and it rested with them to believe or doubt the words of Joshua, to obey the commands given by him in the name of the Lord, or to deny his authority.

Note the expression, "to believe or to doubt the words of Joshua." There is more in this statement than can be seen by a mere surface reading. It is not saying that they were to believe Joshua's words just because they had confidence in him as a person. Rather, the issue was whether God was talking through Joshua or not. They had to believe that God had spoken to Joshua, and obey the words that Joshua gave them from God, even though they had not heard God personally speaking to them as Joshua had.

Then by faith they overcame the city of Jericho. How can we describe this faith? It was faith in the word of God as spoken through Joshua. Previously when we spoke of faith, we always referred to faith in God. But now we must define faith a little bit more closely. The faith of Jesus, that will endure the final test and overcome the powers of darkness, is faith in God's word as spoken through His messenger. That is the faith that we need today.

Many people suppose that the faith of Jesus is to have faith in the word of God according to their own interpretation or their own understanding of someone else's interpretation. If this were so, then we could interpret the word of God as we wished, or to

please ourselves. So our faith would really be in ourselves; we would make a god out of our understanding.

This was really the cause for Israel's tragic failure at Kadesh Barnea. Seemingly they believed the word as told by God through Moses when He said,

> "Go in and possess the country."[41]

If they had not believed this word, they would not have made such wonderful plans to fulfill it. Rather they would have said,

> "No I don't believe the word, so I won't do it."

But instead they said,

> "Yes, I believe the word of God, and will do it."

But they then interpreted this word in their own way, and thus made their own plans to fulfill it. So they trusted the word of God *as interpreted by themselves*, but they needed to trust the word of God as spoken by Moses. That is the essential difference.

Today, we face the same issue. What will give us the victory that will make the walls of Jericho fall down? It is faith in the word of God, not as we interpret it, but *as it is spoken through the messenger*. This principle may sound new to us, yet it is not. It is new in this sense that we have never seen it so clearly. But it shouldn't be so unfamiliar to us because the same faith that we need to exercise in the word of God, as spoken through His messenger today, we also needed to exercise in the word of God as spoken through His messengers in the past.

For example, the writings of Ellen White, who had the Spirit of Prophecy. We know how very important it is to believe the word of God as spoken through this prophet. Some cannot bear it like this so they have preferred to believe the word of God as they interpret it. When discrepancy is found between their interpretation of the word and what the prophet said, they simply account

[41] *Deuteronomy* 1:21.

for it by saying that Ellen White spoke her own opinion. A very common saying among Adventists in Germany is,

> "Well this is what Ellen White says, but what does the Bible say?"

And to take it even further, when you go among Protestants, and quote some things from the Bible, then they say,

> "Well this is what Paul says. But what does God say?"

Human nature always tends to trust more in what it can itself interpret rather than the word of God as spoken through His messenger. So again, what will give us the victory in this last battle with the powers of darkness? It is the faith in the word of God *as spoken through His messenger.*

Again I emphasize that this principle shouldn't be so new to us because we trust in the words of messengers that are dead. So why shouldn't we trust in the messenger that is still alive? It has always been difficult for the people of God to trust their contemporary messengers. Yet they have shown great trust in the messengers that are dead.

One reason for this is the visibility of the earthen vessel, whereas all that is left from those who are dead and buried is the treasure that was within.

Another reason is that the word of the living messenger addresses the sins and problems of the present generation, whereas the messengers of the past dealt more particularly with the sins of their generation. So it is easier to read the words of the messengers of the past since they do not strike so directly at our own sins.

Think back through history as far as you can and you will always see that the people of God have had difficulty trusting their living messenger. Jesus himself said so.

Matthew 13
[57] And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.

The people of God in this last day need to be a people who stand on the word of God as spoken through the living messenger and the dead messengers. Only this kind of faith will bring down the walls of Jericho. What are the walls of Jericho today? Doubt and unbelief. The walls of Jericho are the prejudices of men, their worldly interests, and so forth, which prevent them from being a part of God's kingdom.

We read before that there are a great number of souls…

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:
…on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in.

Many people in the world are reading the word of God and do not know what its true meaning is. There are some that would gladly accept the truth if it was presented to them in God's appointed way, if the right messenger came to them at the right time. But we don't see them because of the walls of Jericho that surround them. These walls must fall, but how?

Hebrews 11
[30] By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.

By faith in the word of God, as spoken through His living messenger. That is our need: faith in God's word as spoken through His messenger.

The Stars in Christ's Hand

But some may say,

"Well, look at this earthen vessel. Look at how faulty he is! Look at how weak he is, how easily he can err. How can I safely trust in his word?"

Yet even Joshua erred, because after they captured Ai, there was a terrible defeat, when Joshua made his own plans. Can't the

same thing happen to us? So some argue that we must not trust the word of the messenger too much, we must sometimes reject it.

Let me clarify. We are not placing our faith in the messenger, but in the word of God as spoken through the messenger. There is a difference. We are not putting our trust in the earthen vessel. Even the messenger himself cannot trust the earthen vessel; that is, his own nature. But our faith is in the ability of God to guide and protect His church. We trust that God has the destiny of the church in His hands and provided that we maintain a close connection with God, He will not disappoint us. We trust that when God has established a way of working, and a way of communication, that He will keep this way.

There are some very wonderful promises in the word of God, which confirm this. Let us study them to establish our faith in God's leading of His church.

Revelation 1

[12] Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,
[13] And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.
[14] His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;
[15] His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;
[16] He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.
[17] And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

In this vision there is a mighty confirmation and consolation for the church of God, to show that God holds her destiny in His hands. In what symbols do we see it? First of all, what do the

seven lamps symbolize? The churches, that is, the church of God in all times, beginning with Ephesus, and ending with Laodicea. And we see Jesus walking in the midst of the seven lampstands. The vision of Jesus walking in the midst of the lampstands shows that he has a very close contact with them. He constantly watches them and when a light is burning dim, He will immediately do everything to make it glow again. He will pour His oil into this lamp so that it can burn brightly.

And what do the seven stars symbolize?

Revelation 1

[20] The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

So the stars represent the angels. I think we have mentioned this already, that the Greek word for "angel" is *angelos* which can be translated as either "angel" or "messenger." So we can read instead that:

> "The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches."

In what relation do the seven stars stand to Jesus in this picture?

[16] He had in His right hand seven stars.

In what relation do they stand to Him? He has them in His right hand, which means under His control. When Jesus has the stars in His right hand, when He has them under His control, then we can certainly trust that He is capable of doing His work. By His mighty power He is able to keep them under His control.

Likewise, when He is among the seven churches, He is faithful to keep the supply of oil flowing to them that they can burn and give light. There is a wonderful statement about this, which I like very much:

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 586:

Christ is spoken of as walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Thus is symbolized His relation to the churches. He is in constant communication with His people. He knows their true state. He observes their order, their piety, their devotion. Although He is high priest and mediator in the sanctuary above, yet He is represented as walking up and down in the midst of His churches on the earth. With untiring wakefulness and unremitting vigilance, He watches to see whether the light of any of His sentinels is burning dim or going out. If the candlesticks were left to mere human care, the flickering flame would languish and die; but He is the true watchman in the Lord's house, the true warden of the temple courts. His continued care and sustaining grace are the source of life and light.

So if we are worried that we could be let down because we trust too much in God's word as spoken through the messenger, then we behave as though the care of the churches was in the hand of man. But it is not; it is in the hand of Jesus. Let's read the next paragraph where the stars are mentioned:

Christ is represented as holding the seven stars in His right hand. This assures us that no church faithful to its trust need fear coming to nought, for not a star that has the protection of Omnipotence can be plucked out of the hand of Christ.

Revelation 2

[1] These things says He that holds the seven stars in His right hand.

These words are spoken to the teachers in the church—those entrusted by God with weighty responsibilities. The sweet influences that are to be abundant in the church are bound up with God's ministers, who are to reveal the love of Christ. The stars of heaven are under His control. He fills them with light. He guides and directs their movements. If He did not do this, they would become fallen stars. So with His ministers. They are but instruments in His hands, and all the good they accomplish is done through His power. Through them His light is to shine forth. The Saviour is to be their efficiency. If they will look to Him as He looked to the Father they will be enabled to do His work. As they

make God their dependence, He will give them His brightness to reflect to the world.

What we read here is not only applicable to the primary messenger, but to the secondary messengers as well. What a great consolation to us to know that God is holding the stars in His hand and that He is walking in the midst of His candlesticks! So we can trust Him. Our faith must not be placed in the vessel, but it must be placed in the treasure that is in the vessel. This also means that we appreciate the fact that it comes through the vessel. We cannot totally reject the vessel and at the same time accept the treasure. These two things are bound together. But we do not place our trust in the vessel, but in the treasure.

The Story of Ai

Let us consider the situation at the town of Ai for a moment, and analyze the story in order to see how Israel would have been able to avoid this mistake. This will help us to take a firm stand in these last days.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:

Soon after the fall of Jericho, Joshua determined to attack Ai, a small town among the ravines a few miles to the west of the Jordan Valley. Spies sent to this place brought back the report that the inhabitants were but few, and that only a small force would be needed to overthrow it.

The great victory that God had gained for them had made the Israelites self-confident. Because He had promised them the land of Canaan they felt secure, and failed to realize that divine help alone could give them success. Even Joshua laid his plans for the conquest of Ai without seeking counsel from God.

So Joshua had laid his plans and the people had laid their plans. Then they attacked Ai with three thousand men and the result was terrible. They experienced a determined resistance that they had not expected. They were put to flight and thirty six people died. This is not a very great number but even one death was too much. When the Lord fought for them, they had no losses. In tak-

ing Jericho how many losses did they have? Not one, but in Ai thirty six fine family fathers died. Thirty six mourning families is too much.

Such a terrible defeat could have been avoided, but how? What could they have done? Disobey Joshua? That is what people suggest when they say that God's messengers should not be trusted. First of all, let us see exactly what Joshua did. He did not go to God to ask what step to take next. In other words, in a question of concerning the guidance of the church, he went his own way. But this was not just his weakness, all Israel were involved also, as it says,

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:
The great victory that God had gained for them had made *the Israelites* self-confident.

The people, together with Joshua, made their own plans. Joshua was not giving a false message to the people at this time. He was making a mistake in planning and there is a difference. In a sense it is true that our actions are also messages, and in this sense he gave a false message. But he did not stand before the people and speak to them as the oracles of God. He did not claim that God gave him the plan. The action he took was a wrong procedural step, and this wrong step soon brought results in a terrible defeat.

When the stars are in the hand of Jesus, what does it mean? It means that He has control over them; He has their destiny and that of the church, in His hands. That does not place them beyond the possibility of making mistakes and as we have read before, when the messengers of God make mistakes, He restores them and places them in positions of trust to send them into the camp of the disloyal.

So messengers can make a mistake, but how can we protect ourselves? By obeying Gospel Order. Very simply, by obeying Gospel Order. Had the people of God not been so self confident, then they would not have laid their own plans for the conquest of Ai and certainly Joshua should not have done this. They could

have asked Joshua where his plan had come from. It is the right of the church to ask the messenger if his message comes from God or from himself, and he must give an honest answer. If they had asked Joshua this question, he would have been obliged to tell them. Then everything would have been laid open and immediately another procedure could have taken place. But in their self-confidence they did not observe Gospel Order.

Gospel order demands that we have clear discernment:

> "Does the message, instruction, or even a procedural step, come from God?"

We can be safe when we work with this discernment. Let us now go further:

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:**
> The Israelites had begun to exalt their own strength and to look with contempt upon their foes. An easy victory was expected, and three thousand men were thought sufficient to take the place. These rushed to the attack without the assurance that God would be with them.

When contemplating any move we first need to establish if the word being received through the messenger is from God. Only if it is can we go ahead with assurance that God is with us. But if we do not go ahead on the word of God as spoken through the messenger, then we will surely suffer defeat.

Beside the problem of self-confidence, the whole camp was also suffering a curse because of Achan.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 494:**
> **Joshua 7**
> [7] Alas, O Lord God, [he cried,] wherefore have You at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us?...
> [8] O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turns their backs before their enemies!

[9] For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what will You do unto your great name?

The answer from Jehovah was,

[10] Get up; wherefore do you lie thus upon your face?

[11] Israel has...transgressed my covenant which I commanded them.

It was a time for prompt and decided action, and not for despair and lamentation. There was secret sin in the camp, and it must be searched out and put away before the presence and blessing of the Lord could be with His people.

[12] ...Neither will I be with you anymore, except you destroy the accursed from among you.

Here we find the same principle described as in the other studies we had before. The people of God must be separate from those who are against the word of God as spoken through His messenger. There must be a clear mark of separation. There was a clear separation needed here too. The sinner had to be searched out and put away before the blessing of the Lord could be with His people.

We are seeking for the blessing of the Lord, aren't we? We are seeking for the latter rain, and if there is anything in the camp that is hindering the blessing of the Lord, it must be searched out and put away before the blessing of the Lord can come. Achan was a curse for the cause of Israel because it was his sin that hindered the blessing of the Lord for Israel.

26. Self-Sent Messengers

IN THE last study we ended with a discussion of Achan, who was a curse to the cause because he let covetousness lead him to disobey the message as given through God's messenger. Let us focus on our time for a moment and look at what curses we have:

> **Early Writings, p. 99:**
> These self-sent messengers are a curse to the cause.

What is a curse for the cause? Self-sent messengers. These messengers presume to speak for God, but they do not speak words that are given to them by Him. In other words, those who send themselves trust the word *as interpreted by themselves;* and they are a curse to the cause. We only have two alternatives:

1. Believe the word as it comes through God's chosen messenger, or
2. Believe the word as it comes through our own interpretation.

When it comes through our own interpretation we are self-sent messengers and are a curse to the cause.

Consideration of Philippians 1

Some may think that this is a very hard saying.

> "Won't these self-sent messengers eventually separate themselves from the true church of God, so why bother about them?"
>
> "Hasn't Paul said, that it does not matter who preaches Christ, the main thing is that Christ is preached? So some preach Christ out of selfish reasons, and the others preach Christ from good reasons, both do it so let them go to it; the main thing is, Christ is preached?"

That is the attitude of many. But we are dealing with two different things here. First, those who preach a wrong message, such as those who teach that Christ did not come in sinful human flesh. We know they are off the road, and we don't need to listen to

them or support them. Secondly, those who preach the correct message as we know it, yet they are not sent by God. Should we listen to them and support them? Let us turn for a moment to Philippians:

Philippians 1

[12] But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,
[13] So that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;
[14] And most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.
[15] Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will:
[16] The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;
[17] But the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.
[18] What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

Korah, for example, must have preached Christ from envy and strife; so why try to hinder him, the main thing is that Christ is preached? We can be sure that this is a misapplication of the verses in *Philippians*, because one statement cannot contradict another. In *Early Writings* we read,

Early Writings, p. 99

Self-sent messengers are a curse to the cause.

And in *Philippians* we read that both preached Christ, and that we reap nothing from a curse, rather that it is good that Christ is preached in any way. Let us consider the true interpretation of the Bible text in *Philippians* 1, and again apply Gospel Order here. We will make this into a practical lesson. Here we have the word of God, *Philippians* 1:12-18. We all believe this word of God as

given through God's messenger, but we do not want to believe our own interpretation of it. So let us turn now to *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing:*

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 33-34:

In every age God's chosen messengers have been reviled and persecuted, yet through their affliction the knowledge of God has been spread abroad. Every disciple of Christ is to step into the ranks and carry forward the same work, knowing that its foes can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. God means that truth shall be brought to the front and become the subject of examination and discussion, even through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated; every controversy, every reproach, every effort to restrict liberty of conscience, is God's means of awakening minds that otherwise might slumber.

How often this result has been seen in the history of God's messengers! When the noble and eloquent Stephen was stoned to death at the instigation of the Sanhedrin council, there was no loss to the cause of the gospel. The light of heaven that glorified his face, the divine compassion breathed in his dying prayer, were as a sharp arrow of conviction to the bigoted Sanhedrin who stood by, and Saul, the persecuting Pharisee, became a chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. And long afterward Paul the aged wrote from his prison house at Rome:

Philippians 1

[15] Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife...

[16] ...not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

[18] Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached.

Through Paul's imprisonment the gospel was spread abroad, and souls were won for Christ in the very palace of the Caesars. By the efforts of Satan to destroy it, the "incorruptible" seed of the word of God, "which lives and abides forever" is sown in the hearts of men; through the reproach and persecution of His children the name of Christ is magnified and souls are saved.

The application of *Philippians* 1 is clearly not to self-sent messengers *within* the church of God, but to the enemies *outside* the church of God who persecute the church of God. These enemies try to suppress the truth and fight against it. They spread all kinds of evil rumors, but they cannot do anything against the truth, but for it. All their attempts to misrepresent it simply cause more attention to be focused upon the message. And so they preach Christ, and thus benefit the cause of Christ. These are not self-sent messengers, because…

Early Writings, p. 99:

…self-sent messengers are a curse to the cause.

How the Curse Unfolds

Why are they a curse? The answer is given:

> Honest souls put confidence in them, thinking that they are moving in the counsel of God and that they are in union with the church, and therefore suffer them to administer the ordinances, and, as duty is made plain that they must do their first works, allow themselves to be baptized by them. But when light comes, as it surely will, and they are aware that these men are not what they understood them to be,—God's called and chosen messengers,—they are thrown into trial and doubt as to the truth they have received and feel that they must learn it all over again; they are troubled and perplexed by the enemy about all their experience, whether God has led them or not, and are not satisfied until they are again baptized and begin anew.
>
> It is much more wearing to the spirits of God's messengers to go into places where those have been who have exerted this wrong influence than to enter new fields. God's servants have to deal plainly, act openly, and not cover up wrongs; for they are standing between the living and the dead and must render an account of their faithfulness, their mission, and the influence they exert over the flock of which the Lord has made them overseers.

Why is it so much more wearing to go into the field where these self-sent messengers have been? Why is it such a burden? A

wrong influence has to be stood against and a wrong influence is something which is difficult to counteract. Further more, they have to deal plainly, act openly, and not cover up wrongs and so they have to make it very clear that these self-sent messengers are not standing in agreement with the church and that is not an easy thing to do. It is not easy to expose wrongs, but the servants of God must deal plainly. They must act openly and not cover up wrong.

Early Writings, p. 99-100:

...the influence they exert over the flock of which the Lord has made them overseers.

They must clearly explain to the people that these messengers do not stand in agreement with the church. But isn't it a good thing that these self-sent ones brought some truth with them? that they were on the side of present truth? Let's read further:

Those who receive the truth are brought into such trials would have had the truth the same if these men had stayed away and filled the humble place the Lord designed for them. God's eye was upon His jewels, and He would have directed to them His called and chosen messengers—men who would have moved understandingly. The light of truth would have shown and discovered to these souls their true position, and they would have received the truth understandingly and been satisfied with its beauty and clearness. And as they felt its powerful effects, they would have been strong and shed a holy influence.

Again the danger of those traveling whom God has not called, it was shown me. If they do have some success, the qualifications that are lacking will be felt...

We can't read the whole chapter here, but I strongly recommended that you read through this chapter, "Gospel Order." These self-sent messengers do not always have bad motives, they have very good motives. They are not necessarily talking against the message. Very seldom do they oppose the message, but, because God has not sent them, their influence in the end does not go on the good side but on the bad side. This is the fact of the matter as

we find it described in the chapter in *Early Writings* on "Gospel Order."

It is not only told that these self-sent messengers travel on their own account, sometimes they travel when they are pushed by others. When the church thinks that they need such ambitious people to spread the message. Even the leading ministers and messenger can err in this respect. I will tell you a short illustration.

In the times of James White, the early times of the Adventist church, ministers were very rare. And they believed that they badly needed some ministers. For this reason they accepted candidates very easily if they were prepared to work for very little wages as a minister. One day a person came from a Universalist church, and he believed something about the millennium which was different to the Advent belief. When he came into the Adventist faith, he accepted the truth of the Sabbath, the Sanctuary and so forth, except for his peculiar views of the one thousand year millennium. Brother White came together with him and said,

> "Okay, you can be our minister but you must not teach on this subject, as you believe contrary to us."

This minister said,

> "Yes, I will keep quiet about these things if you also keep quiet about it."

Brother White said,

> "Okay, I will not say anything about the thousand years either. We can concentrate on all the other things: Sabbath, Sanctuary, and so forth."

It worked well for a while, but after several years, all of a sudden this brother of the past Universalist faith, was given a church in a distant field. He suddenly came up with his theories again, he did not keep his word. These theories quickly spread around, and more and more people were influenced by it, and when this be-

came known it had already spread far. Now James White was in a great dilemma because for a long time he had published nothing about the thousand years, so the believers were not informed about the truth. All the things they had were the errors of this brother, and now it was very difficult to counteract this influence.

This shows how dangerous it is to put somebody in such a position. We must not do this because the self-sent messengers are a curse to the cause. They must be called by God, and if they are not called by God, then not even the messenger can call another secondary messenger or secondary helper, or whatever. It must be left absolutely to God. Only when He chooses the messengers, can they be a blessing. But if somebody is not chosen by God, then he will be a curse to the cause, even if he does not realize it. Those who send this person out are in a degree contributing to the curse of the cause.

Gospel Order a Protection

How can we protect ourselves against this? How can the church protect itself against the curse of the self-sent messengers? The answer is given again in this chapter, "Gospel Order."

> **Early Writings, p. 100:**
> I saw that this door at which the enemy comes in to perplex and trouble the flock, can be shut.

So there is a door to be shut. How can it be shut?

> I inquired of the angel how it could be closed. He said, "The church must flee to God's Word and become established upon Gospel Order, which has been overlooked and neglected." This is indispensably necessary in order to bring the church into the unity of the faith.

And so it was in the apostles time as well. The church was in danger and when they fled to Gospel Order, they were saved from many troubles.

> The church must flee to God's Word and become established on Gospel Order.

What does the word “flee” indicate? A spirit of urgency. When you flee, you run as fast as you can. You don’t think much about gathering things together, you just run. That means that we do not have time to waste on studying other subjects. We need to concentrate on Gospel Order so that the door is shut against a curse to the cause.



27. Achan: The Enemy Within

LET us now turn again back to *Patriarchs and Prophets*, where we follow on the story of Achan and where we will see more clearly what the real cause of the defeat at Ai was. It was Achan, yes, but was it only Achan? It cannot be, because in the beginning we have read the very clear words that all Israel had become self-confident. Let's read this again.

Self-Exaltation

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:

The great victory that God had gained for them had made the Israelites self-confident. Because He had promised them the land of Canaan they felt secure, and failed to realize that divine help alone could give them success. Even Joshua laid his plans for the conquest of Ai without seeking counsel from God.

The Israelites had begun to exalt their own strength and look with contempt upon their foes...

Let us jump further along in the story on the next page:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 494:

There was secret sin in the camp, and it must be searched out and put away before the presence and blessing of the Lord could be with His people.

Joshua 7

[12] Neither will I be with you anymore, except you destroy the accursed from among you.

God's command had been disregarded by one of those appointed to execute His judgments. And the nation was held accountable for the guilt of the transgressor:

[11] *They* have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also.

Instruction was given to Joshua for the discovery and punishment of the criminal.

The way in which the sinner was discovered is very significant. God could've immediately pointed him out and said,

"Achan is the cause."

But did God choose to do this? No! Why didn't God expose the man directly; why such a long procedure of casting lots? The delay provided an opportunity for searching of heart and repentance. We have seen this pattern repeatedly: first with Elijah,[42] then with the marching around the city;[43] and here again, an opportunity, a delay, an opportunity for searching of hearts.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 494-495:

Instruction was given to Joshua for the discovery and punishment of the criminal. The lot was to be employed for the detection of the guilty. The sinner was not directly pointed out, the matter being left in doubt for a time, that the people might feel their responsibility for the sins existing among them, and thus be led to searching of heart and humiliation before God.

So very clearly it says here that a delay was needed so that they could see and...

...feel *their responsibility* for the sins existing among them, and thus be led for *searching of heart* and humiliation before God.

Can you imagine? Place yourself in the position of an Israelite back there and the lot is cast; you are one of the twelve tribes. Let's say you were of the same tribe as Achan, and suddenly the lot fell on your tribe, what would you think? I would really think,

"Well maybe I have done something; I had better now look before the lot falls on me; I had better search through my life."

Wouldn't you think like this? It is natural. The people were really in need of searching their hearts when the lot was cast.

[42] When he prayed for rain after the showdown on Mount Carmel. See *Review and Herald*, May 26, 1891 or *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1035.
[43] Jericho. See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 493.

A Need of Separation

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 495:

> Early in the morning, Joshua gathered the people together by their tribes, and the solemn and impressive ceremony began. Step by step the investigation went on. Closer and still closer came the fearful test. First the tribe, then the family, then the household, then the man was taken, and Achan the son of Carmi, of the tribe of Judah, was pointed out by the finger of God as the troubler of Israel.

God did not point it out through human searching, because they would probably not only have found out one, but many. They would have accused others as well, of having these things. If man would do this delicate work by himself he would really fail. Only the finger of God can point out the troubler of Israel. But it was very necessary at the same time for Israel to be separated from this troubler. So also is it is necessary for us to be separate from those who are a curse to the cause and want to remain a curse to the cause. It is very necessary.

For Achan it would not have been necessary to die. He had ample opportunity to repent, even when the lot was cast in the beginning, before it was pointed to him; he could have repented and been reinstated with the people of God. But after the lot finally fell on him, it was too late because then his confession would not have come out of a real consciousness of his sin, but rather because there was no other possibility to avoid it anymore. This shows clearly that there is a real possibility of repentance, even of those who have been a curse to the cause.

I believe that through my failures in the past, I also have contributed to be a curse to the cause. And probably others will see this as well as they view their behavior in the church in the light of Gospel Order. And if there was not possibility for us to repent then probably we would all be lost. But glad to say, God can forgive us and cleanse us so that we can be reinstated and then build God's kingdom in His way. Let's read on.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 495:

To establish his guilt beyond all question, leaving no ground for the charge that he had been unjustly condemned, Joshua solemnly adjured Achan to acknowledge the truth. The wretched man made full confession of his crime:

Joshua 7

[20] Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel...

[21] When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekel's weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent.

Messengers were immediately dispatched to the tent, where they removed the earth at the place specified and...

[22] ...behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it.

[23] And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua,...and laid them out before the Lord.

Sentence was pronounced and immediately executed.

[25] Why have you troubled us? [said Joshua,] the Lord shall trouble you this day.

As the people had been held responsible for Achan's sin and had suffered from its consequences, they were, through their representatives, to take part in its punishment.

[25] All Israel stoned him with stones.

Then there was raised over him a great pile of stones—a witness to the sin and its punishment.

[26] Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor: that is, Trouble.

In the book of *Chronicles* his memorial is written:

1 Chronicles 2

[7] Achar, the troubler of Israel.

Achan's sin was committed in defiance of the most direct and solemn warnings and the most mighty manifestations of God's power.

This again tells us, how important it is to understand the relationship between mighty revelations of truth and our resisting it. The mightier the truth, that is revealed, the more serious when we resist it. Even if we do so with a smiling face and it seems

with a good spirit, but when we resist truth when it is mightily shining on us, then the guilt is very great. If there is no truth that is revealed, then the guilt is very small. It is still there, but this is a time of ignorance which can be forgiven. Let's read on.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 496:

Of the millions of Israel there was but one man who, in that solemn hour of triumph and of judgment, had dared to transgress the command of God. Achan's covetousness was excited by the sight of that costly robe of Shinar.

Let's now turn the bottom of the page:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 496-497:

Are not similar sins still committed, in the face of warnings as solemn and explicit? We are as directly forbidden to indulge covetousness as was Achan to appropriate the spoils of Jericho. God has declared it to be idolatry. We are warned,

Matthew 6

[24] You cannot serve God and mammon.

Luke 12

[15] Take heed, and beware of covetousness.

Ephesians 5

[3] Let it not be once named among you.

We have before us the fearful doom of Achan, of Judas, of Ananias and Sapphira. Back of all these we have that of Lucifer, the "son of the morning," who, coveting a higher state, forfeited forever the brightness and bliss of heaven. And yet, notwithstanding all these warnings, covetousness abounds.

The covetousness we are considering here is covetousness for another position. Covetousness for a place and work of another worker. That is the greatest curse in God's church.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 497:

Everywhere its slimy track is seen. It creates discontent and dissension in families…

The same order that we have in the church, we have in families.

> ...it excites envy and hatred in the poor against the rich; it prompts the grinding oppression of the rich toward the poor. And this evil exists not in the world alone, but in the church. How common even here to find selfishness, avarice, overreaching, neglect of charities, and robbery of God "in tithes and offerings." Among church members "in good and regular standing" there are, alas! many Achans.

I won't read the rest of the paragraph, this I leave up to you. I turn now to the next paragraph:

Dealing with Rebellion in the Church

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 497:**
> Achan's sin brought disaster upon the whole nation. For one man's sin the displeasure of God will rest upon His church till the transgression is searched out and put away. The influence most to be feared by the church is not that of open opposers,...

That is, of the enemies of the truth, that openly oppose it;

> ...infidels, and blasphemers, but of inconsistent professors of Christ. These are the ones that keep back the blessing of God of Israel and bring weakness upon His people.

We have realized that we are a weak people, and here we are told what brings weakness upon God's people: it is those professors of Christ who are inconsistent. We all can search our own hearts to see wherein we have been inconsistent and therefore made the church of Christ weak.

As we have seen also in the case of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, their real curse did not lie in the fact only that they were warring against Moses, but their curse also lay in the fact that they were professors of the true religion of Israel. They professed great zeal and great love for the cause of God, and yet they were working underground, undermining authority, without openly coming out with their complaint. And this is what was the great trouble.

Today, if there are those who are fighting against Gospel Order without coming out openly, they are a serious danger for God's

cause. For this reason we must take a very firm stand, and not let our sympathy lead us astray. They are following the steps of the first great rebel, and we must take a clear stand against such rebellion. When people come to us in such an underhanded way, in order to weaken our faith in Gospel Order, we must not be drawn into a discussion with them, because this would only strengthen them, and weaken our own faith.

Some people love to discuss, and they presumptuously enter into conversation with all kinds of different people, who are fighting against the message, or trying to modify it. These kinds of discussions have never helped such people. They only result in strengthening the enemy, and weakening the one who tries to help. We cannot put confidence in argument, for this is to put confidence in the flesh, or in the power of human intellect and mental strength. Let's look at how it was in heaven, when so many angels were led astray:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 37:

Leaving his place in the immediate presence of the Father, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels. He worked with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealed his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God. He began to insinuate doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their own wisdom was a sufficient guide. They were not beings that could bring dishonor to God; all their thoughts were holy; it was no more possible for them than for God himself to err. The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor. If this prince of angels could but attain to his true, exalted position, great good would accrue to the entire host of heaven; for it was his object to secure freedom for all. But now even the liberty which they had hitherto enjoyed was at an end; for an absolute Ruler had been appointed them, and to His authority all

must pay homage. Such were the subtle deceptions that through the wiles of Lucifer were fast obtaining in the heavenly courts.

While these angels listened to Lucifer's arguments, they became confused, and ended up participating in his rebellion:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 38:

Taking advantage of the loving, loyal trust reposed in him by the holy beings under his command, he had so artfully instilled into their minds his own distrust and discontent that his agency was not discerned. Lucifer had presented the purposes of God in a false light—misconstruing and distorting them to excite dissent and dissatisfaction. He cunningly drew his hearers on to give utterance to their feelings; then these expressions were repeated by him when it would serve his purpose, as evidence that the angels were not fully in harmony with the government of God. While claiming for himself perfect loyalty to God, he urged that changes in the order and laws of heaven were necessary for the stability of the divine government. Thus while working to excite opposition to the law of God and to instill his own discontent into the minds of the angels under him, he was ostensibly seeking to remove dissatisfaction and to reconcile disaffected angels to the order of heaven. While secretly fomenting discord and rebellion, he with consummate craft caused it to appear as his sole purpose to promote loyalty and to preserve harmony and peace.

The spirit of dissatisfaction thus kindled was doing its baleful work. While there was no open outbreak, division of feeling imperceptibly grew up among the angels. There were some who looked with favor upon Lucifer's insinuations against the government of God. Although they had heretofore been in perfect harmony with the order which God had established, they were now discontented and unhappy because they could not penetrate His unsearchable counsels; they were dissatisfied with His purpose in exalting Christ.

Today, we are to learn from the mistakes made by those angels who listened to Lucifer's insinuations, which were spread in secret. Many of them were deceived by those insinuations, and we, who are much weaker than these angels were, will not have the

strength to resist them either. After the cross, the good angels learned nevermore to even listen to Satan's accusations anymore:

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 761:**
> Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, *he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin.* The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.

Like the angels who did not discuss with Lucifer anymore, when he accused the brethren, so we must not discuss with those who accuse the messenger of God and Gospel Order.

The Need for Honest Confessions

We return now to finish the story of Achan, with a parallel drawn from his confession:

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 498:**
> So confessions will be made by the guilty when they stand before the bar of God, after every case has been decided for life or death. The consequences to result to himself will draw from each an acknowledgment of his sin. It will be forced from the soul by an awful sense of condemnation and a fearful looking for of judgment. But such confessions cannot save the sinner.

So let us make the confessions as long as we have opportunity. Let us search our own hearts as the Israelites did, and find out in what way we have transgressed Gospel Order. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, then let us make clear confession to those concerned in order to be cleared, so that we will not have to meet this record when it is too late to change. It would be very sad and the issues that are at stake in this case are very real.

God has given us the task of searching out and finding wherein we have failed to be in agreement with Gospel Order. That is finding out the Achans, isn't it? How did they find out the Achan? By searching their own hearts. The lot was cast, and the finger of God was going around, searching each person's heart. This is the work which we have to do, we have to search out the Achans and then the Lord will bless us again. We have to search out the cause for our weakness.

A common mistake usually made here, is to look at others. But we must search our own hearts. At the same time we must also face the fact that there are opposers of the truth and we must maintain a very firm stand and help them if possible, not by sympathizing with them, but by pointing them back to God's order.

An Achan can be very near to us. For example, when the light of God comes on the message of His character, and one person rejects it firmly, and continues to reject it, and then some other person who is not yet very firm on that message, goes to the first person in order to help him, and tries to convince him. First of all, unless the Lord has sent him, he will not be protected; if he goes merely out of sympathy, then the Lord will not protect him. There can be only one reason for us to go and help others, and this is when the Lord sends us. And if He doesn't send us, then He cannot protect us, and then we will be definitely weakened, to say the least, and maybe even lost.

If we do such a work, we take the place of another, namely the place of the one who should really give him the light. Which in the first instance was probably the messenger who preached the message. Taking the place of another means to take the same course as Lucifer had taken in heaven; so that is the same sin again of taking God's place. To take God's work into our own hands and to restructure God's kingdom is the original sin all over again. And this may proceed simply from a feeling of mercy, but without God's direction.

Also by sympathizing when we shouldn't, we form a link between the church of God and those who are pulling away from the truth. So instead of a clear cut separation taking place, God's people are weakened. Through this action, we do not help those persons because we are not sent by God; and we actually end up strengthening them in their rebellion. From my own experience, whenever I went out and tried to help people from a feeling of mercy or sympathy, and I tried to help them with logic and reasoning, I only strengthened them in their resistance and they became more defiant. So, in the end, we strengthen the enemy by this course of action.

Let us put together all the reasons why we should not go out and do our own work in this way:

1. We form a link between the true people of God and the enemy.
2. We take God's place in doing a work that He has not committed to us.
3. We strengthen the enemy.
4. We weaken ourselves and even endanger ourselves.

And for us these should be reasons enough not to go ahead and do our own work. If we do it, we commit the same sin as Achan, we are self-sent messengers, and we will be a curse to the cause, and a curse to ourselves.

28. Christ Holds the Stars

Joshua 7

[2] And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth-aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai.

[3] And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labor thither; for they are but few.

[4] So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai.

[5] And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

Revelation 1

[16] And He had in His right hand seven stars.

When Messengers Fail

LET us now consider another aspect of the failure at Ai. Israel had a terrible defeat; a defeat which we also can suffer; a defeat which would not have been necessary if Gospel Order had been observed. Joshua had made a procedural mistake in this case. One great concern that people have is that the messenger may make a mistake.

> "Suppose he gives his own message and then we are all deceived because we all trust him."

But we are not to trust the messenger, who is only a vessel; but we are to trust the treasure that is coming through the vessel. Our trust is always to be in the word of God that comes through the messenger. There is a definite distinction.

When the messenger makes a mistake, in the area of giving the message, we will find that God has a very close control over these

things. When Joshua together with all Israel, made his mistake, the results were immediately seen weren't they? Everybody could see that something was wrong and it could be easily rectified.

Likewise there was one experience here in Palmwoods, some years ago, where the messenger was not delivering the word of God through him, but his own word from within himself. He confessed so, making it public in the *Messenger and News Review,* December 1986. There he reports, that after he had presented the message for that year; he was thinking about what to study next. He presented something out of *John.* Let's read it together:

> I was too sick on Friday morning to take any studies and was sincerely grateful to Michael and Neil to take studies each for me. I felt better by the evening, and stood up to take the Friday evening study but found that I had lost my voice. After struggling for a few minutes, I invited Michael to continue in my place. I had begun the study of Christ's last words to His disciples before His crucifixion as recorded in *John* 14-17. He stepped up and carried on as if he had previously prepared the material.

That was the account of the situation, and then, the reason for his loss of his voice is told.

> After that, I made no attempt to take any further studies until the Lord's Supper on Sabbath afternoon. It was by faith that I stood in my place and, needless to say, the Lord stood by me. My voice was clear and strong and the meeting was much blessed.
>
> But the week had not ended on the high plane we had expected. Something had gone terribly wrong and, for a time, I could not determine what it was, just as Joshua had to wait for some time before he got the answer for his army's failure at Ai.
>
> So, it was not until the camp was over and I had gone to bed with my mind reviewing the events of the week that I suddenly realized what had happened. I had done something I had never done before in a camp meeting—half way through I had gotten up a message of my own. This is a messenger's cardinal sin, the worst that he can possibly commit, for, instead of being God's

spokesman, he becomes his own. He has assigned to himself the position belonging to God alone.

From repeated experiences I know that there was no need to make this mistake, for I have come to the first in the circuit of camp meetings before without enough light to fill the entire week, but I had never let it concern me. I well remember arriving in Germany one year sometime ago, and, on the Friday afternoon of the day the meetings were due to begin, my assessment of the material on hand showed me that by Monday, I would have exhausted the supply. My response was to remind myself that this was the Lord's responsibility, not mine. I did not start searching for anything to make up the deficiency. I did not even open a book, but went instead for a carefree walk in the hills behind the campsite.

By the time Monday came when I was due to have run out, so much had been opened to my mind that there was ample for the rest of the week and more besides. What was revealed there became the theme at all the subsequent camps that year in both the old and the new world.

But, at the Palmwoods camp this year, I utterly failed to obey the Sabbath Rest principle of making God to be the Problem-solver and the Plan-maker. I knew it was God's plan that I present the message on praying for the latter rain in addition to the truth that the repentance which comes from viewing the goodness of God is the message needed to bring the latter rain.

But, when I came to the end of these studies, the question arose, "What shall I now present?"

There was only one safe course to follow and it was to leave the matter entirely with the Lord, while, under no circumstances, was I to start looking around for something to present. But, this I failed to do. I began to look in various directions to find something that would be instructive and inspirational for all concerned and it was not long before I found it. I decided to make a study presentation of the last months of Christ' earthly life as a revelation of His superlative goodness that we might find the deep repentance that we are seeking. I knew that such a theme would more than fill the time remaining and I was relieved.

Truthful and beautiful as the message I had selected was, it was presented by human election and not by divine appointment.

Therefore, no matter how pure and perfect the message I had chosen might be, it could never be exactly the right message needed just then, and could never bring the blessing the Lord planned we should have. The events which followed clearly revealed that things were not right, for the camp was not the same after I made that plan. It seemed that my inspiration was gone, that I had to actually get the studies up, and that the atmosphere of deep peace had vanished. Then I got sick, and lost my voice.

It may well be asked why, after teaching the Sabbath rest message for so long, I could make such a mistake. I repeat that it was without reason and totally inexcusable. There were several mild pressures and diversions which distracted me but I will not take the space to detail them here lest they seem to excuse me.

However, humans in high places and low seem to need no particular pressure to lead them into this trap. There were no pressures on Israel to select twelve spies at Kadesh-barnea, or on Joshua to attack Ai without giving God the right to make the plan. On the other hand, there were great pressures on Moses and Paul when they failed.

For my part, I knew that something was wrong but could not identify the problem. I continued to meditate on this vexing question even after the camp was over and it was too late to reassemble the believers and undo the damage as far as possible. It was then at last that the awful, guilty, devastating thought flooded over me that, whatever light and blessing the Lord had for us was shut away from His people by my inexcusable failure to rest in Him. It was shut away because the Lord will never force His presence but comes in only if we clear the way for Him and Him alone.

Think of the terrible implications of this. We cannot tell for certain whether or not the Lord was actually going to give us the latter rain, but there is a very real possibility that He was. The time for it is here, so we have every reason to expect it. If it was not quite the time for the actual outpouring, then the Lord had some other great blessing for us. Whichever, the loss we sus-

tained is beyond computation, and the burden of condemnation resting on me is beyond measure.

Such an eventuality can only cause a serious delay in the work of God. Paul made the same mistake in principle. All through his ministry, he had looked to none but God for his orders until he came to Jerusalem where he deviated from his previous consistently correct course. He submitted to the instructions of men and fulfilled the temple vow. His action was well-meaning, sincere, born of great love for God and His people, and was the expression of his desire to unite all in the church. There was no apparent trace of selfishness or rebellion whatsoever in his action.

But, no matter how commendable his motives, or how long and faithful his previous service had been, there was no mitigation of the seriousness of the blow to the cause of God. What a price Paul himself paid and what an immeasurable cost was imposed on the church. Paul lost his freedom and all too soon his life was taken long before the Lord intended that he die. The second advent became an impossibility to them at that time. Instead, a long delay occurred giving scope for the rise of the papacy with all its ignorance, suffering, bondage, and unspeakable misery.

It is very significant that while the Lord never intended that Paul's labors should end so soon, "…He did not work a miracle to counteract the train of circumstances to which the course of the leaders in the church at Jerusalem had given rise." *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 417.

Every time the believers in Jesus make the mistake that Paul made, the price is extremely high. See the turn around at Kadesh-barnea. In the face of God's direct command to proceed with the conquest of the promised land, the people diverted from their previous faithful committal to Him of all planning for the course they would follow in their journey to the land. God stood still and said nothing, and when it was done, He worked no miracle to counterwork the mischief done. The price was forty years delay filled with miserable and painful desert wanderings.

In my repeating the same sin even though unwittingly and with the best of intentions, the church of today has been robbed of whatever glorious revelations of truth the Lord intended to give us, and there will be a delay. It could be so serious that this

generation will miss receiving the latter rain and the end will not come for quite a long time.

On a much brighter note, the delay could be no more than a very brief one. I am encouraged to believe this on the basis of Joshua's experience. In God's way, he overcame Jericho, but then reverted to man's way in his initial attack on Ai. He could very easily then have turned to more human planning to solve the problem, but, instead, he looked to the Lord for the reason for the failure. How swiftly the work of God was resumed when true repentance was made and Ai was dealt with under God's leadership.

So I hasten to confess and repent of the terrible mistake that I made and of the robbery from myself and the church of the incredible blessing the Lord planned for us at this camp meeting. I know that very swiftly the blessing received would have spread to all the believers throughout the world.

Such an experience as this does nothing to establish confidence in the human instrument. On the contrary, it is so shattering as to make one feel that he is hopelessly unqualified to be the messenger. In the world, a mistake of these tragic proportions and extremely serious implications is the basis for the resignation of the one making the mistake. For instance, a few years ago a spy ring was discovered in the German government of which the leader was ignorant. When it was uncovered, the leader promptly resigned his position even though he was not involved in the espionage at all. He has not been seen in politics since.

I pray that this will be a lesson well learned so that, in future, only God's will shall be done in the church on earth as it is done in heaven.

So, the reason for the loss of his voice was that the message being given was not coming from God through the messenger, but from himself. I see in this a mighty comfort. You might think that was a disaster, but I think it was a very good lesson, and it showed us how closely God has the stars in His hands.

Compare this experience with the circumstance of the self-sent messengers. When the self-sent messenger goes forth to preach

his own stuff which he hasn't received from God, how long does it take until you realize the error of it? Sometimes a very long time. I can testify to this. If these self-sent messengers present their own things, they sound very logical, very nice at the beginning, and it takes sometimes years until you discover that something was wrong, because they are not stars in the hand of Jesus.

But God's chosen messenger is in Christ's hand. He is a star in the right hand of Jesus and when he makes a mistake this thing is immediately taken care of by God: especially in the area of the message given to the church. So we can trust God that if the messenger would give his own message, He would take this immediately in His own hand and it will become clear. We can trust that God has the situation in His hand. We don't need to put our trust in the earthen vessel. Faith means to believe *the word of God* as it is given through the messenger.

Balaam

We want to study a little bit further about the fact that Christ has the stars in His right hand. Again let us emphasize the point that the devil tries to snap away our confidence in God's leading by putting our attention to the earthen vessel which is fragile and faulty.

We need a very clear vision of God's ability to keep the stars in His right hand, and for this reason we want to study a story of a person who was not so faithful at all. This person is Balaam. As you know, he once was a good man and prophet of God, but he apostatized, due to his covetousness. Let us see how this came about and how completely God had the situation under His control without forcing anybody.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 439:

Balaam was once a good man and a prophet of God; but he had apostatized, and had given himself up to covetousness; yet he still professed to be a servant of the Most High. He was not ignorant of God's work in behalf of Israel; and when the messengers announced their errand, he well knew that it was his duty

to refuse the rewards of Balak and to dismiss the ambassadors. But he ventured to dally with temptation, and urged the messengers to tarry with him that night, declaring that he could give no decided answer till he had asked counsel of the Lord. Balaam knew that his curse could not harm Israel. God was on their side, and so long as they were true to Him no adverse power of earth or hell could prevail against them. But his pride was flattered by the words of the ambassadors, "He whom *you* bless is blessed, and he whom *you* curse is cursed." The bribe of costly gifts and prospective exaltation excited his covetousness. He greedily accepted the offered treasures, and then, while professing strict obedience to the will of God, he tried to comply with the desires of Balak.

Balaam knew he couldn't carry out the king's request, but he wanted the prize offered him. He stalled and said,

"I must ask God first."

Why do you think this greedy person, would say, "I must ask God first?" Why didn't he go right away and make up some oracle against Israel? Because Balaam knew that if God would not talk through him, his word would fail and he would thereby lose the reward. He knew this from his own experience, as every messenger does. Every messenger knows that when he talks from himself, then he has no success; but if God talks through him, he has success; his word has power. This was the situation of Balaam, but his character was rather base.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 439-440:

In the night season the angel of God came to Balaam with the message,

Numbers 22

[12] You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people: for they are blessed.

In the morning Balaam reluctantly dismissed the messengers, but he did not tell them what the Lord had said. Angry that his visions of gain and honor had been suddenly dispelled, he petulantly exclaimed,

[13] Get you into your land: for the Lord refuses to give me leave to go with you.

Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness." *2 Peter* 2:15. The sin of covetousness, which God declares to be idolatry, had made him a timeserver, and through this one fault Satan gained entire control of him. It was this that caused his ruin.

The situation was very clear, Balaam understood that to go with them would be pointless. Later, these ambassadors came back again and this time with even more reward, if he would do the work for them and succeed in cursing Israel.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 440:

When the messengers reported to Balak the prophet's refusal to accompany them, they did not intimate that God had forbidden him. Supposing that Balaam's delay was merely to secure a richer reward, the king sent princes more in number and more honorable than the first, with promises of higher honors, and with authority to concede to any terms that Balaam might demand. Balak's urgent message to the prophet was,

Numbers 22

[16] Let nothing, I pray you, hinder you from coming unto me:
[17] For I will promote you unto very great honor, and I will do whatsoever you say unto me: come therefore, I pray you, curse me this people.

A second time Balaam was tested. In response to the solicitations of the ambassadors he professed great conscientiousness and integrity, assuring them that no amount of gold and silver could induce him to go contrary to the will of God. But he longed to comply with the king's request; and although the will of God had already been definitely made known to him, he urged the messengers to tarry, that he might further inquire of God; as though the Infinite One were a man, to be persuaded.

Yet again he said, no, I first must ask God. That he should ask God a second time about such a question, is asking for trouble. It is bad because God had already made His will clear and having done that He expects all to stand firm on this ground. So asking God again if he could go with them, was to try to change God.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 440:

In the night season the Lord appeared to Balaam and said,

Numbers 22

[20] If the men come to call you, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto you, that shall you do.

Thus far the Lord would permit Balaam to follow his own will, because he was determined upon it. He did not seek to do the will of God, but chose his own course, and then endeavored to secure the sanction of the Lord.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 441:

The Moabites were a degraded, idolatrous people; yet according to the light which they had received their guilt was not so great in the sight of Heaven as was that of Balaam. As he professed to be God's prophet, however, all he should say would be supposed to be uttered by divine authority. Hence he was not to be permitted to speak as he chose, but must deliver the message which God should give him. "The word which I shall say unto you, that shall you do," was the divine command.

Balaam had received permission to go with the messengers from Moab if they came in the morning to call him.

And so Balaam quickly rushed up and rushed outside the door to find that the messengers had gone already. What a disappointment, it slipped through his hand just like that! It was almost there, and so he thought,

"No, I must not let it go."

And so he packed his ass and started to go after them, this time against the command of the Lord.

Every excuse for complying with the request of Balak had now been removed. But Balaam was determined to secure the reward; and, taking the beast upon which he was accustomed to ride, he set out on the journey. He feared that even now the divine permission might be withdrawn, and he pressed eagerly forward, impatient lest he should by some means fail to gain the coveted reward.

What are the conditions of messengership?

Jeremiah 1
[7] You shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatsoever I command you, you shall speak.

Those are the conditions. Only under these conditions has the word of the messenger power. This applies to the primary messenger and also to the secondary messengers because if we do not speak the message that we receive through the primary messenger, but our own interpretation, then we will not be successful in winning those souls that are on the verge of the kingdom.

Balaam was now pursuing after the king's men, against the will of God, therefore he could not curse Israel under such a condition. But still he went; he was determined not to just say some formula because he knew it would not work. Therefore he very much wanted the Lord to bend down to give him a curse to speak. God stood in the way, through this angel, which was Christ, and the ass stopped in it's tracks. At that moment, he seemed to be repentant, but in his heart he still really wanted to go. Finally God gave him permission. He said,

"You can go, but, you can only speak what I give you to speak."

Again God reiterated this principle under which alone a messenger can be a messenger. The character of Balaam did not reflect in any sense what it means to be a good messenger: not at all. Let's see what character this person Balaam had. It describes how the ass stopped, and how he beat his ass:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 442-443:
Furious at being thus hindered in his journey, Balaam answered the beast as he would have addressed an intelligent being:

Numbers 22
[29] Because you have mocked me: I would there were a sword in my hand, for now would I kill you.

Here was a professed magician, on his way to pronounce a curse upon a whole people with the intent to paralyze their strength, while he had not power even to slay the animal upon which he rode!

The eyes of Balaam were now opened, and he beheld the angel of God standing with drawn sword ready to slay him. In terror,

> [31] ...he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

The angel said to him,

> [32] Wherefore have you smitten your ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand you, because your way is perverse before me:
>
> [33] And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me surely now also I had slain you, and saved her alive.

Balaam owed the preservation of his life to the poor animal that he had treated so cruelly. The man who claimed to be a prophet of the Lord, who declared that his eyes were open, and he saw the "vision of the Almighty,"[44] was so blinded by covetousness and ambition that he could not discern the angel of God visible to his beast.

> **2 Corinthians 4**
>
> [4] The god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not.

How many are thus blinded! They rush on in forbidden paths, transgressing the divine law, and cannot discern that God and His angels are against them. Like Balaam they are angry at those who would prevent their ruin.

Balaam had given evidence of the spirit that controlled him, by his treatment of his beast.

> **Proverbs 12**
>
> [10] A righteous man regards the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

. . . . When he beheld the messenger of God, Balaam exclaimed in terror,

> **Numbers 22**
>
> [34] I have sinned; for I knew not that You stood in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease You, I will get me back again.

---

[44] *Numbers* 24:4, 16.

> The Lord suffered him to proceed on his journey, but gave him to understand that his words should be controlled by divine power. God would give evidence to Moab that the Hebrews were under the guardianship of Heaven, and this He did effectually when He showed them how powerless Balaam was even to utter a curse against them without divine permission.

Balaam now went under the condition that he would only go where the Lord sent him and would only speak what the Lord gave him to speak. The way he went now, was not God's original will for him, but He suffered him, or permitted him, but God overruled the situation. And He said,

> "You shall only speak what I give you to speak."

Did God force him to speak what He gave him to speak? Does God force the messenger? Definitely not. God never forces the messenger to give a message. There was an agreement between God and Balaam, and this agreement was that Balaam would go where God sent him and speak what God gave him to speak only. Balaam still hoped that God would give him some curse. But at the same time, he knew that he must only speak what God gives him to speak and only to go where God sent him. God never forced this man as He never forces any messenger.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 443-444:

> With great pomp the king, with the chief dignitaries of his kingdom, escorted Balaam to "the high places of Baal,"[45] from which he could survey the Hebrew host. Behold the prophet as he stands upon the lofty height, looking down over the encampment of God's chosen people. How little do the Israelites know of what is taking place so near them! How little do they know of the care of God, extended over them by day and by night! How dull are the perceptions of God's people! How slow are they, in every age, to comprehend His great love and mercy! If they could discern the wonderful power of God constantly exerted in their behalf, would not their hearts be filled with gratitude for His love, and with awe at the thought of His majesty and power?

[45] *Numbers* 22:41.

Here is revealed a wonderful protection of God, because He holds His stars in His right hand. Because God holds the stars in His right hand, He can protect His people. If He would not do this, He could not protect His people. So our faith must be placed in God who is guiding the messenger and not in the man. Likewise would you place your trust in Balaam? Would you dare to do this after reading his character as we have read it here? Definitely not!

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 444:

Balaam had some knowledge of the sacrificial offerings of the Hebrews, and he hoped that by surpassing them in costly gifts he might secure the blessing of God and ensure the accomplishment of his sinful projects. Thus the sentiments of the idolatrous Moabites were gaining control of his mind. His wisdom had become foolishness; his spiritual vision was beclouded; he had brought blindness upon himself by yielding to the power of Satan.

By Balaam's direction seven altars were erected, and he offered a sacrifice upon each. He then withdrew to a "high place," to meet with God, promising to make known to Balak whatever the Lord should reveal.

With the nobles and princes of Moab the king stood beside the sacrifice, while around them gathered the eager multitude, watching for the return of the prophet. He came at last, and the people waited for the words that should paralyze forever that strange power exerted in behalf of the hated Israelites. Balaam said:

Numbers 23

[7] The king of Moab has brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

[8] How shall I curse, whom God has not cursed? Or how shall I defy, whom the Lord has not defied?

[9] For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

> [10] Who can count the dust of Jacob, And the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

Were these the words from Balaam, or were they the words of God through Balaam? They were the words of God through Balaam, definitely. Such words could not ever come from Balaam. How are we so sure? By contemplating his revealed character. In other words, if we have seen the vessel, and now the treasure that flowed forth, then we see that such truth could not have come from this vessel.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 447-448:

> Balaam confessed that he came with the purpose of cursing Israel, but the words he uttered were directly contrary to the sentiments of his heart. He was constrained to pronounce blessings, while his soul was filled with curses.
>
> As Balaam looked upon the encampment of Israel he beheld with astonishment the evidence of their prosperity. They had been represented to him as a rude, disorganized multitude, infesting the country in roving bands that were a pest and terror to the surrounding nations; but their appearance was the reverse of all this.

He saw the people of God and was amazed by their order.

> Not only was Balaam shown the history of the Hebrew people as a nation, but he beheld the increase and prosperity of the true Israel of God to the close of time.

So, he saw even to our time.

> He saw the special favor of the Most High attending those who love and fear Him. He saw them supported by His arm as they enter the dark valley of the shadow of death. And he beheld them coming forth from their graves, crowned with glory, honor, and immortality. He saw the redeemed rejoicing in the unfading glories of the earth made new. Gazing upon the scene, he exclaimed,

Numbers 23

[10] Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?...

And as he saw the crown of glory on every brow, the joy beaming from every countenance, and looked forward to that endless life of unalloyed happiness, he uttered the solemn prayer,

[10] ...Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

If Balaam had had a disposition to accept the light that God had given, he would now have made true his words; he would at once have severed all connection with Moab. He would no longer have presumed upon the mercy of God, but would have returned to Him with deep repentance. But Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness, and these he was determined to secure.

There was a time when he went so far that God could not use him anymore. That is when he broke the covenant of:

"I will say only what You give me to say, and go only where You send me."

When he broke that covenant, then God could not talk through him. But as long as he cooperated so far, God could still use this wicked vessel, to give His tremendous treasure to Balak. And to us as these words have been transmitted to the end of time.

Furthermore, Ellen White wrote that the messages which came through this man, are among the most wonderful writings of the whole Bible.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 449:

All the world should wonder at the marvelous work of God in behalf of His people—that a man determined to pursue a sinful course should be so controlled by divine power as to utter, instead of imprecations, the richest and most precious promises, in the language of sublime and impassioned poetry. And the favor of God at this time manifested toward Israel was to be an assurance of His protecting care for His obedient, faithful children in all ages.

When God could do this for the Israel back there, what can He do for us? Can't He do the same? So let us put our trust in God and really see that He is leading His people through the wonderful messages that we receive. If He could even use a Balaam who was sinful as he was, then He can also use other human messengers as well. This story we studied with special respect to the faith that we need: faith in God's guidance of the church. So as a close to these thoughts, let us again open *Revelation* 1, where we read how Jesus is caring for His church.

Revelation 1 [NKJV]
[10] I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,
[11] Saying, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and, What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.
[12] Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,
[13] And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.
[14] His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;
[15] His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;
[16] He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

And so we see how closely Jesus keeps an eye on His church. He is walking among the church here and everywhere, and He has a careful eye on every true believer so that we are safely guided and prepared for the last struggle. This is God's work and not man's work. And this must become very evident to us.

29. The King of the North

WE WOULD now like to contemplate the last struggle between God's people and the King of the North. For this reason we again come back to Satan's sin in heaven.

A Rejection of Christ as the Messenger

When Satan rebelled in heaven, as we have already seen earlier, he was not denying the fact that God was the sovereign of heaven; he was *not* saying,

> "I do not want to obey God."

His dispute was over the position of Christ:

> **The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 973:**
> He [Satan] declares he cannot submit to be under Christ's command, that God's commands alone will he obey. God's angels weep to hear the words of Satan, and to see how he despises to follow the direction of Christ, their exalted and loving Commander.

This statement tells us that Satan declares that he cannot submit to be under Christ's command, that God's command alone will he obey. That is the problem which we find in every deviation from Gospel Order. People say,

> "Yes, we want to believe the word of God."

But they do not say,

> "We want to believe the word of God as spoken through the messenger."

That is the problem. That is the critical point at which people stop. So likewise, Lucifer in heaven said,

> "Yes, I believe the word of God, but I don't believe the word of God as spoken through the messenger Christ."

Or in other words, he declared that:

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 973:

...he cannot submit to be under Christ's command, that God's commands alone he will obey.

Restructuring the Kingdom

What does this mean? When Satan rebelled in heaven, he did not want to erect a separate kingdom apart from God's kingdom. He did not set out to do that. It might seem logical to us, that a person who does not agree anymore with a certain kind of government, should leave it and start a new one, but that was not Satan's intention, nor his profession. He left the immediate presence of God, but he did not want to leave heaven. He wanted to remain in heaven and the only thing he wanted was a restructuring of God's kingdom, in which Christ would not be the only messenger anymore. He wanted to receive the word direct from God, but not through Christ.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 973:

The Father decides the case of Satan, and declares that he must be turned out of heaven for his daring rebellion, and that all those who united with him in his rebellion should be turned out with him. Then there was war in heaven. Christ and His angels fought against Satan and his angels, for they were determined to remain in heaven with all their rebellion.

So why was a war necessary, for what reason? Because Satan was determined to remain in heaven. He said,

"I just want to restructure it."

For the angels, the issue was not so clear. They did not see a black devil with two horns trying to deceive everybody, and a white Christ shining righteously. No, both Christ and Satan, from the outward appearance, were shining bright beings. And both said,

"We want to remain in the kingdom of God, we want to build the kingdom of God."

One was willing to build according to the structure that God had given, and the other according to the structure that he saw fit. That was the difference. And when Satan came onto this earth, he repeated the same thing over again. Again he tried to build God's kingdom, but his own way. Even spiritualism is not called Satan's kingdom, it is called the kingdom of God. Even the professed devil worshipers, believe and delude people that they are building God's kingdom.

The Same Warfare on Earth

To understand that Satan really continued the same thing on this earth as in heaven, we want to read a statement in *The Great Controversy* because to some there is an appearance that Satan wanted to remain in heaven only at the beginning, but then after a while he had no interest in the kingdom of God anymore. This is not so.

> **The Great Controversy, p. 582:**
> From the very beginning of the great controversy in heaven it has been Satan's purpose to overthrow the law of God. It was to accomplish this that he entered upon his rebellion against the Creator, and though he was cast out of heaven he has continued the same warfare upon the earth.

You might think that being cast out of heaven would be enough; that he would cease from trying to get back in, and would be content to build his own kingdom outside. But no, on this earth he endeavors to rebuild it, by intruding upon God's church, working within it to try and restructure it.

Under what name in the Bible do we find Satan's effort to restructure God's kingdom on this earth? Babylon, Antichrist, the King of the North. But the real "King of the North" is Christ.

> **Isaiah 14** [NKJV]
> [12] How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!

[13] For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides *of the north*.

He said in his heart,

Isaiah 14 [NKJV]
[13] ...I will ascend into heaven...

To what place? To the place where Christ was. And it says further,

[13] ...I will also sit on the mount of the congregation, on the farthest sides of the north.

So when Satan wanted to have the position of Christ, he did not want to destroy God's kingdom. Of course, what he actually does by his restructuring is to destroy God's kingdom, but according to his intentions and beliefs, he did not intend to do so, but he only intended to save it from a very serious threat: namely, that of Christ, the messenger. For this reason, he was setting up his kingdom on this earth exactly like he wanted to have it in heaven. And that is accomplished by replacing Christ with himself. So he said,

"I will set up my throne on the farthest side of the north."

This is the place which really belongs to God.

Psalm 48
[1] Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness.
[2] Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, *on the sides of the north*, the city of the great King.

On this earth Satan has been all too successful. He deluded Adam and Eve into restructuring God's kingdom and ever since this time the people of God have been deluded into treading the same path. Instead of remaining Israel, God's church keeps falling into apostasy, and being transformed into an earthly "king of the north;" or, in other words, a "Babylon." We could also study this

from *Jeremiah,* because there Babylon is called again and again "the king of the north."

But let's turn now to *Daniel* 11, and there again we find a description of the king of the north.

> **Daniel 11** [NKJV]
> [40] At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through.

This is a prophecy that is fulfilling before our very eyes. The king of the south is different from the king of the north. What is the king of the south? In our day it is particularly Atheism, and does Atheism try to build God's church, God's way? No, they build man's kingdom. The king of the north seeks to build God's kingdom, by man's way, or more specifically, the devil's way. In other words, he tries to restructure the kingdom of God.

- The king of the north seeks to build God's kingdom, man's [or Satan's] way.
- The king of the south seeks to build man's kingdom, man's way.
- And the people of God, the true people of God, build God's kingdom, God's way.

To see more clearly what Satan will attempt to do in the time of the end, we turn to:

> [45] And he [the king of the north] shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.

Before we contemplate this text, let us think a little bit about this. The king of the south is also a kingdom Satan uses. But he prefers the king of the north, because he wants to remain in the kingdom of God; he doesn't want to leave it, he wants to restructure it. That is his declared purpose. For this reason the king of

the north is his favorite agency, not Atheism, but the system of the king of the north, who believe they build the kingdom of God.

Being the director of man's attempt to build God's kingdom, gives him a position complementary to Christ. This is described in the verse we just read:

Daniel 11
[45] And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.

He plants his tents here between the seas and the glorious holy mountain. What are the seas? They are:

Revelation 17
[15] The waters which you saw,...are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

And what is the glorious holy mountain? A mountain represents a kingdom,[46] and the capital of God's kingdom is "Mount Zion, on the sides of the north."[47] The glorious holy mountain is therefore Christ's holy kingdom. The earthly king of the north attempts to plant his tents between the people of earth, and God. So he takes exactly the place that Christ should have, the true messenger. He takes his place on his own account and therefore, he restructures the kingdom of God, and he seems to have very great success in this because he actually plants himself there, at least for the majority of earth's inhabitants. But, the good news is:

Daniel 11
[45] ...he shall come to his end.

In the German Bible it says,

> "Quickly he shall come to his end. And no one will help him."

[46] See *Revelation* 17:9-10.
[47] *Psalm* 48:2.

Here we may understand why those who want to restructure God's kingdom do not leave the church; they would rather stay in it and restructure it, instead of going out to build another. Thus they follow their master Satan, who also does not want to leave the kingdom of God, but he wants to restructure it. And so Satan attempts to use the very church of God on this earth to accomplish his aims.

- The character of the king of the north is to build God's kingdom in man's or the devil's way. He tries to restructure God's kingdom.
- The king of the south, is antagonistic to Christianity. He is the king who does not endeavor to build God's kingdom, but openly defies it and instead, builds man's kingdom, in his own way.
- And finally we have a third power in this world, and these are the true people of God who build God's kingdom in God's way. However there have been so few people, or so little time was spent building God's kingdom in God's way, that most of the time the church of God has been very weak and the work has not been accomplished yet.

We can be very thankful to the Lord that we understand these principles. It is very important that we understand the seriousness of building God's kingdom in man's way. This is the very method of the devil, and good motives will not cover the evil results that flow from such a course of action. So when we come to these sins against Gospel Order, which seem to be so small to us, then let us really see that they come from the same character as that possessed by Lucifer, when he promoted his rebellion in heaven.

That Satan prefers to use the king of the north, we can see in history. During most of earth's past history, the king of the north has been the ruling power. Only when the king of the north was not strong enough did Satan turn and use the king of the south. One of those times was during the revolution in France, when the

Catholic church had so weakened itself by its cruel domination, that the people refused to give the support to that power. Satan then needed the other power. And these atheistic powers have ruled the world since that time. We can see how the atheistic powers are weakening. How? Well the people refuse to support them. This is what we see literally before our eyes.[48]

I made it an object to look in the concordance and study a little bit about the king of the south and I found many texts about the drying up of the river of Egypt, the river Nile.[49] This is exactly what we see at the moment. The people refuse to give their support to the king of the south. So Satan again switches to his favorite power, which is the king of the north. Just look in Poland, how did the change from Communism to Catholicism come about? The people went into the churches and it was the church which played a major role in the change. Likewise in east Germany and these other countries. So this all is a clear sign for us that we are in the very last days, because prophecy is fulfilling.

This is a great joy for us, as it shows us that the latter rain is soon to fall. Another reason for our joy is that borders are opening so as to allow the gospel to penetrate into the once forbidden territory. We are aware of the fact that the king of the north will be more cruel than the king of the south, and that this freedom which we enjoy at the moment is limited and soon we will have to face a very great test. In order to pass this test, we must understand the character of the king of the north, and we must avoid building God's kingdom like the king of the north. We must really see the sinfulness of doing it, and not call it by harmless names. That is a very important change we have to undergo, which means that we must stop being self-sent messengers, and stop forming links between the godly and the ungodly; that we walk only in the way that God leads us, and thus do the work of God, and build His kingdom in His way. When we do this, we will face

[48] See the footnote in Chapter 11.
[49] *Isaiah* 19:1-10; 27:12.

the enmity of those who endeavor to build God's kingdom in man's way.

When we say that those who build God's kingdom in man's way are following Satan's methods, it may sound overly severe, but this is what it is. The motives of the people who build God's kingdom in man's way, may not be bad. They may show great love, and an interest for the cause of God, and for lost souls. From the outside, their interest for lost souls seems to be greater than that of God's people, who build God's kingdom in God's way. One example is that of Jesus, when He was traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem on His last journey. Instead of healing the people who were on the wayside, He went straight forward to Jerusalem. Satan pressed the temptation upon Him, to make Him think that He lacked compassion and love when He bypassed these needy people.

Judas

Let's also consider the example of Judas in the New Testament church of Christ to confirm that it is in fact Satan's effort to restructure the very kingdom of God, and that he tries to work through the very people of God. While we know that Satan is endeavoring to bring about his kingdom through the Catholic and Protestant churches, who comprise the king of the north too, his main interest, his main aim, is to restructure the very kingdom of God, which are the very people of God. That is the reason why he tries to work within the church rather than preferring to go outside of it. The life of Judas is an example of this.

The Desire of Ages, p. 293:

While Jesus was preparing the disciples for their ordination, one who had not been summoned urged his presence among them. It was Judas Iscariot, a man who professed to be a follower of Christ. He now came forward, soliciting a place in this inner circle of disciples. With great earnestness and apparent sincerity he declared,

Matthew 8

[19] Master, I will follow You whithersoever You go.

Jesus neither repulsed nor welcomed him, but uttered only the mournful words:

[20] The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay His head.

When Jesus received him with such disinterest, the other disciples thought that Jesus lacked compassion.

The Desire of Ages, p. 294:

Judas believed Jesus to be the Messiah; and by joining the apostles, he hoped to secure a high position in the new kingdom. This hope Jesus designed to cut off by the statement of His poverty.

The disciples were anxious that Judas should become one of their number. He was of commanding appearance, a man of keen discernment and executive ability, and they commended him to Jesus as one who would greatly assist Him in His work. *They were surprised that Jesus received him so coolly.*

Through Judas, Satan was attempting to restructure the very kingdom of God. This is one of the major threats which we have to face in this time. When Judas pressed himself into the inner circle, was he coming with the intention to destroy Jesus, and to restructure His kingdom? No!

Judas believed Jesus to be the Messiah; and by joining the apostles, he hoped to secure a high position in the new kingdom. This hope Jesus designed to cut of by the statement of His poverty.

So Judas believed Jesus to be the Messiah. Judas very much wanted Jesus to be the king. He desired that the mission of Jesus would be successful, and for this reason he came into the inner circle of the disciples. He did not desire to destroy the wonderful kingdom of God, but this is actually what was in his heart, even though he was not conscious of it. So there is a similarity between Satan and Judas: both had seemingly good motives; both did not intend to destroy the kingdom; but the principles of both would war against the kingdom. But the disciples did not see this,

and they thought Judas was an excellent candidate for the kingdom:

The Desire of Ages, p. 294:

The disciples were anxious that Judas should become one of their number. He was of commanding appearance, a man of keen discernment and executive ability, and they commended him to Jesus as one who would greatly assist Him in His work.

So Judas had very good business abilities. Jesus tried to clarify the nature of His kingdom to Judas, when He said,

Matthew 8

[20] The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay His head.

Jesus did not welcome Judas, because He knew that Satan would use him to attempt to restructure the kingdom. The reaction of Jesus to Judas shows how we should respond towards any effort to restructure God's kingdom. We should view and test our own lives to see if we have endeavoured to restructure God's kingdom, and in no way should we allow any other person to influence us into cooperating with them in a restructuring work.

Taking a firm stand will be interpreted by the adversary as having a lack of mercy; of not understanding the cross of Calvary. But if we take the right stand, this is the only way in which we can help those who are on the verge of God's kingdom. It is the only way also to help those who try to restructure God's kingdom. If we make compromises and go with them half way, then we weaken our own stand, strengthen their stand in rebellion, and fasten them in the path of self-destruction.

In order to do God's work and build His kingdom, we must take a clear stand. Often in a marriage, for instance, when one partner takes a clear stand without compromise, following God's way, then this often helps the other partner.

There must be a very clear distinction for these last times, and for this reason we must understand the difference between the

king of the north and the true people of God. Let us continue a little bit with Judas, to establish the fact that Judas was in no way intending to tear down Christ's kingdom. You may say,

> "Well he betrayed Christ in the end, didn't he? So he actually tore down Christ's kingdom."

But let us turn now to the chapter "Judas," in *The Desire of Ages*.

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 717:**
> Judas was highly regarded by the disciples, and had great influence over them. He himself had a high opinion of his own qualifications, and looked upon his brethren as greatly inferior to him in judgment and ability. They did not see their opportunities, he thought, and take advantage of circumstances.

Judas was actually thinking that he could be a big help to the kingdom of God with his abilities, which made the task for Jesus all the more difficult, as the other disciples were deceived in regard to Judas.

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 718:**
> Notwithstanding the Saviour's own teaching, Judas was continually advancing the idea that Christ would reign as king in Jerusalem. At the feeding of the five thousand he tried to bring this about. On this occasion Judas assisted in distributing the food to the hungry multitude. He had an opportunity to see the benefit which it was in his power to impart to others. He felt the satisfaction that always comes in service to God. He helped to bring the sick and suffering from among the multitude to Christ. He saw what relief, what joy and gladness, come to human hearts through the healing power of the Restorer. He might have comprehended the methods of Christ. But he was blinded by his own selfish desires.

That was the character of Judas. While he was working in the kingdom of God, he was all the time trying to restructure it. You know what happened after the feeding of the five thousand? How the disciples tried to make Jesus king by force. Judas was the main instigator of this scheme.

The Desire of Ages, p. 720:

Judas reasoned that if Jesus was to be crucified, the event must come to pass.

So, he was quite intelligent, wasn't he?

His own act in betraying the Saviour would not change the result. If Jesus was not to die, it would only force Him to deliver himself. At all events, Judas would gain something by his treachery. He counted that he had made a sharp bargain in betraying his Lord.

Why did Judas betray his Lord? Because he wanted to destroy God's kingdom? Because he wanted to erect another kingdom together with the Pharisees? No! He wanted to force Christ to deliver himself, and through this action, force Him to make himself king. So Judas, with his betrayal, was not trying to destroy God's kingdom, but was trying to save it. That was his very intention, his motive and his belief.

The Desire of Ages, p. 720-721:

Judas did not, however, believe that Christ would permit himself to be arrested. In betraying Him, it was his purpose to teach Him a lesson. He intended to play a part that would make the Saviour careful thenceforth to treat him with due respect. But Judas knew not that he was giving Christ up to death. How often, as the Saviour taught in parables, the scribes and Pharisees had been carried away with His striking illustrations! How often they had pronounced judgment against themselves! Often when the truth was brought home to their hearts, they had been filled with rage, and had taken up stones to cast at Him; but again and again He had made His escape. Since He had escaped so many snares, thought Judas, He certainly would not now allow himself to be taken.

Here we see very clearly that Judas did not intend to destroy God's kingdom but that he intended to restructure it. That was his purpose.

The Desire of Ages, p. 721:

Judas decided to put the matter to the test. If Jesus really was the Messiah, the people, for whom He had done so much, would rally about Him, and would proclaim Him king. This would forever settle many minds that were now in uncertainty. Judas would have the credit of having placed the king on David's throne. And this act would secure to him the first position, next to Christ, in the new kingdom.

The false disciple acted his part in betraying Jesus. In the garden, when he said to the leaders of the mob,

Matthew 26

[48] Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold Him fast,

–he fully believed that Christ would escape out of their hands.

So he fully believed this.

The Desire of Ages, p. 721-722:

Then if they should blame him, he could say, Did I not tell you to hold Him fast?

Judas beheld the captors of Christ, acting upon his words, bind Him firmly. In amazement he saw that the Saviour suffered himself to be led away. Anxiously he followed Him from the garden to the trial before the Jewish rulers. At every movement he looked for Him to surprise His enemies, by appearing before them as the Son of God, and setting at nought all their plots and power. But as hour after hour went by, and Jesus submitted to all the abuse heaped upon Him, a terrible fear came to the traitor that he had sold his Master to His death.

As the trial drew to a close, Judas could endure the torture of his guilty conscience no longer. Suddenly a hoarse voice rang through the hall, sending a thrill of terror to all hearts; "He is innocent; spare Him, O Caiaphas!"

The tall form of Judas was now seen pressing through the startled throng. His face was pale and haggard, and great drops of sweat stood on his forehead. Rushing to the throne of judgment, he threw down before the high priest the pieces of silver that had been the price of his Lord's betrayal. Eagerly grasping the robe of Caiaphas, he implored him to release Jesus, declaring that He had done nothing worthy of death.

Judas still believed that Christ was the Messiah, otherwise he would not have been terrified. He was convinced that this was the right kingdom, and, that he must stay in it. His last confessions were a last effort on the side of Judas to remain in that kingdom and restructure it, because he never gave this idea up. Had he given it up, then he could have been saved. But his last efforts to remain in the kingdom and to restructure it, were seen in his terrible cry,

The Desire of Ages, p. 722:

Matthew 27

[4] I have sinned, [again cried Judas,] in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.

But the high priest, regaining his self-possession, answered with scorn,

[4] ...What is that to us? see you to that.

The priests had been willing to make Judas their tool; but they despised his baseness. When he turned to them with confession, they spurned him.

Judas now cast himself at the feet of Jesus, acknowledging Him to be the Son of God,...

So, Judas really was a king of the north, he acknowledged Jesus to be the Son of God;

...and entreating Him to deliver himself.

When Judas entreated Him to deliver himself, what did he endeavor to do? To restructure God's kingdom. That was not how Christ built His kingdom.

The Saviour did not reproach His betrayer. He knew that Judas did not repent; his confession was forced from his guilty soul by an awful sense of condemnation and a looking for of judgment, but he felt no deep, heartbreaking grief that he had betrayed the spotless Son of God, and denied the Holy One of Israel.

As Judas acknowledged Christ as the messenger, so likewise Lucifer acknowledged God as the source. Lucifer wanted to be second and so did Judas. Lucifer wanted to restructure God's

kingdom, so did Judas, even up to the very last moment during this terrible confession, he still endeavoured to change it. So a confession is not always a proof of a change of heart and ways. When the confession is forced upon us because we have no other alternative, then we show thereby that we have not really repented. The great problem that Judas had was that despite the confession, he still desired Jesus to deliver himself. He still thought that the kingdom was to be built in mans way. It was his own plans that Jesus was to be king in Jerusalem.

One Messenger, or Many Messengers?

We need now to contemplate a few other aspects of Gospel Order which give us a deeper understanding still of God's system of government. When we look back into the history, we see that God had always established His church in the same way which He did in heaven. So as God in heaven gave a messenger, so on earth He gave one. In heaven there was a primary messenger, which was Christ, and on earth there was Moses. There was after him, Joshua, and many others, such as the Judges and Samuel and so forth. The same was so even in the New Testament.

There were times in the earth's history, when there were two primary messengers at the same time, but they were not in the same place, due to the geographical restraints on travel and communication, which made it impossible for the believers to be all united. An example of this is the early Advent movement, where there was Joseph Wolff for example in Europe, while William Miller was the primary messenger in America. But the principle remained the same because for each church in each distant location, there was only one messenger and they needed to accept him. So the believers in America had to accept the message as it came through William Miller. And the believers in Europe, which may not have even known of the existence of the believers in America, had to accept the message as it came through Joseph Wolff.

Then there was the time of the apostles. Evidently we have here several primary messengers, like Peter, John and Paul and so forth. And we will have more primary messengers in the end of time. To understand the reason for this leads us into a deeper understanding of how God builds His kingdom. This is not at all a contradiction to the fact that God builds His kingdom on earth as He does in heaven.

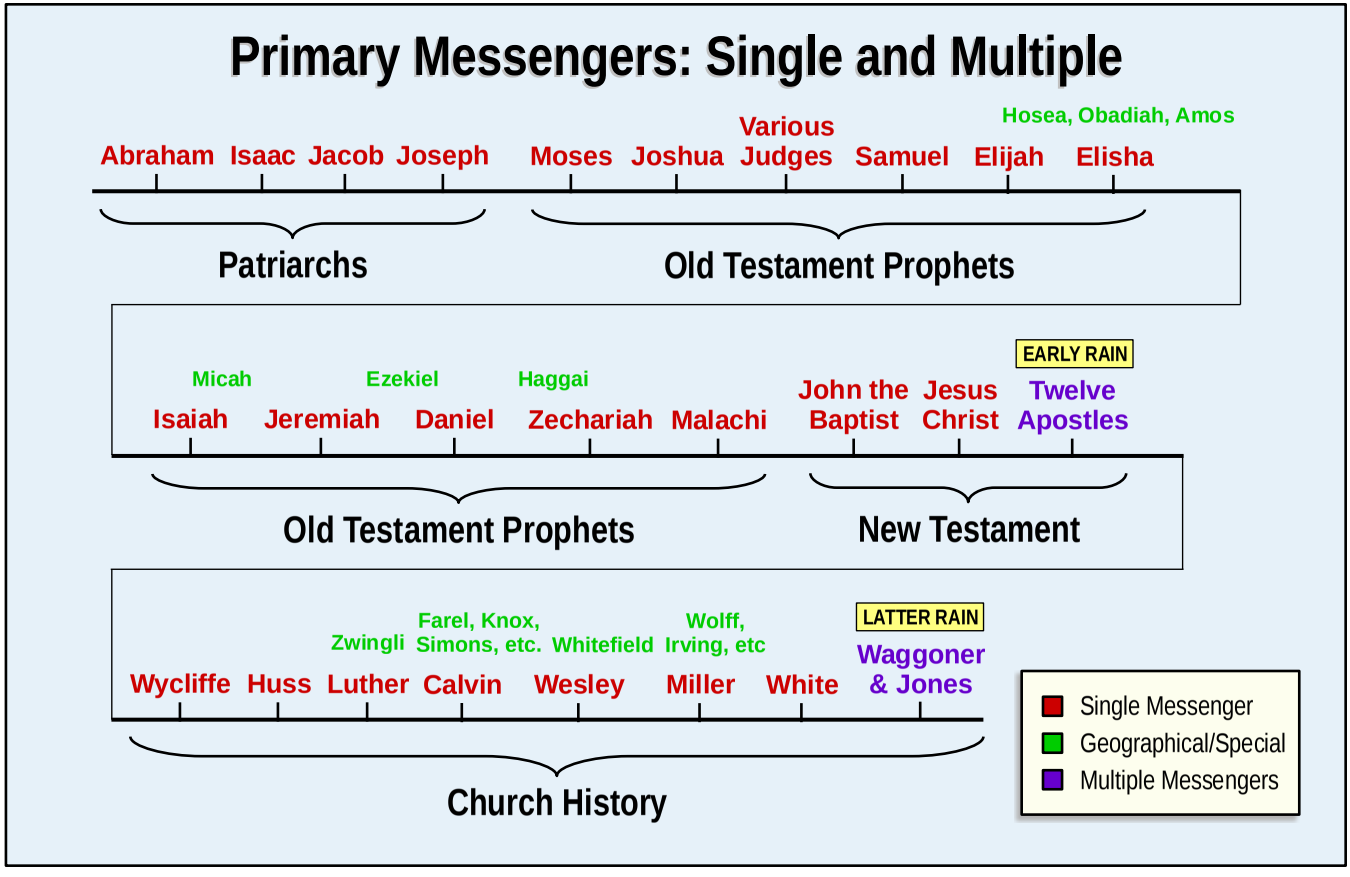
Let's look at a chart. This shows the periods of the single messengers, beginning with the patriarchs, then Moses, Joshua, Samuel; and in the early and latter rain, we have multiple messengers. The time of 1888 should have been the latter rain. Ellen White said,

> **SDA Bible Commentary, vol 7, p. 984:**
> The time of test is just upon us, for *the loud cry* of the third angel *has already begun* in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth.[50]

For this reason we can count the time of 1888 as the beginning of the latter rain which was not wholeheartedly received, and for this reason the revival which began, stopped.

Why is there a multiple messengership in the time of the end? Why was there multiple messengership in the time of the early rain? Before we answer these questions, we must make very sure that we really understand what God's kingdom procedures had to be. To implement a single messengership on earth at all times excepting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (in the early and latter rain), the pattern in Heaven had to be followed. Men needed to have the same test as Lucifer and the angels had when they were confronted with a single messenger. They needed to pass this test, and only then were they qualified for the time when there will be more than one messenger.

[50] Also *Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 1892.


Primary Messengers: Single and Multiple
Abraham
Isaac
Jacob
Joseph
Moses
Joshua
Various Judges
Samuel
Elijah
Hosea, Obadiah, Amos
Elisha
Patriarchs
Old Testament Prophets
Micah
Ezekiel
Haggai
EARLY RAIN
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Daniel
Zechariah
Malachi
John the Baptist
Jesus Christ
Twelve Apostles
Old Testament Prophets
New Testament
Zwingli
Farel, Knox, Simons, etc.
Whitefield
Wolff, Irving, etc
LATTER RAIN
Wycliffe
Huss
Luther
Calvin
Wesley
Miller
White
Waggoner & Jones
Church History
Single Messenger
Geographical/Special
Multiple Messengers

Let us now turn to Lucifer again for a moment, and see how the single messengership was test for him, and how he should have passed it, and what God could have done for him had he passed the test.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 38-39:

> The spirit of dissatisfaction thus kindled was doing its baleful work. While there was no open outbreak, division of feeling imperceptibly grew up among the angels. There were some who looked with favor upon Lucifer's insinuations against the government of god. Although they had heretofore been in perfect harmony with the order which God had established, they were now discontented and unhappy because they could not penetrate His unsearchable counsels; they were dissatisfied with His purpose in exalting Christ. These stood ready to second Lucifer's demand for equal authority with the Son of God.
>
> But angels who were loyal and true maintained the wisdom and justice of the divine decree and endeavoured to reconcile this disaffected being to the will of God.

That is understandable, but were they successful when they tried to reconcile Lucifer and all the others? Not at all.

> Christ was the Son of God; He had been one with Him before the angels were called into existence. He had ever stood at the right hand of the Father; His supremacy, so full of blessing to all who came under its benignant control, had not heretofore been questioned. The harmony of heaven had never been interrupted; wherefore should there now be discord? The loyal angels could see only terrible consequences from this dissension.

It took quite some time before they would not discuss with these angels anymore; that was at Calvary.

> In great mercy, according to His divine character, God bore long with Lucifer.

God had great patience with Lucifer. He remained in heaven all this time; he was not cast out of heaven. He could still talk with angels and angels with him, which gave them an opportunity to

repent. The longsuffering of God meant that He gave Lucifer opportunity after opportunity to turn back and repent.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 39:

The spirit of discontent and disaffection had never before been known in heaven. It was a new element, strange, mysterious, unaccountable. Lucifer himself had not at first been acquainted with the real nature of his feelings; for a time he had feared to express the workings and imaginings of his mind; yet he did not dismiss them.

He did not see whither he was drifting. But such efforts as infinite love and wisdom only could devise, were made to convince him of his error. His disaffection was proved to be without cause, and he was made to see what would be the result of persisting in revolt. Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong. He saw that "the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." (*Psalm* 145:17)

Could he have been very easily reinstated again? Not so easily because the spirit of rebellion was already in him; that is sin. His nature was already changed to a certain degree in such a way that to reinstate him again into his full honor and place would have required the full outworking of the plan of salvation. But Lucifer had already left his place in the immediate presence of the Father:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 37:

Leaving his place in the immediate presence of the Father, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels.

So he already was not in his place anymore. To be reinstated to this place, even though he was in heaven, meant that the full plan of salvation would have been carried out for him, and for the other disloyal angels as well. Jesus would have to die as a sacrifice for Lucifer.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 39:

He saw that "the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" (*Psalm* 145:17); that the divine statutes are just,

and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. He had not at that time fully cast off his allegiance to God.

So there was still a possibility of him being saved. Like it is for us today.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 39:

Though he had left his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan,...

–which was as secondary messenger. If he had been satisfied with that; he needed again to pass a test to be content with the position of secondary messenger and to acknowledge Christ as primary messenger.

...he would have been reinstated in his office. The time had come for a final decision; he must fully yield to the divine sovereignty or place himself in open rebellion.

There was no way between, there is no neutrality. Neutrality in the time of a crisis is a great sin. When there is a clear question of accepting or rejecting the truth and we try to stay neutral, neither committing ourselves one way or the other, then we commit a sin. In fact we will separate ourselves from the truth. It is not possible to be neutral in a crisis over the truth. We either yield to God's authority and His ways or we reject them.

The time had come for a final decision; he must fully yield to the divine sovereignty or place himself in open rebellion. He nearly reached the decision to return, but pride forbade him. It was too great a sacrifice for one who had been so highly honored to confess that he had been in error, that his imaginings were false, and to yield to the authority which he had been working to prove unjust.

That is very serious and it shows how strong sin is, and how tight a hold it can have on a person. If it could hold Lucifer, how

much more can it hold us, unless we hang our helpless souls upon Christ, confessing our helplessness. Even though Lucifer had the spirit of rebellion in him he was still in heaven and there was still a possibility for him to repent and be reinstated as a secondary messenger. But God had further purposes with Lucifer and these we will study in our next study.



30. Gospel Order After the Fall

Testimonies for the Church, vol 3, p. 281:

If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis, is regarded of God as a grievous crime, and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God.

THIS shows how neutrality is viewed by God. We tend to understand this sin as upsetting God, like a parent who overreacts to the little misdemeanors of their children. In this way, we blame the personality of God. But in actual fact, it is only because the results of this crime are so serious, that God treats it so.

Neutrality means to be independent of each party. And to be independent from the side of God means to be independent from the Life Giver and therefore to fall into ruin. Remember the warning given to the church of Laodicea:

Revelation 3

[15] I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot.

[16] So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

If you are neither hot or cold, but lukewarm, trying to be friendly to both sides, compromising both sides, then this is really the worst type of hostility against God, with the result that you will be spewed out of the kingdom.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol 3, p. 272:

God will not be trifled with. It is in the time of conflict that the true colors should be flung to the breeze. It is then that the standard bearers need to be firm and let their true position be known. It is then that the skill of every true soldier for the right is tested. Shirkers can never wear the laurels of victory. Those who are true and loyal will not conceal the fact but, will put heart and might into the work and venture their all in the struggle. Let the battle turn as it will. God is a sin-hating God and

> those who encourage the sinner saying, it is well with you, God will curse.

So it is very important that those who are standing against God's kingdom are not praised and are not rewarded with sympathy, but that they receive the rebuke that is needed. It is very important for each member in the time of such a crisis to take a very firm and definite stand. To say to the sinner, "It is well with you," is a very great sin in the sight of God because it strengthens the sinner in his rebellion, and it weakens the stand of the true people of God.

The Requirements for Lucifer's Restoration

Let us turn back again to Lucifer, and the question that we have asked and established in our last study was,

> "How could Lucifer have been reinstated?"

This could not be done so easy. It was not just a matter of saying,

> "Okay, I forgive you, now you can come back into your position."

No, there had to be a very deep work of cleansing and of giving life where there was death. In the moment that Lucifer left his place, or a bit before that, he was so turned against the government of God that his nature had actually changed, from being a totally righteous person, to being a sinner. And being a sinner, the spirit of sin was in him. His actions were not the only problem, but the very spirit of sin was in him, and this spirit of sin made it impossible for him to go back and sit at the place where he once was, unless God would put into effect the plan of salvation. We will now contemplate what this means.

What Lucifer had transgressed in heaven, was the law of God, which is the transcript of His character, or Gospel Order.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 52:

Our first parents were not left without a warning of the danger that threatened them. Heavenly messengers opened to them the history of Satan's fall and his plots for their destruction,...

The law of God is as sacred as God himself. It is a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, the expression of divine love and wisdom. The harmony of creation depends upon the perfect conformity of all beings, of everything, animate and inanimate, to the law of the Creator.

God has ordained laws for the government, not only of living beings, but of all the operations of nature. Everything is under fixed laws, which cannot be disregarded. But while everything in nature is governed by natural laws, man alone, of all that inhabits the earth, is amenable to moral law.

So we have here the very clear expression, that "the law is as sacred as God himself." Therefore, to destroy the law would mean to destroy God. But that is not possible, therefore, the law cannot be destroyed either. Some people in our day say that the law is changed. What would this mean? It would mean to change God. Is this possible? No, therefore it is not possible to change the law either. The law of God is as sacred as God himself. Let's replace "the law" with "Gospel Order":

"Gospel Order is as sacred as God himself."

So when Satan transgressed Gospel Order and left his immediate place in the presence of the Father, what did he do? He transgressed the Law, and he actually sinned against that which is as sacred as God himself. The transgression of the law demands the life of the sinner. Since God is the source of life, and His commandments are the way of life, to transgress, or go against His commandments, is to embrace death. And so,

The Great Controversy, p. 418:

The broken law of God demanded the life of the transgressor.

So when Lucifer broke the law of God and left his place in the immediate presence of the Father, then what should have been

the sure result? He should have perished. And yet we read that Lucifer could have been reinstated:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 39:

Though he had left his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office.

But because the broken law demands the life of the sinner, he should have died. So for this reason it was not so easy for him to be reinstated. Because the broken law demanded his life, it would have to be given up. So another life would have to be provided, and the penalty for his sin paid by another. The plan of salvation would have to be put into effect.

Likewise our human life is a lost life. We will definitely lose it. There is no hope to carry it with us into heaven, or to prolong it unto eternity. It is a lost life. And so likewise, all that Lucifer had was a lost life, and in order to be reinstated he needed another life. Could Lucifer have received the life of an angel?

Early Writings, p. 150:

The angels prostrated themselves before Him. They offered their lives. Jesus said to them that He would by His death save many, that the life of an angel could not pay the debt.

Because the law is as sacred as God, how great was the debt? It was as great as God. So an angel who was not as great as God, could not even with his life, pay the debt. That would have been impossible because the debt was greater than that which he had to give. The life of an angel would not be enough to reinstate Lucifer. So Jesus said,

His life alone could be accepted of His Father as a ransom for man.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 63:

Since the divine law is as sacred as God himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression.

> None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son. Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race.

And so it would have been for Lucifer as well. It was possible only that the life of God could pay the debt, which means, the life of Christ. Christ would have been willing to give His life, for if God was willing to reinstate Lucifer, it would have involved the sacrifice of His Son. Therefore Christ was willing to give His life for Lucifer.[51]

If it had been possible for an angel to give his life for Lucifer, then Lucifer would have been reinstated exactly in the same position again. But, receiving the life of Jesus, meant more than receiving the life of an angel. So therefore Lucifer would not only have been reinstated in the same position, but would have received a higher position than before.

This is exactly what God does with fallen man. When man sinned, they lost their life, and the debt is as great as God is great. No created being could ever pay this debt, it is impossible. Only one being in the universe can pay this debt and this is the being that is equal to God, because this is the greatness of the debt. Jesus alone can pay it, and by giving His life for man, can reinstate him again.

Jesus not only gave His life *for* man, but He also gave His life *to* man. Not only did He pay the guilt of the transgression, but He also gave life to man so that he can live again; to be reinstated. As this life is His own life, it is a higher life than man had before, and even a higher life than angels have.

[51] For a further discussion of the same topic, see the booklet: *Self-Exaltation or Self-Renunciation?* by A. T. Jones.

The Desire of Ages, p. 21:

> The angels of glory find their joy in giving,—giving love and tireless watchcare to souls that are fallen and unholy. Heavenly beings woo the hearts of men; they bring to this dark world light from the courts above; by gentle and patient ministry they move upon the human spirit, to bring the lost into a fellowship with Christ which is *even closer* than they themselves can know.

So that is the ministry of angels. They work on the hearts of men, and they by their work, bring men…

> …into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know.

What a wonderful selfless ministry this is! So through the plan of salvation man will be closer to Christ than even the highest angels.[52] This is possible only through receiving the very life of Christ. And this would have been the very life that Lucifer would have received had he repented.

Let's think a little bit about how this would have applied to Lucifer. If he had repented, he would not have immediately been taken into this high position on the throne of Christ. First of all there would need to be a rebirth, and growth, until finally he would have come into this position in the very nearness of God and Christ. But during this time of test he would again have had to acknowledge the supremacy of Christ; he would have been tested whether he was content to be a secondary messenger instead of a primary messenger.

So likewise for us, before we come into the presence of Christ, we have to be thoroughly tested.

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[52] This can already be seen by looking at those who were already taken to Heaven from this Earth, such as Enoch, Elijah, Moses, and the multitude who were raised when Christ was raised (*Matthew* 27:52-53). They appear in *Revelation* chapter 4 & 5 as "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne" (*Revelation* 4:6), intimately involved in Christ's work, and the angels stand a bit further back (*Revelation* 5:11), still closely involved, but not as close.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 39:

He saw that "the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" (*Psalm* 145:17); that the divine statutes are just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. He had not at that time fully cast off his allegiance to God. Though he had left his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office.

So first of all, to be reinstated in the office which he had before, would mean to acknowledge the fact that he is only the secondary messenger, and that Christ alone is the primary messenger. Then after he had passed this test, he would have been qualified to be a primary messenger. We can see this in the redemption of man.

The Plan for Man

When Lucifer finally came to the decision that he would not return, God began to carry out the plan to create man:[53]

The Story of Redemption, p. 19:

Then there was war in heaven. The Son of God, the Prince of Heaven, and His loyal angels, engaged in conflict with the arch rebel and those who united with him. The Son of God, and true loyal angels prevailed, and Satan and his sympathizers were expelled from heaven.

All the heavenly host acknowledged and adored the God of justice. Not a taint of rebellion was left in heaven. All was again peaceful and harmonious as before. Angels in heaven mourned

[53] The plan was actually made before the fall of Satan, but not carried out until after Heaven was cleared from the rebellion. "Before the fall of Satan, the Father consulted His Son in regard to the formation of man. They purposed to make this world, and create beasts and living things upon it, and to make man in the image of God, to reign as a ruling monarch over every living thing which God should create. When Satan learned the purpose of God, he was envious at Christ, and jealous because the Father had not consulted him in regard to the creation of man." *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 36.

the fate of those who had been their companions in happiness and bliss. Their loss was felt in heaven.

The Father consulted His Son in regard to at once carrying out their purpose to make man to inhabit the earth. He would place man on probation to test his loyalty before he could be rendered eternally secure. If he endured the test wherefore God saw fit to prove him, he would eventually be equal with the angels.

For what purpose was man created? To fill the vacancies of those angels who fell.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1081:

All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and man. Human beings were a new and distinct order. They were made in the image of God and it was the Creators design that they should populate the earth.

All heaven took a deep and joyful interest because the loss of their former companions was felt in heaven, and God made up for the loss by creating man. When God created man, they had the opportunity to come to the same stage as the angels. But they fell, like Lucifer, and came into the same condition: rebellion against Gospel Order, transgression of God's law.

So how could they be saved? Alone through the plan of salvation, which involves the death of God's Son himself—the death of Jesus as a human being. And this was the only possibility through which God could reinstate man. When Christ died for mankind, thereby paying the debt, He made it possible to implant His seed into His children. Those who would be willing to repent and return would have their old life removed, and the life of Christ implanted in them. While Lucifer was not willing to accept this offer, some men were.

But the moment that men repent from their sinful state, and return to the Lord, they are not immediately reinstated into the pure and sinless garden of Eden with holy, sinless bodies. After the rebirth, the physical and moral natures are still weak, and men must grow and be tested with the hindrances of a weakened

nature. Likewise, when Christ came as our example, He did not come into Adam's nature before the fall, but into the weakened human nature after the fall. So it takes time for us to be reinstated, as it would have taken time for Lucifer to have been reinstated.

When Adam and Eve were created, they were living under a single primary messengership, in which Christ alone was the primary messenger, and the angels were His helpers,—the secondary messengers. Then came the deep fall of man, out of which God redeemed them through the plan of salvation. This plan includes the eradication of the old spiritual nature from them and the implantation of Christ's own life into them. Only the life of Christ could redeem them because sin was a transgression of the law, and the law was equal to God. Therefore, only the life of Christ, one equal to God, could possibly restore man back to the condition from which he had fallen. This is wonderfully described:

> **Psalm 40**
> [1] I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
> [2] He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

This terrible pit into which we have all fallen was the fall into sin, in which the life that was in us was turned to death. After Adam and Eve had sinned, all they possessed was corrupted and touched with death. Through the eradication of the old spirit of rebellion against Gospel Order, and the implantation of Christ's life, we received salvation from the pit of sin.

But now there needs to follow a reformation, a change of old habits and of old practices; a re-education of the human nature, as we know from the studies on *Revival and Reformation*. During most of this time of reformation there was a single messengership. This was to prove whether we had truly recovered from the fall.

> "Are we able to receive God's word as spoken through His messenger, or do we prefer God's word as we understand it, through our own interpretation?"

That is the question against which each one of us stands through this time of reformation. When a redeemed man submits to Gospel Order, and it becomes his way, then he is qualified to be a primary messenger himself. This is the heritage of the life of Christ. We see this in the lives of the apostles of Christ, who accepted the messages of God as given by John the Baptist, and then later as given by Christ himself. By their acceptance of these messengers of God, they proved that they were qualified to be messengers themselves, which they were, during the descent of the Holy Spirit on the church.

In the closing work of the Gospel, during the time of the latter rain,[54] there will be multiple messengers, just as there were in the time of the early rain, at Pentecost. Now is our time of test where we are proved to see if we can be fitted for this responsibility.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 590:**
> In the time of the end the people of God will sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. With tears they will warn the wicked of their danger in trampling upon the divine law, and with unutterable sorrow they will humble themselves before the Lord in penitence. The wicked will mock their sorrow and ridicule their solemn appeals. But the anguish and humiliation of God's people is unmistakable evidence that they are regaining the strength and nobility of character lost in consequence of sin.

Quite some time is required to gain that which was lost. And so it would have taken time for Lucifer to be restored as well. When we receive the life of Christ, then we receive a new kind of messengership as well, and in order to understand this, we need to study next the Melchizedek priesthood.

[54] See *Joel* 2:23, *Zechariah* 10:1, *Revelation* 18:1-4.

31. The Melchizedek Priesthood

THE Melchizedek priesthood shows us what kind of messengership we are to have in heaven after we are translated. Let us open *Hebrews* 5 and see who qualifies for that priesthood.

Christ's Qualifications for the Melchizedek Priesthood

Hebrews 5 [NKJV]
[1] For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

Let's look at Christ and see how He qualifies for the Melchizedek priesthood.

1. TAKEN FROM AMONG MEN

The first qualification is:

Hebrews 5 [NKJV]
[1] For every high priest taken from among men...

A priest according to the order of Melchizedek, must be *a man*. Does Christ qualify for this? Certainly. We could ask the question,

> "How did Christ qualify in the times of Abraham, to be a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek?"

Well He didn't back then, except by promise; but today He qualifies.

2. EXPERIENCED WEAKNESS

Hebrews 5 [NKJV]
[2] He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.

Qualification number two: *weakness*. Again we ask the question,

> "Does Christ qualify in this respect?"

Today He does, because He has experienced weakness, but He did not experience weakness before He came as a man.

3. OFFER SACRIFICES FOR HIMSELF

Hebrews 5 [NKJV]
[3] Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins.

Can we say about Christ that He was required to offer sacrifices for himself, for sins? He did not sin, so what does this "offer" mean? When an Israelite in the Old Testament brought his lamb, what did he actually do? Back there an Israelite went to the sanctuary to offer the lamb for sins. Where do we go today? We go into the heavenly sanctuary on our prayer journey, as we go into the prayer chamber. The Israelite in the Old Testament went into the earthly sanctuary, and we go into our prayer chamber and make a prayer journey through to the heavenly sanctuary. Then, to "offer" sacrifice means? Prayer and praise.

Jeremiah 33
[11] The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts: for the Lord is good; for His mercy endures for ever: and of them that shall bring *the sacrifice of praise* into the house of the Lord.

Hebrews 13
[15] By Him therefore let us offer *the sacrifice of praise* to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.

Psalm 141
[2] Let my *prayer* be set forth before you as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening *sacrifice*.

Proverbs 15
[8] The *sacrifice* of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the *prayer* of the upright is His delight.

Let us read together how it was necessary for Christ, as a man, to pray for himself. Let's read about this:

The Desire of Ages, p. 690:

Turning away, Jesus sought again His retreat, and fell prostrate, overcome by the horror of a great darkness.

That was in Gethsemane.

The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour. He prayed not now for His disciples that their faith might not fail, but for His own tempted, agonized soul. The awful moment had come—the moment which was to decide the destiny of the world.

So for whom did Christ pray for here? For himself, or to speak in Old Testament language: He offered for himself. And He was required to do so because without praying for himself, Christ would not have been able to overcome in this time of darkness. So He had to offer for himself.

4. CALLED BY GOD

Hebrews 5 [NKJV]

[4] And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

Being "called by God," is a clear reference to Gospel Order, in which God alone is the one who calls His messengers. Therefore, the priest, according to the order of Melchizedek, must be called by God. Does Christ qualify in this respect?

[5] So also Christ did not glorify himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him, You are my Son, Today I have begotten You.
[6] As He also says in another place, You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek;

Christ was definitely called by God to be a priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

5. EXPERIENCED SALVATION

Hebrews 5 [NKJV]

[7] Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who

was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.

Here we have another qualification for the priest according to the order of Melchizedek, and that is that he was saved from death. In other words, he has experienced salvation.

6. AN AUTHOR OF SALVATION

Hebrews 5 [NKJV]
[8] Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.
[9] And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

Here Christ is set forth, not only as qualifying for the Melchizedek priesthood, but being the foremost. So what was Christ as a sixth qualification? He was the author of salvation. In other words, He was the cause of salvation for others, and He was the one who led others to salvation.

Hebrews 5 [NKJV]
[10] Called by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek,
[11] Of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

Then some more information can be found in chapter 6 & 7.

Hebrews 6 [NKJV]
[19] This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,
[20] Where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7 [NKJV]
[1] For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

[2] To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, meaning king of peace,
[3] Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

Here, the appearance of Melchizedek to Abraham is mentioned. In order to understand the qualifications of Christ's Melchizedek priesthood, we must search through some cases and we will see if they apply to Christ, to the Holy Spirit, or to us today, or even to us after the translation, or even to another person. Then we will surely identify this first appearance of Melchizedek.

Some people have difficulties seeing that Christ fulfilled all the conditions of the Melchizedek priesthood; especially when it comes to the point that He had to sacrifice for himself. Others have problems seeing that He had weaknesses. I think that nobody would argue against the statement that He came from man. He was called by God to this office, that is evident, we read this. But there is a bit of difficulty understanding how Christ is…

Hebrews 7 [NKJV]
[3] …without father, without mother, without genealogy.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION: HOW CHRIST OFFERED FOR HIMSELF

We will leave this open for a moment, but we want to clarify a little bit better in what way Christ had to offer for himself. For this reason first of all we open a statement in *Selected Messages*, book 1, where it tells about our services and the mediation of Christ.

Selected Messages, book 1, p. 344:
The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand,

presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned.

Sometimes Satan presents tempts us with the thought that when we become more righteous and more honest in our intentions and motives, that we need less of Christ's intersession. But this statement refutes this thought. Rather it says,

Selected Messages, book 1, p. 344:

The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers…but passing through the corrupt channel of humanity.

What kind of humanity? Sinful humanity. In other words, our sinful human flesh and blood, they are the cause of corruption and therefore no matter how sincere, and how honest and true the believers are, still their prayers ascend to God impure. They need to be purified by the blood of Christ. This is very clear now, I hope, from reading this statement. When we think of our prayers, we realize that constantly we need to sacrifice. We constantly need the blood of Christ. Without this no prayer has any value with God. This we must be very conscientious of.

But how about Christ when He was on earth? Who made the sacrifice so that He could pray? Or didn't He need the cleansing blood for His prayer? Surely He was a righteous person wasn't He? But what kind of human nature did Christ have? The same human nature that we have. There is no question about the fact that Christ did not sin, but, He had the same sinful human nature, the same vessel that we have. For this reason also His prayers did not ascend to the heavenly sanctuary clean.

That seems a strong statement to make because we think of Christ as absolutely sinless. He did not sin; not even by a thought did He give Satan an advantage. There is no question about this, but, He had the same channel of human nature. And when He prayed, as we ourselves, His prayers needed the cleansing drops of blood. Who's blood was it then, by which Christ's prayers could ascend to heaven? It can be only Christ's blood. There is no other blood that can cleanse our prayers. So it was by His own sacrifice that He sacrificed; by His own sacrifice He purified His own prayers. This was applied in advance of the actual sacrifice, as it was also for Abraham and the other faithful in the Old Testament, because it was only later that He was actually crucified. But it was the merit of His own blood through which He could come to the Father, but, this blood must be administered by a mediator.

This mediator could only be Christ. Only Christ has the two natures: God and creature. That is the reason why He could be the only mediator. Through the plan of salvation, Christ has multiplied himself; He has children. How could Christ be in heaven and on the earth at the same time? Because the mystery of God is…

Colossians 1

[27] …Christ in you the hope of glory.

Christ can be in heaven and in each child at the same time through His seed. Christ is in His children; His life is in those who are born again. Lucifer could have been reinstated only under one condition and that was the death of Christ. And by this means Christ would not only have given His life *for* Lucifer, but *to* Lucifer. Then Lucifer would have had the very life of Christ in himself, which would have meant that Christ himself was reproduced in His children. Just like their Father, the children can administer the cleansing blood of Christ. It is Christ's blood alone that can cleanse us. And because His nature (His very life) is in His children, it is only this life that can administer this blood,

whether it be Christ personally, or Him in the children. We will cover this in detail later.

The first point is that Christ himself was like every other man on this earth and therefore needed to sacrifice for himself. Some say,

> "But Christ was God!"

Well, He had laid down His divine power:

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 336:**
> When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart.

When we read that there was no fear in the heart of Jesus, we might think,

> "Well, He had no reason to fear because He was God and, as such, He could control nature and so nothing could threaten Him."

But the next sentence tells us different:

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 336:**
> But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the "Master of earth and sea and sky" that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says,
>
> **John 5**
> [30] I can of my own self do nothing.
>
> He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God. As Jesus rested by faith in the Father's care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour.

It was by faith in God's love and care that He rested, not in the power of His own divinity.

> That power He had laid down, and He says, "I can of my own self do nothing." *John* 5:30. He trusted in the Father's might.

Just as any other person on this earth, Jesus was dependent. In all points He became like we are. Christ needed to sacrifice for himself, not because of any personal sin, but because of His sinful human nature. He was as dependent upon His Father as every other Christian is. He needed the cleansing blood of His own sacrifice. And so likewise, when He came to Gethsemane, our sins were placed upon Him and He needed salvation from the sin as verily as we need salvation from our own sins. And so Jesus was put into the same situation as we are, and so we should have no difficulties seeing that He had to offer for himself.

7. WITHOUT GENEALOGY / 8. ETERNAL

When Christ was on this earth, he had a genealogy. We read this in *Matthew* 1, and also in *Luke* 3, so it looks as though Christ does not fulfill the qualification of "without father, without mother, without genealogy," because Christ had a genealogy. But let us ask the question,

> "When Christ came into heaven, did He have a genealogy then?"

He did not, as His genealogy when He was on earth came from Adam down though Mary. His human nature had a genealogy. But did He take this exact same human nature with Him when He went to heaven? Definitely not! And the same will be the case with us when we go to heaven. Let us open for a moment *1 Corinthians*.

1 Corinthians 15

35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?
36 You fool, that which you sow is not quickened, except it die:
37 And that which you sow, you sow not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:
38 But God gives it a body as it has pleased Him, and to every seed his own body.

[39] All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

So, with what body shall we be translated? With a body that is not from our earthly father or mother, but, with a body that is from God. It will be a body that is neither male nor female,[55] but will be, according to Jesus,

Matthew 22
[30] ...as the angels of God in heaven.

It will be a body similar to that of the angels. So, that body has no genealogy, but this earthly body that has a genealogy has an end when we die. It is away forever and we never get the same body again. When Christ was in heaven, He was without father and mother, He was eternal; of this we have no doubt.

Was Melchizedek the Holy Spirit?

Let us now see whether the Holy Spirit would qualify for the Melchizedek priesthood, because some say that Melchizedek is the Holy Spirit. According to *Hebrews* chapter 5-7 what do we read?

1. Was the Holy Spirit taken from man? No!
2. Had He experienced weakness? No!
3. Had He to offer for himself? No!
4. Was He called by God for this office? No! He is God himself so He does not need to be called by God. And it is not His office.
5. Has He experienced salvation? No!
6. Is He the author of salvation? In this I would say, yes, He is together with Christ, the author of salvation.
7. Is He without father or mother? Yes.
8. Is He eternal? Definitely, yes.

[55] *Galatians* 3:28.

We would not need to look further because if He does not fulfill any one of the specified qualifications, then He is not suitable.

1. Taken from man?	✖
2. Experienced weakness?	✖
3. Offering for Himself?	✖
4. Called by God?	✖
5. Experienced salvation?	✖
6. An author of salvation?	✔
7. Without father or mother?	✔
8. Eternal?	✔

Do We Qualify for the Melchizedek Priesthood?

Let us look at us today, whether we would qualify for the Melchizedek priesthood. That is an important question.

BEFORE TRANSLATION

First, let's consider the question as it applies to our current condition, in our bodies of weak, sinful flesh, before translation takes place.

1. Are we taken from man? Yes. In this respect we qualify.
2. Have we experienced weakness? Yes.
3. Do we have to offer for ourselves? Yes. We have to offer for ourselves through the cleansing blood. It is the blood of Christ with which we have to offer.
4. Are we called by God for this office? Yes, as sons of Christ we are sharers with Him in His work.
5. Have we experienced salvation? I hope so. Everybody who is born again has experienced salvation.
6. Are we an author of salvation? Let us consider this question further on in our study.
7. Are we without father or mother? We have a father and mother, each on of us, so in this respect we *do not qualify.*

8. Are we eternal? Partly, but *not fully.*

Let us open a statement in *The Desire of Ages*, which tells us what we receive when we receive the life of Christ.

The Desire of Ages, p. 388:

John 6

[47] Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on me has everlasting life.

Through the beloved John, who listened to these words, the Holy Spirit declared to the churches,

1 John 5

[11] This is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

[12] He that has the Son has life.

And Jesus said,

John 6 [also vs. 44, 54]

[40] I will raise him up at the last day.

Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave,—not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours.

There are several possibilities of how God could resurrect the dead. He could resurrect them for example in a creative act, as a manifestation of His power. This is the way in which the wicked will be resurrected after the thousand years. But, when we are resurrected, we are not resurrected in this way. As we just read,

The Desire of Ages, p. 388:

It is *by virtue of this union* [our union with Christ] that we are to come forth from the grave,—not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours.

When our old nature is eradicated and the life of Christ has become our life, then it is by virtue of that life, which God has given us, that we are resurrected. When we are resurrected by virtue of the life of Christ, then it means that we have eternity in us from

the moment that Christ has come into our heart. We *have* eternal life, as Jesus says. It is not just a figure of speech, nor some future gift. When Jesus said,

John 6
[47] He that believes on me *has* eternal life,

–it is a reality. When we have the life of Christ, when we are unified with Him by faith, then we have eternity. So in this point we would qualify for the priesthood.

1. Taken from man?	✔
2. Experienced weakness?	✔
3. Offering for ourselves?	✔
4. Called by God?	✔
5. Experienced salvation?	✔
6. An author of salvation?	✔
7. Without father or mother?	✖
8. Eternal?	Partly

AFTER TRANSLATION

Let us now come to the situation *after* our translation:

1. We are taken from man;
2. We have experienced weakness;
3. We had to offer for ourselves;
4. We are called by God;
5. We have experienced salvation;
6. An author of salvation? Let us consider it later.
7. We are without father and mother, because we have another body. Not the body we have now, which comes from our father and mother, but the body which is given us directly from God. And in our spiritual nature, we have the very nature that we have received already through our rebirth experience.

8. Are we called by God for this office? We will consider this point, and point #6 now.

Let's first look at the question of the author of salvation because the priest according to the Melchizedek priesthood must be an author of salvation. That is a qualification that is recorded in:

Hebrews 5
[9] And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.

Now let us read:

Ephesians 3
[8] Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
[9] And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:
[10] To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known *by the church* the manifold wisdom of God.

We read here that the mystery of God, the manifold wisdom of God, is made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. Who are the principalities and powers in heavenly places? The angels and all the unfallen worlds: these are the principalities and powers in heavenly places. In other words, the whole universe. And to them is made known the manifold wisdom of God. But how? "...by the church." The manifold wisdom of God is expressed in His mystery, which is Christ in you the hope of glory, and this is a lesson book for the whole universe. This is made very clear in the following:

Education, p. 308:
For what was the great controversy permitted to continue throughout the ages? Why was it that Satan's existence was not cut short at the outset of his rebellion? It was that the universe might be convinced of God's justice in His dealing with evil; that

sin might receive eternal condemnation. In the plan of redemption there are heights and depths that eternity itself can never exhaust, marvels into which the angels desire to look. The redeemed only, of all created beings, have in their own experience known the actual conflict with sin; they have wrought with Christ, and, as even the angels could not do, have entered into the fellowship of His sufferings...[56]

An angel has none of these qualifications. Like the Holy Spirit, an angel would not be man, would not have experienced weakness, and so forth. But man has these things, and so it says,

Education, p. 308-309:

...will they [the redeemed] have no testimony as to the science of redemption—nothing that will be of worth to unfallen beings?

It is a rhetorical question: a rhetorical question implies the answer. So what is the answer? They *will* have a lot; they will have a testimony that is of worth for the unfallen beings.

Even now, "unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places" is "made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God."

Ephesians 2

[6] And [He] has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places:...

[7] That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

In our life here, earthly, sin-restricted though it is, the greatest joy and the highest education are in service. And in the future state, untrammeled by the limitations of sinful humanity, it is in service that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found—witnessing, and ever as we witness learning anew...

Colossians 1

[27] ...the riches of the glory of this mystery...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

There will be a task for us in heaven, definitely, and this experience will be used to teach the whole universe more about God's

[56] *Philippians* 3:10.

wonderful love and grace. In this sense we are an *author of salvation* to the whole universe.

The word *salvation* does not only mean salvation from the actual state of a sinful being. For example, the two thirds of angels who had not rebelled also needed salvation,—not from a sinful state of being,—but as far as their understanding of God's character was concerned. They needed salvation from the confusion that Satan had spread in the universe and this is as much a salvation as it is to be saved from a sinful state of being. So our concept of salvation must get a little bit broader, and in this sense we are definitely an author of salvation to the whole universe. Our very lives are examples because only we have this experience of deliverance from sin, and of "Christ in us, the hope of glory."[57] To this office we are definitely *called by God.*

There are other evidences that show we are called to this high office of service, which is nothing short of being primary messengers together with Christ.

Revelation 3
[21] To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne.

What a wonderful promise! To sit on the throne of Jesus, that is a tremendous privilege, a tremendous promise. I find this difficult to grasp, but here it says so. The throne of Jesus is the Father's throne, because they both share the same throne:

Revelation 22
[3] And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

1 John 3
[1] Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

[57] *Colossians* 1:27.

[2] Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

We have the tremendous privilege of being like Jesus and therefore seeing God, or the Father, as He is. Seeing God face to face, this is the prerogative of the primary messenger in heaven: to see God.

Revelation 22
[4] And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads.

In this we see the privilege, what the Melchizedek priesthood implies. It implies that we can, together with Christ, be the teachers of the universe. We are still the children of Christ and He is the Father; and in this sense, Christ is still our head, and our captain and our leader and everything. It does not make us higher than Christ. But when we sit with Christ on His throne, we actually become messengers in heaven; teachers for the universe. And this privilege is a privilege that is foreshadowed on this earth in the latter rain when God not only chooses one primary messenger, but many. This fact is stated in *Joel:*

Joel 2
[28] And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:
[29] And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

So, after translation, and for eternity, the redeemed from this Earth will qualify for the Melchizedek priesthood.

1. Taken from man?	✔
2. Experienced weakness?	✔
3. Offering for ourselves?	✔

4. Called by God?	✔
5. Experienced salvation?	✔
6. An author of salvation?	✔
7. Without father or mother?	✔
8. Eternal?	✔

Who Was Melchizedek?

We come now to the question,

> "Who actually was Melchizedek?"

Two persons so far would qualify, that is, you and me *after* our translation, and Christ *after* His ascension, not before. But Melchizedek appeared in the time of Abraham. Was Christ the Melchizedek who appeared in Abraham's time? There is a statement that seems to indicate this in *The Desire of Ages*, in the chapter, "Thy King Cometh." It is about the disciples who prophesied of Jesus when He was riding into Jerusalem on an ass.

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 578:**
>
> Adam will tell you, It is the seed of the woman that shall bruise the serpent's head.
>
> Ask Abraham, he will tell you, It is "Melchizedek King of Salem," King of Peace. *Genesis* 14:18.

So here it seems to say that Christ is Melchizedek. If He was Melchizedek, then something must be wrong in our understanding, because Christ in the time of Abraham, was not *from* man, He had not experienced weakness, and so forth. There were many qualifications which He lacked. But let's come to another statement which clearly says that Christ was *not* Melchizedek:

> **SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1092-1093:**
>
> God has never left himself without witness on the earth. At one time Melchizedek represented the Lord Jesus Christ in person, to reveal the truth of heaven, and perpetuate the law of God.

> It was Christ that spoke through Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. *Melchizedek was not Christ*, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father. And all through the generations of the past, Christ has spoken; Christ has led His people, and has been the light of the world.

It was Christ that spoke through Melchizedek, but He was not Melchizedek. Then who was alive in Paul's time and also in Abraham's time, with the qualifications which we have mentioned? Melchizedek needed to be alive in Paul's time as well, as we read in *Hebrews:*

> **Hebrews 7**
> [8] And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that *he lives.*

Melchizedek was alive in the time of Paul and he also lived in the time of Abraham, which is logical because he is eternal. Who would qualify? But there is no great mystery about it. Enoch was the only person who had been redeemed from the Earth in the time of Abraham. He is the only one who qualified to be Melchizedek. He fulfilled all the qualifications.

1. He was from man.
2. He had experienced weakness.
3. He had to offer for himself when he was on earth.
4. He was called by God to this office.
5. He has experienced salvation.
6. He was the author of salvation in the sense that we have mentioned before.
7. In heaven he was without father and mother, and
8. He was eternal and he lived through both time periods.

Thus the chart is complete.

1. Taken from man?	✔
2. Experienced weakness?	✔

3. Offering for ourselves?	✔
4. Called by God?	✔
5. Experienced salvation?	✔
6. An author of salvation?	✔
7. Without father or mother?	✔
8. Eternal?	✔

The study of Melchizedek shows the possibility for Christians to be priests and kings in heaven. When Christ was in heaven, He spoke through Melchizedek. But when Christ was on earth, and He needed himself someone to stand between himself and God for Him, who could fulfill this office? Enoch (Melchizedek) could; but at the time Christ appeared on Earth, there were two others redeemed from the Earth who also qualified: Moses and Elijah.

When Christ was in Heaven, He was the primary messenger in Heaven. When He was on Earth, He was the primary messenger on Earth. But then there needed to be another primary messenger in Heaven to take His place. There were three who qualified: Enoch, Moses, and Elijah.

We just showed that Enoch was the only one who could fill the role of Melchizedek as described in *Genesis:*

> **Genesis 14**
> [18] Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High.
> [19] And he blessed him and said: Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth;
> [20] And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him a tithe of all.

Melchizedek is described in *Hebrews*, chapters 5-7, and Melchizedek was both a king and a priest. As such he showed what God's people will be in heaven: kings and priests.

While Paul is describing the office and the qualifications for Melchizedek, we notice only Enoch at that time could fulfill this position: being rescued from the pit of sin, having been a man, having experienced weakness, and having to offer for himself; he had experienced salvation, he was the author of salvation and he was without father or mother at that time because he had the body received from God, and he was eternal.

Also we have seen that Christ fulfilled the conditions, except that in the time of Abraham, He had not yet come to the earth, was not man, and therefore could not then fulfill this position, except by promise.

We have a statement in *The Desire of Ages*, in which the disciples called Jesus Melchizedek, king of Salem, in which they prophesied.

The Desire of Ages, p. 578:

Ask Abraham, he will tell you. It is "Melchizedek, king of Salem," king of peace. *Genesis* 14:18.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1093:

Melchizedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of Christ in the world.

There seems to be a contradiction. Christ, at the time He was on earth, could not be Melchizedek, for He did not have all these qualifications at that time. But Enoch, who had been translated to Heaven about a thousand years before, had these qualifications, and at that time he was the type of priest/king for Christ.

Christ is the real Melchizedek, in fact He is the original, the father Melchizedek. All the others who were brought into Heaven since the time of Enoch, and entered this office of priests and kings, are the sons of Christ. Only those who have Christ's life in them can be part of the Melchizedek priesthood.

So Christ is the great archetype to which all the others pointed, and Enoch was one of them, and was in fact the first from among redeemed men to take up this position.

32. The Times of Many Messengers

LET us now turn to the question,

> "Why was there many messengers in the time of the early rain, and why will there be many messengers again in the time of the latter rain?"

Development in Heaven

It was God's intention from the very beginning to fill heaven with many messengers. Before Lucifer ever sinned, there was not the need, nor the possibility of having more than one messenger because Christ was the only person who qualified for this position. He was God and creature at the same time, and there was no other. For this reason there could be only one messenger, and there needed to be only one messenger in order to make heaven safe.

If Lucifer had accepted this order always, and had respected Gospel Order as it existed, then he would have been perfectly safe. When he transgressed Gospel Order, then via the plan of salvation, there opened up the possibility of an enlargement of the messengership which God had instituted from the very beginning. In other words, Christ begat children and these children share this office with Christ.

This was possible and also necessary also because of the fall into sin.

- It was possible because through the plan of salvation, Christ not only gave His life *for* man, but He gave it *to* man.
- And it was also necessary because the only way in which man could be saved was for Christ to give His life to them.

For this reason, the multiple messengership is something which became possible through sin, and as the kingdom on earth is to be as it is in heaven,[58] so shall it be now.

[58] *Matthew* 6:10.

First of all there was the fall of Lucifer. It was still possible for him to repent. Then came the expulsion from heaven and immediately the plan of the creation of man was carried out.[59] Then came the fall of man, the life of Enoch, Calvary, the resurrection of Christ, latter rain, Armageddon, and then our resurrection.

In heaven there had been a one person messengership from the very beginning of eternity, that is, since there were creatures. Then came the time when another messenger was installed together with Christ, and this other messenger was Enoch. That was the beginning of the multiple messengership. Then later Moses was added, and Elijah. That was the situation in heaven.

Development on Earth

On earth God began with single messengerships because everything had to be as it was in heaven. First there had to be a test for mankind and only if they could receive the single messengership were they prepared for the multiple messengership.

So likewise, the angels first needed to accept the single messengership before they were fitted for many messengers. Lucifer did not stand the test. One third of the angels did not stand the test, therefore they fell, but when the two thirds of the angels passed the test, they were prepared for a multiple messengership. This could have come through Lucifer's salvation, but since Lucifer rejected his opportunity, it came through the salvation of man.

Heaven is ahead in its development of messengerships, compared to the situation on this earth. Because in heaven now we already have a multiple messengership; on earth we still have a single messengership. The reasons for this are not arbitrary. There are good reasons for it. So what are they?

First we need to pass the test. And only when we pass the test can we be fit for the multiple messengership. The test is that we accept that the place in which we stand, and the place in which most of us stand on this earth, is not that of the primary messen-

[59] As we have read in the book, *The Story of Redemption.*

ger, but of a secondary messenger. In this place we must learn to go only where the Lord sends us and to say only what the Lord gives us to say.

In the chart from chapter 29, the time of the early rain is marked as a time when there were multiple messengers. Ideally speaking, had the early church remained faithful, the gospel work should have been finished back then, but there was a falling away and it was necessary to build up the church via a single messengership again.

When did Christ's Melchizedek priesthood begin? When did Christ become a fully qualified priest according to the order of Melchizedek? When He fulfilled all the conditions that were outlined before, which included Him being a man, having experienced weakness and so forth. And finally also, being without father and mother, which means that Christ had to be translated first, He had to be given the new body. Only then was He fully fit to fill this position.

On behalf of men, Christ also had to pass a test in order to fulfill this position, and the test was: full submission to God on this earth. Only as He passed this test could He enter into the heavenly gates and there receive His glory as king and priest where He is in His office for our sakes since this time. His beginning as a priest is described in *The Acts of the Apostles:*

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 38:

Christ's ascension to heaven was the signal that His followers were to receive the promised blessing. For this they were to wait before they entered upon their work. When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as

priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people.

Christ's ascension was the signal that His followers were to receive the promised blessing. But when did they actually receive it? at what point of time? When His inauguration was complete.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 38:

According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, *as priest and king*, received all authority in heaven and on earth.

And what kind of priesthood is this, where one is priest and king at the same time? The Melchizedek priesthood. The Levitical priesthood only carried the priestly honor and not the kingly honor.

...*as priest and king*, received all authority in heaven and on earth.

Therefore He was now the leader of the Melchizedek priesthood in heaven. Christ's Melchizedek priesthood started at the time when He was inaugurated, and His disciples received the early rain at Pentecost. Since that time Christ has been in that position. The great question now is:

"What happened when Christ was on earth?"

He himself needed a primary messenger in heaven for, as a human being Christ could not approach God and see Him face to face; that was impossible for Him because of the fallen sinful flesh that He had. For the same reason, we cannot see God either. This body which has father and mother cannot see God, because it is sinful. But the body which we receive from God is different, it does not have father or mother and through the fact that we have the life of Christ in us and are freed from our sinful flesh, then we can see God face to face. But as a man, Jesus could not see Him directly, so God needed someone to be a shield for Him, and how was this accomplished? Through the primary messengers that

were in heaven at that time. And they were Enoch (translated), then Moses (resurrected), and later Elijah (translated).

This answers some questions which some people have asked concerning the time when Christ was on earth and God spoke directly from heaven. We established the point that God cannot talk face to face with man except the man be shielded. And there are many Bible texts which prove this, for example:

Exodus 33
[20] And he said, You can not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

Judges 13
[22] And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

Habakkuk 1
[13] You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and can not look on iniquity.

Matthew 11
[27] All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.

John 1
[18] No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

John 5
[37] And the Father himself, which has sent me, has borne witness of me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape.

John 6
[46] Not that any man has seen the Father, save He which is of God, He has seen the Father.

Colossians 1
[15] [Christ] is the image of the *invisible God*, the firstborn of every creature.

1 Timothy 1
[17] Now unto the King eternal, immortal, *invisible*, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 John 4
[12] No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us.

God needs to be shielded when talking to men because they cannot endure His presence. The shield of God is usually Christ. But when Christ was on earth, He could not be this shield because He had sinful flesh and blood. For this reason, it was necessary that even Christ himself was shielded and this shield was provided by the children of Christ who were in heaven at that time, namely: Enoch, Moses and Elijah.

The Desire of Ages, p. 112:
Of the vast throng at the Jordan, few except John discerned the heavenly vision, Yet the solemnity of the divine Presence rested upon the assembly. The people stood silently gazing upon Christ. His form was bathed in the light that ever surrounds the throne of God. His upturned face was glorified as they had never before seen the face of man. From the open heavens a voice was heard saying,

Matthew 3
[17] This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

That was the voice of God from heaven, but how could God speak this voice unshielded to this earth? In the past, in the Old Testament, when God spoke to earth, He had always done it through Jesus. That is why Jesus is called "The Word of God." Everything that God did, He did through Jesus. But when Jesus was on earth, the pathway for the Father was open through the children of Jesus, those who had the same nature as He; those who

qualified to sit with Him on the throne; those who were called to do this work in the heavenly temple, while Christ was on earth.

The Desire of Ages, p. 116:

At the Saviour's baptism, Satan was among the witnesses. He saw the Father's glory overshadowing His Son. He heard the voice of Jehovah testifying to the divinity of Jesus. Ever since Adam's sin, the human race had been cut off from direct communion with God; the intercourse between heaven and earth had been through Christ; but now that Jesus had come "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (*Romans* 8:3), the Father himself spoke. He had before communicated with humanity *through* Christ; now He communicated with humanity *in* Christ. Satan had hoped that God's abhorrence of evil would bring an eternal separation between heaven and earth. But now it was manifest that the connection between God and man had been restored.

This statement tells us that there was different degrees of communication between God and man.

1. Before the fall of man, there was a very close communication between God and man, through Christ. Christ was the primary messenger as we have seen when reading *Patriarchs and Prophets*. This close communication was possible because of the sinlessness, and the high state in which God had created man.
2. But by man's fall into sin, this communication had been hindered; it was not so close anymore, but it was still conducted through Christ.
3. But now when Jesus came "in the likeness of sinful flesh," the Father himself spoke. He had before communicated with humanity through Christ, now He communicated with humanity in Christ.

And this is in agreement with what we read in *Hebrews:*

Hebrews 1 [NKJV]

[1] God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

[2] Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;
[3] Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person,...

This statement shows us Gospel Order in a very wonderful way.

1. Before Christ came to this earth, the Father spoke through Christ, the primary messenger, to the people.
2. When Christ was on this earth, God still spoke through the heavenly primary messengers, which were then Enoch, Moses, Elijah, (the children of Jesus), to Jesus; and in Jesus He spoke to the people.

As He spoke to the people through the messenger in the Old Testament, so He spoke in the New Testament. Only now, Christ the Father's only Son, and the original connector between the Creator and the creatures, had lowered himself, and taken upon himself fallen human nature. Jesus came into this position through God's ordination. By this position on earth, Christ gave an example, a perfect example of how the message should be received by man, because He was in the same mortal form as any other human messenger. Let's read this again:

Hebrews 1 [NKJV]
[1] God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
[2] Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things.

There was a time when I was puzzled about the question:

> "Why is it so necessary that God establishes a single messengership on this earth now while already we have a multiple messengership in heaven?"

The reason is very simple and the diagram[60] shows it a little bit. There needs to be a time of growth, a time of probation and test-

[60] In chapter 29.

ing. This time of testing is very essential for our preparation for the multiple messengership.

When Lucifer sinned against the single messengership in heaven, he thereby unfitted himself totally, for his place and also for a multiple messengership. For this reason he needed first the salvation from the pit of sin, but he also needed time for growth. He needed a time of testing in which he would show that he really was in agreement with God's order, as it was established.

And likewise with us, we need a time of growth, and only when this is accomplished all the way to the last cleansing during the future time of Jacob's trouble, then we will receive our promotion to the multiple messengership in heaven. Meanwhile, we will have a foretaste of it in the time of the latter rain, when there will be many messengers on this earth.

33. Appreciating the Gift

2 Corinthians 9

[15] Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

IN OUR last study we saw that God leads His people from the single messengership to the multiple. But let us now dwell upon the difficulty of recognizing and appreciating the gift of the messenger for what it is.

The same way in which the prophets were treated in the Old Testament, so Christ was treated in the New Testament. He was in the same position, namely that of an earthly primary messenger. And this shows us today what a tremendous gift God gives us when He has given us a messenger through whom He talks to us. It is the same gift as He gave via Jesus to His disciples.

The Disciples

We should stop and think a little bit about how the disciples appreciated this gift. Could they appreciate it? Could they see it? They could not. Let us turn now to some statements, first in *The Desire of Ages* and then later in *The Acts of the Apostles*, to see how Jesus, as the primary messenger, was received by the disciples. In the chapter, "The Feast at Simon's House," you may remember the story of how Simon, the high priest was healed by Christ and made a big feast for Christ out of thankfulness; then Mary came and anointed Jesus with the alabaster box; and the disciples murmured against it. Their reaction showed how little they appreciated the wonderful gift of God in His messenger to them.

The Desire of Ages, p. 564-565:

Christ delighted in the earnest desire of Mary to do the will of her Lord. He accepted the wealth of pure affection which His disciples did not, would not, understand. The desire that Mary had to do this service for her Lord was of more value to Christ than all the precious ointment in the world, because it expressed her appreciation of the world's Redeemer. It was the love of Christ that constrained her. The matchless excellence of the

character of Christ filled her soul. That ointment was a symbol of the heart of the giver. It was the outward demonstration of a love fed by heavenly streams until it overflowed.

The work of Mary was just the lesson the disciples needed to show them that the expression of their love for Him would be pleasing to Christ. He had been everything to them, and they did not realize that soon they would be deprived of His presence, that soon they could offer Him no token of their gratitude for His great love. The loneliness of Christ, separated from the heavenly courts, living the life of humanity, was never understood or appreciated by the disciples as it should have been. He was often grieved because His disciples did not give Him that which He should have received from them. He knew that if they were under the influence of the heavenly angels that accompanied Him, they too would think no offering of sufficient value to declare the heart's spiritual affection.

Their afterknowledge gave them a true sense of the many things they might have done for Jesus expressive of the love and gratitude of their hearts, while they were near Him. When Jesus was no longer with them, and they felt indeed as sheep without a shepherd, they began to see how they might have shown Him attentions that would have brought gladness to His heart. They no longer cast blame upon Mary, but upon themselves. Oh, if they could have taken back their censuring, their presenting the poor as more worthy of the gift than was Christ! They felt the reproof keenly as they took from the cross the bruised body of their Lord.

The disciples could not really appreciate that God spoke to them in Jesus. They appreciated it to a certain extent, they did not reject it like the Pharisees, but they could not fully appreciate it and therefore they incurred a great loss. This loss they felt after the departure of Christ, as we read in *The Acts of the Apostles*, in the chapter on the preparation for Pentecost.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 36:

As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief.

What is the definition of true belief, of true faith? It is faith in God's word *as spoken through His messenger*. So when they had unbelief, what didn't they believe? They didn't believe the word of God as spoken through their messenger, Jesus; that was their unbelief. They didn't fully disbelieve it, but they didn't fully believe it either.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 36:

> As they called to remembrance the words that Christ had spoken to them before His death they understood more fully their meaning. Truths which had passed from their memory were again brought to their minds, and these they repeated to one another. They reproached themselves for their misapprehension of the Saviour. Like a procession, scene after scene of His wonderful life passed before them. As they meditated upon His pure, holy life they felt that no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great, if only they could bear witness in their lives to the loveliness of Christ's character. Oh, if they could but have the past three years to live over, they thought, how differently they would act! If they could only see the Master again, how earnestly they would strive to show Him how deeply they loved Him, and how sincerely they sorrowed for having ever grieved Him by a word or an act of unbelief! But they were comforted by the thought that they were forgiven. And they determined that, so far as possible, they would atone for their unbelief by bravely confessing Him before the world.

As we read this, please don't make the mistake of thinking that we are comparing the present messenger with Christ, as if he was Christ. We are not talking of the vessel here, but of the treasure, although the principle is the same, for the treasure is among us as it was among them. That treasure is the revelation of Christ in the message, and that is tremendous. It is the revelation of Christ in the message that is to lead us to love Him more earnestly, and it is this revelation of Christ that we are to "bravely confess before the world."

The disciples did not fully realize what a great treasure was among them; they could not fully appreciate it. For them Christ

was a talented teacher, and what they should have seen more clearly was that this was God's voice speaking to them in Jesus. That was a very great nearness, a very great privilege. Today we tend to think,

> "If we were alive in the time of Christ, we would have acted differently. We would have really listened to what Jesus had to say!"

In His presence, would we ever dare to stand up and give studies? No, we would rather sit and ask Him to tell us what is the truth. In His presence would we ever discuss and question, whether He did something wrong, or watch to see if He makes a mistake? Well we certainly would do all those things, if today we cannot appreciate what God is giving us in the gift of a living messenger. Let us see very clearly that God has given a great gift in this.

> **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 37:**
> The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. They drew nearer and nearer to God, and as they did this they realized what a privilege had been theirs in being permitted to associate so closely with Christ. Sadness filled their hearts as they thought of how many times they had grieved Him by their slowness of comprehension, their failure to understand the lessons that, for their good, He was trying to teach them.

How many lessons that God has given us through the messenger in the past have we failed to understand and comprehend, and put into practice? Let us now contemplate a little bit, why it was that the disciples did not comprehend what Jesus told them while He was among them. What was the problem, what was the block that hindered the flow of information to come into them?

> [Congregation:] "They saw only the vessel."

But there must be something else.

[Congregation:] "Wrong ideas about the kingdom."

Only wrong ideas?

[Congregation:] "Their fight for supremacy."

Jealousy causes envy, and envy causes rebellion, and this always causes strife for the highest position. That was the very problem of the disciples. They were not satisfied to build God's kingdom His way. They always tried to build God's kingdom their own way.

The Desire of Ages, p. 642:

The whole life of Christ had been a life of unselfish service.

Matthew 20

[28] Not to be ministered unto, but to minister,

–had been the lesson of His every act. But not yet had the disciples learned the lesson. At this last Passover supper, Jesus repeated His teaching by an illustration that impressed it forever on their minds and hearts.

The interviews between Jesus and His disciples were usually seasons of calm joy, highly prized by them all. The Passover suppers had been scenes of special interest; but upon this occasion Jesus was troubled. His heart was burdened, and a shadow rested upon His countenance. As He met the disciples in the upper chamber, they perceived that something weighed heavily upon His mind, and although they knew not its cause, they sympathized with His grief.

As they were gathered about the table, He said in tones of touching sadness,...

And then He gives them some words, talking of His coming suffering. Suddenly He stopped talking. He realized that if He continued to talk it would be for nothing. In the hearts of the disciples there was the desire,

"Who is the greatest in God's kingdom?"

In other words,

"I want to restructure God's kingdom, I want it *my way.*"

And this desire of the disciples was the hindering block that the message of Jesus, which God gave to Him, could not come through. God communicated to man in Jesus, and they did not fully comprehend it.

The same wonderful principle is described in the chapter, "Who is the Greatest," which starts on page 432. In this chapter, we see also that Jesus desired to teach them something important, but He could not teach them because they quarreled with each other about who was the greatest. And in this chapter we are told that the disciples needed a definite change.

The Desire of Ages, p. 436-437:

But when men exalt themselves, feeling that they are a necessity for the success of God's great plan, the Lord causes them to be set aside. It is made evident that the Lord is not dependent upon them. The work does not stop because of their removal from it, but goes forward with greater power.

It was not enough for the disciples of Jesus to be instructed as to the nature of His kingdom.

Likewise, it is not enough that we are instructed about it.

What they needed was a change of heart that would bring them into harmony with its principles. Calling a little child to Him, Jesus set him in the midst of them; then tenderly folding the little one in His arms He said,

Matthew 18

[3] Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The simplicity, the self-forgetfulness, and the confiding love of a little child are the attributes that Heaven values. These are the characteristics of real greatness.

I strongly recommend that you read this chapter. It discusses very carefully about this principle, that we need a change of heart

in order to come into agreement with Gospel Order. This is what the disciples needed, and let us always remember that today we have the same privilege as the disciples had.



We have the voice of God speaking to us in His messenger. This does not mean that the vessel, that is, the messenger himself, is as holy, or as sinless as Christ was; but it means that the treasure that we have in this vessel is the same as the treasure that the disciples had among them back there. It is Christ speaking through a human vessel. But they did not fully appreciate it. Let us not repeat this mistake of the disciples, but appreciate what we have in our time.

We are so used to many ideas and thoughts as we were fed in other churches and we have ingrained in us the mentality that tells us we can easily afford to get some of the truths and leave out others and still get along okay. But for the disciples in the time of Jesus, it was very essential that they made full use out of

the gift that they had in Jesus, because in the times past, God spoke *through* Jesus to them; now God spoke *in* Jesus to them.

In Jesus they had the treasure, they had the tremendous light that shone on this earth, but the disciples were very slow in comprehending it. They were quarreling, who was to be the greatest. They were troubled by old habits, thoughts, ideas, and they were not seeing the importance of the time in which they lived. They did not see that they had only three and a half years to be prepared for the most important work ever given to man, the work of primary messengership. And, for this reason, day after day passed; they got something, but they did not get the fullness because they did not take the gift to the full advantage.

We are in the same danger of doing likewise today. We say,

> "Yes we have a messenger, I recognize him,"

–and then we feel already that we have accomplished a lot or have a strong faith because we say,

> "Yes, I recognize the messenger."

But really to see what God has given to us, that is something else, and we must train ourselves to really take full advantage of the gift. Again let's put ourselves in the position of the disciples. If Jesus were among us today and we were the disciples, would we miss one sermon of His? Would we think we could afford that? Would we, in His presence, discuss our own ideas and thoughts? No! We would be like Mary and want to sit at His feet to listen to every word.

We tend to make a difference between Jesus and the messenger today. Yes, there is a difference as far as the vessel is concerned, but the treasure of truth is the same, and to make this very clear, let us again turn to *Galatians:*

Galatians 4

[12] Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all.

[13] You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.
[14] And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

Paul says to the Galatians,

"You received me as Christ Jesus."

Did Paul make himself equal with Christ Jesus by saying that? No! So in what sense was he the same as Christ Jesus? The same treasure (the truth and the life) was in the vessel, and this is what he told the Galatians. Whereas the disciples were slow to comprehend the gift that God had given them in the messenger Jesus, the Galatians were not slow. But they grasped it at the beginning, until false teachers came, and then the problem broke out again.

Mary

Let us for a moment look at the situation of Mary to see in what way there was at least one person who could appreciate the gift of God. We turn to the chapter of the resurrection of Lazarus, titled "Lazarus Come Forth."

The Desire of Ages, p. 524:

At the home of Lazarus, Jesus had often found rest. The Saviour had no home of His own; He was dependent on the hospitality of His friends and disciples, and often, when weary, thirsting for human fellowship, He had been glad to escape to this peaceful household, away from the suspicion and jealousy of the angry Pharisees. Here He found a sincere welcome, and pure, holy friendship. Here He could speak with simplicity and perfect freedom, knowing that His words would be understood and treasured.

Treasured means…? Appreciate; to see a treasure in it.

Our Saviour appreciated a quiet home and interested listeners. He longed for human tenderness, courtesy, and affection. Those who received the heavenly instruction He was always ready to

impart were greatly blessed. As the multitudes followed Christ through the open fields, He unfolded to them the beauties of the natural world. He sought to open the eyes of their understanding, that they might see how the hand of God upholds the world. In order to call out an appreciation of God's goodness and benevolence, He called the attention of His hearers to the gently falling dew, to the soft showers of rain and the bright sunshine...

So we read something of the teachings of Jesus here, and then we come to the next paragraph.

The Desire of Ages, p. 525:

As Christ gave His wonderful lessons, Mary sat at His feet, a reverent and devoted listener. On one occasion, Martha, perplexed with the care of preparing the meal, went to Christ, saying,

Luke 10

40 Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

This was the time of Christ's first visit to Bethany. The Saviour and His disciples had just made the toilsome journey on foot from Jericho. Martha was anxious to provide for their comfort, and in her anxiety she forgot the courtesy due to her Guest. Jesus answered her with mild and patient words,

41 Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things:

42 But one thing is needful: and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Mary was storing her mind with the precious words falling from the Saviour's lips, words that were more precious to her than earth's most costly jewels.

That was an appreciation, wasn't it? She did not care about the worldly things so much as listening to the words from the Saviour, because they were the words of the messenger for her.

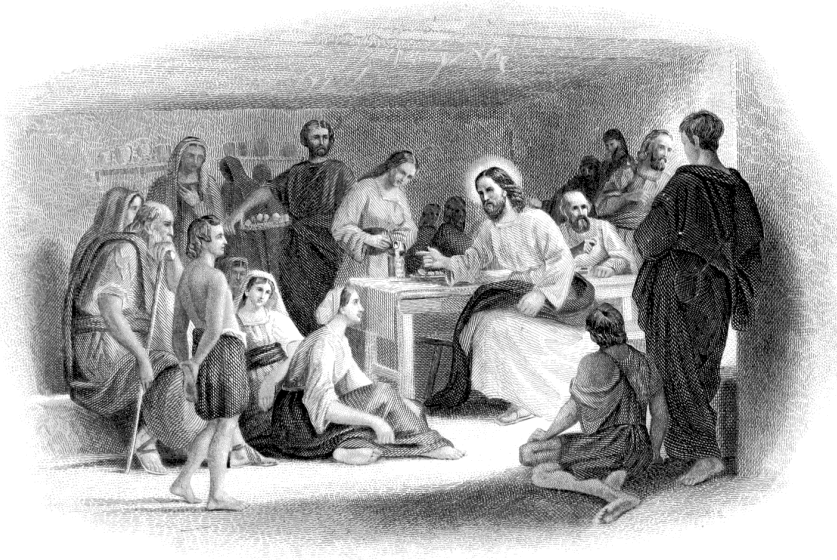
The Desire of Ages, p. 525:

The "one thing" that Martha needed was a calm, devotional spirit, a deeper anxiety for knowledge concerning the future, immortal life, and the graces necessary for spiritual advancement.

She needed a greater anxiety for the spiritual things.

The Desire of Ages, p. 525:

She needed less anxiety for the things which pass away, and more for those things which endure forever. Jesus would teach His children to seize every opportunity of gaining that knowledge which will make them wise unto salvation. The cause of Christ, needs careful energetic workers. There is a wide field for the Marthas, with their zeal in active religious work. But let them first sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus. Let diligence, promptness, and energy be sanctified by the grace of Christ; then the life will be an unconquerable power for good.



So this little story which we studied here, shows something of the needed appreciation towards the gifts that God is giving to us. And the same gift He gave to the disciples in Jesus, He has given to us in the messenger today.

34. The Sabbath

THE Sabbath is another gift of God to us. We want to understand now for what purpose God has given us the gift of the Sabbath. We will study it in the light of Gospel Order.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 48:

God saw that a Sabbath was *essential* for man, *even in Paradise*. He needed to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God and meditate upon His power and goodness. He needed a Sabbath to remind him more vividly of God and to awaken gratitude because all that he enjoyed and possessed came from the beneficent hand of the Creator.

Whatever God does, He does not do on a whim, but because it is necessary. When God gives us a messenger, He doesn't do it because He likes to play games with us, but because He knows we need a messenger. When He gives us one messenger, He gives it because we only need one.

And likewise with the Sabbath. God does not like to give us a day in order to play games with us. He gives us a Sabbath because this is necessary; as it says here, "essential." What does the word *essential* imply? You must have it, you cannot do without it. Without a Sabbath, we would be lost. So man needs a Sabbath and God saw this. And it says here that, "even in Paradise," God saw that the Sabbath was essential for man. So likewise today, it is essential.

We have been educated with a wrong Sabbath-keeping spirit, especially if we grew up in the Adventist church. There, questions were asked,

"What may I do on the Sabbath, and what may I not do?"

And big discussions are held about these questions. This education has led us to view the Sabbath as something that is a burden rather than something which we need. In the same way, there is a

danger in seeing the messenger as something of a burden, rather than something which we need. This is because of Satan's false picture which he has drawn of the Sabbath and of the messenger.

We will now compare the messenger with the Sabbath, and we will see that there are absolute parallels: both are gifts from God.

Purpose of the Sabbath

Why is the Sabbath essential for man? Why does he need it? Why can't he be without it? After all, we don't only have Sabbath rest on the Sabbath day, do we? That wouldn't be right to have Sabbath rest only on Sabbath, and then all six days we do our own work without God, totally separate from Him. That is not the idea at all. We have learned, in the Sabbath Rest message, that the Sabbath principle is a principle that has to go through our whole life. It is very essential. So then, why not keep seven days? Why have only one day out of seven?

Even though there are professing Christians who say,

> "I keep Sabbath every day,"

–it is essential that we have one day out of seven, for the following reasons:

During the week, when we work together with God in our daily pursuits, in building up a house, or in the bakery, or in the engineering profession, or on the farm, then all the time that we work, we work together with God. Even the worldlings do this, to a certain extent, because if they would not work together with God, they would not succeed in their work.

The farmer, whether he acknowledges or not, works together with God. Because when he sows his seed, he sows it in trust that the seed will receive rain, which he cannot give, that the seed will germinate, which he cannot make happen, and so forth. Isn't this so? So each one who works, works together with God. Those who understand the Sabbath rest principles, they will work more efficiently.

When we work together with God in our daily pursuits, then we are very busy and hard working. In this cooperation, who is doing the greater part? God or us? God is doing the greater part; by far the greater part. This is what we emphasize during these studies too, for when the preacher preaches the message as good as he can, then the Holy Spirit does a work in bringing it to the hearts of each one individually. Who does the greater work? The Holy Spirit, by far.

Likewise in our daily pursuits, whatever we do, God does by far the greater part of the work. What we do is almost insignificant and yet we have to do it because it is through God's grace and our own diligent effort[61] that we accomplish good results. But when we work very hard during the week day, do we see that God is doing the greater part? Not at all. And that is the reason why many people do not admit that they cooperate with God. They say,

> "It is all done by myself. Look what I have done!"

What did Nebuchadnezzar say when he erected his wonderful Babylon?

> "Look what I have done. That is my wonderful work!"[62]

And so likewise, men today praise themselves. They praise their own works and say,

> "How wonderful what I have accomplished!"

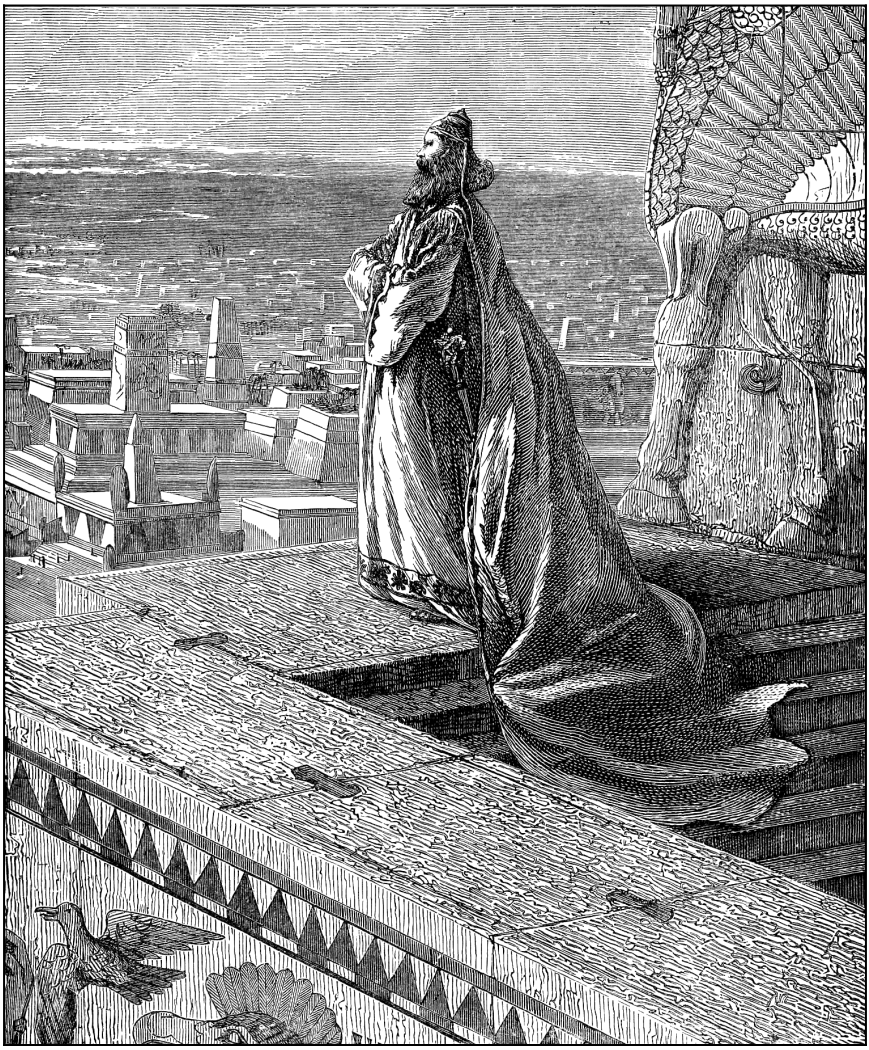
–forgetting that God does the greater work. In their busy struggle, they lose sight of the part that God is doing. And so, to cooperate successfully with God, a Sabbath is necessary, because on that day we lay aside all work, stop everything, and concentrate fully on looking into that which God does. We concentrate on the

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[61] *The Great Controversy*, p. 425: "Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil."

[62] **Daniel 4** [30] Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?

greater part which God has done, so we do not forget Him, and walk in our own strength. That is the purpose of the Sabbath.



King Nebuchadnezzar admiring great Babylon "which I have built." The Sabbath was designed to prevent such self-sufficiency.

Needed Even in Paradise

Even in paradise, Adam and Eve needed a Sabbath, and if the Sabbath had fully accomplished its purpose for them, they would

never have fallen. Let us see this for a moment by turning to *Patriarchs and Prophets*, in chapter 3, "The Temptation and the Fall."

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53:

> The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone. But absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side.

When she was absorbed in her pleasing task, she was cooperating with God in her daily work. She was working, just as we do in the six days, and there was nothing wrong with it. There is nothing wrong with being absorbed in the pleasing task of the work which we do. But in this absorption,

> ...she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger, but dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it.

In her daily work, Eve was cooperating with God. Her daily work was mainly learning the things of nature, and while she was learning them, God was her teacher. It was His wisdom, and His strength which was imparted to her, giving her ability to understand all these things.

While she was so absorbed in her pleasing task, and then realized that she had wandered away from her husband, she dismissed her fears, and felt that she had wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it. The success she was having in her work built in her a measure of self-confidence. But God knew her weakness better than she did, and He had instructed the angels to warn her to keep by the side of her husband. God had provided help for her, through the angels, through Adam, and through His Spirit, but now in her mind, she did not need all that help. So she shifted her faith from the work that God was doing, to the work that she was doing, and this caused her fall, as we

have studied earlier this week.[63] If this could happen in paradise to sinless creatures, imagine how much more we, in our fallen nature, need the Sabbath.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 48:**
> God saw that a Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise. He needed to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God and meditate upon His power and goodness. He needed a Sabbath to remind him more vividly of God [*i.e.* of God's wisdom and strength], and to awaken gratitude because all that he enjoyed and possessed came from the beneficent hand of the Creator.

This shows that the Sabbath was not given so that God could exalt himself. Very much the opposite. He gave us the Sabbath because we need it in order to be able to stay in the lines of righteousness. Without the Sabbath we couldn't do it. It is very essential for man.

Taking Full Advantage of the Gift

The great problem is that we do not take the full advantage of this gift. Because Satan has so educated our minds that we consider God's gift as a restriction of our liberty, we tend to rebel against His gift to a certain extent, and for this reason do not take full advantage of it. Instead of seeing that this is a tremendous gift that God has given us now, we tend, even unconsciously, to think,

> "Well, this is a day where *I have to do* this, and *I have to do* that."

And because we force ourselves to do things that we do not love to do, this day becomes oppressive. But a true Christian will not find God's ways oppressive. We must learn to appreciate the gift and to take full advantage of it every hour.

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[63] See Chapter 6, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, under the subtitle, "The Fall of Adam and Eve."

The Sabbath day has twenty four hours. We also have to sleep, as we sleep on other days, but would it be ideal to sleep more on the Sabbath than on other days? To have a long sleep in the afternoon? Would it be ideal? That would give physical rest, but we would not be able to take full advantage of the time then. The purpose of the Sabbath is not to sleep, but to study God's works; to lay aside every worldly work and every worldly thought, in order to focus on searching into what God has done. This leads us to spend time studying nature and the Word of God. But the problem is that we do not see that every hour, in fact every minute of this day, is precious time.

> "Well," you may say, "if I miss a few minutes here and there, next Sabbath I can gain them."

But we must see this gift as such a precious jewel, as though it was the last Sabbath we had, and it is now that we must make full use of it. Just imagine you would live only twenty four hours more, what would you do with these last hours? Would you sleep? If you are a true Christian, you wouldn't do this. You would make full use out of these minutes.

Likewise if you are together with a dear friend, or your husband or wife whom you are about to be separated from for a long time, then when you are together with them for only twenty four hours more, you would make full use out of that time together. This is what we need to be impressed with, not to regard God's gifts as a restriction of our liberty, but as they really are, a very precious gift.

In *The Desire of Ages*, in the chapter, "The Sabbath," we are told how Satan had succeeded through the Jews and the Pharisees, to make the Sabbath something that was viewed as a restriction of liberty; while God had really given it as a gift:

The Desire of Ages, p. 288:

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,"[64] Jesus said.

God did not make the Sabbath first, and then He made man. He made man first on the sixth day, and then He gave him a Sabbath. The Sabbath was not a cage to put man into, like a prisoner. But rather it was a gift for him which he needed.

The Sabbath and the Messenger

In our comparison of the Sabbath and the messenger, let us read it a little bit differently:

"The messenger was made for man, [he was made for us] and not we for the messenger."

The Desire of Ages, p. 288:

The institutions that God has established are for the benefit of mankind.

2 Corinthians 4

15 All things are for your sakes.

1 Corinthians 3

22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.

In *1 Corinthians 3* there is a discussion of the problems that were in that church, where some said, "I am of Paul," and others, "I am of Apollos." Instead of seeing that these people were only the gift of God, they started to praise the vessel and made themselves dependent on the vessel. Paul refuted this and he said very clearly,

"It is not the vessel which serves you and which you shall look at, but it is the gift of God."

And so he emphasizes this:

[64] *Mark* 2:27.

1 Corinthians 3

[4] For while one says, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal?
[5] Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?
[6] I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.
[7] So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase.
[8] Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.
[9] For we are laborers together with God: you are God's husbandry, you are God's building.
[10] According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon.
[11] For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
[21] Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours:
[22] Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours.
[23] And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

To praise the man is a danger, for it is God who gives the gift in the messenger. In the same manner, there is a danger to praise the sabbath day, instead of the gift in the sabbath day. What does it mean to praise the day? It means that we say,

> "On the Sabbath, you must do this and you must do that."

There was a time when I believed that the Sabbath day was different from the other days. But the day is not different. If it was different, then the sun would shine on every Sabbath while on the other six days it would rain. Or it would be nice and cool on the Sabbath, while it would be very hot on the other six days. Do we find this to be the case? Are the birds different on the Sabbath than on the Friday? And the kangaroos and the animals, are they different in any way? Not at all. The birds feed their youngsters on the Sabbath as well as on all the other days.

There was a time when I believed it was different. I thought to myself,

> "If I were on an island, and was ship-wrecked and not knowing what day it was, all I would need to do is to observe nature; then I would observe the animals and see when they kept Sabbath, and then I would know when it was the Sabbath."

But after watching nature more carefully, I saw that the animals are not different at all. They do on Sabbath exactly the same thing as on other days. The day is the same as all the other days. What then is so special with the Sabbath? The gift. The treasure in the vessel. And what is the gift? What is the treasure in this day? It is the promise that God will commune with us on this day, that is the treasure. God makes himself available to us on this day, so that we may commune with Him.

The Desire of Ages, p. 288:

Mark 2

[27] The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,

–Jesus said. The institutions that God has established for the benefit of mankind.

2 Corinthians 4

[15] All things are for your sakes.

1 Corinthians 3

[22] Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,...

Was Paul, Apollos, Cephas different to all the other Christians? They were a vessel as all the others, but what has God given them; a treasure. He has put His truth in them to give it to the church. So likewise Jesus was for us. There is nothing special in the outward appearance of Jesus, neither in His human nature, but the fact that God put His light in this person, and gave it to us, this is the gift of God and of this we must take full advantage. And not make ourselves guilty like the disciples by neglecting to take full advantage of this gift.

The Desire of Ages, p. 288:

The law of Ten Commandments, of which the Sabbath forms a part, God gave to His people as a blessing.

Deuteronomy 6

[24] The Lord commanded us, [said Moses,] to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive.

And through the psalmist the message was given to Israel,

Psalm 100

[2] Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing.

[3] Know you that the Lord He is God: it is He that has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

Mark 2

[28] Wherefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.

These words are full of instruction and comfort. Because the Sabbath was made for man, it is the Lord's day. It belongs to Christ. For,

John 1

[3] All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.

Since He made all things, He made the Sabbath. By Him it was set apart as a memorial of the work of creation. It points to Him as both the Creator and the Sanctifier.

And the same situation exists in the case of the messenger: he is made by Christ and not by man; he points us to Christ and not to man. That is the reason we need this gift and we must take full advantage of it.

Some say, if the Sabbath is not different from other days, why not keep Friday or Tuesday? Why keep the seventh day? In the same way, you can ask the question,

> "Why listen to the messenger and not to somebody else? If he is the same person as anybody else, if he is the same human being, why listen to the messenger and not to anybody else?"

Why? Because God has put His truth in this human vessel, which He has not put in another vessel. And the same is true of the Sabbath. Why keep the seventh day? Because God has put His treasure in this day and not in another day. He is available to us only on this day, for this kind of communication. When we come to God on Monday, or Tuesday, or on Sunday, then we will not find the same kind of communication available as on the seventh day. If we choose a day for rest that God has not appointed, we will end up listening to messengers that God has not appointed also. Then we will receive false messages, and certainly will not enter into His rest. Those are the serious consequences.

Only the gift of God can lead us to success, and can help us to finish the battle. All the other suggestions of man make will lead us to ruin. And when the king of the north tells us that he has another vessel, namely Sunday, in which God is supposed to put His gift, if we follow, then we will surely miss our connection with God. And so likewise, if we follow a false messenger, we will surely server our connection with God.

Summary

So let us summarize the parallels between the Sabbath day and the messenger:

The Sabbath Day	The Messenger
Made for man	Made for man
Essential for man	Essential for man
Treasure in an earthen vessel	Treasure in an earthen vessel
Sabbath blessing only found here	Present Truth only found here
The blessing connects man with God	The message connects man with God

Sunday is a false messenger because Sunday is man-appointed. As we know, the last conflict will be over Sunday/Sabbath. This also means that the final conflict will be over the false and true messenger, as we have seen in our studies about the King of the

North and the King of the South.[65] Satan enters the kingdom of God to try and restructure it, and this is why he tries to set up a false messenger. That is what the last struggle will be about. Let us really understand this and arrange our lives accordingly.



"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings." Isaiah 52:7

[65] PP Editor's note: Readers are directed to the materials: *The Seven Angels*, *Last Day Events*, *Armageddon*, and *Revelation 17*. Also, the next year's camp theme, conducted by Andreas in 1990, was on the King of the North, and will be available soon. Check the website.

35. Paul and the Church in Jerusalem

WE HAVE seen that Sunday is a false messenger, and the final conflict will be between the false and the true messenger. This applies to the controversy between Sunday and the Sabbath, and also to the instrument that God is using to speak to His people. We keep Sabbath as only one day out of seven, and not two days, or three days, or four days, or seven days. And likewise, we have only one primary messenger, and not two, three, or seven.

A Multitude of Counselors

There is a statement in *Proverbs* which seems to contradict this, in some minds at least, because people say that this arrangement of only one messenger is a dangerous arrangement. They reason that if this one person makes a mistake, then the damage is very great, so there is safety in more persons teaching as primary messengers, and then they can check and counter-check each other and so we can control the whole situation a little bit.

This is true as far as democratic systems of government are concerned. There it is safe to have a governing cabinet, in which people discuss about the important decisions that they have to make. And even a leader of the government will have a bunch of counselors who tell him what to do because he knows that he makes mistakes.

If a messenger would by himself lead the church, then he would also need a lot of counselors, and even then he would not do it right. Neither the messenger, nor the Sabbath, is the real leader of the church, it is God alone. And God uses only the instrument, the vessel.

> **Proverbs 11**
> [14] Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

"Ah ha," many would say, "so therefore it is safe to have many messengers because there is safety in the multitude."

But there is a difference between a counselor and a messenger. It is not in the "multitude of messengers" that there is safety, but in the "multitude of counselors." What is the difference between a counselor, and a primary messenger? There is a difference:

- A primary messenger is a person who receives the message from God, and gives it on to the church.
- A counselor is a person who gives advise, opinions or knowledge, but there are very few who can really give wise counsel.

Under what conditions can we be a counselor?

- Only under the direction of God, and
- Only if we are truly grounded in the message.

A counsel, in order to be wise, needs to be based on the message. All other wisdom or knowledge is foolishness and leads to destruction. So therefore only a person who thoroughly understands the message can be a wise counselor. Then he will be able to give counsel in practical situations of life.

But as a general rule it is wise to keep yourself back than to be quick in giving counsel. There are so many people who think they are called to be counselors, while in fact they make themselves messengers instead. How does this happen? When a man gives a counsel that is not based on the message, then it is his own message, based on his own thoughts, and he makes himself a messenger. In order to become a good counselor, there is one condition: a very firm grounding in the message, and then according to God's guidance only, can we become counselors.

I want to share some examples of how dangerous it is to try to be a counselor when we are not. There was a time when I had to make a very important decision which involved a lot of money and I felt very incapable of making this decision. I felt there is

safety if I ask many people, especially believers. And so I wrote a letter and duplicated it and sent it out to the believers. I expected that God would so arrange matters that from this source I would receive encouragement and strength in the right decision. But to my dismay and disappointment, I received a lot of letters: one saying I should do this, and the other saying I should do that. There were many different counsels. There was no safety in this procedure, but rather confusion.

It is not wrong to have consultation with believers, but when believers make themselves quick advisers, then you receive different instructions all going in different directions, and confusing a matter, the original problem becomes even more complicated and more difficult, and in the end you don't know what to do. Then you must forget all these opinions and go to God directly anyway.

So there is safety in the multitude of counselors, but only if these people are grounded in the message and therefore have the same aim. Otherwise it only leads to confusion, and makes the situation more difficult.

A governor today, a president or prime minister, or whatever he is, has a hard time because he has so many advisers telling him different things and he never knows exactly what to do. Human leaders are placed in a very difficult situation.

Paul's Confirmation

Let us turn now to the life of Paul and look at some examples in his life to see in what way Paul was really living out Gospel Order. And we will also see in what way Satan worked to restructure God's kingdom thereby destroying it to such an extent that the work has been delayed for almost two thousand years. This history teaches an important lesson that we must understand: in order to be able to finish the work, it is imperative that we embrace Gospel Order.

Let us turn first of all to the confirmation of Paul in the church. This chapter shows us something of the responsibility that the church has towards those who stand up as teachers in the church.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 160:

God had abundantly blessed the labors of Paul and Barnabas during the year they remained with the believers in Antioch. But neither of them had as yet been formally ordained to the gospel ministry. They had now reached a point in their Christian experience when God was about to entrust them with the carrying forward of a difficult missionary enterprise, in the prosecution of which they would need every advantage that could be obtained through the agency of the church.

Acts 13

[1] There were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manean,...and Saul.

[2] As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

Before being sent forth as missionaries to the heathen world, these apostles were solemnly dedicated to God by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands. Thus they were authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches, being invested with full *ecclesiastical authority*.

The words "ecclesiastical authority" frighten some people because these words remind them of the Catholic church. But the church of God has ecclesiastical authority, this is what we just read. The fallen churches exercise something that they call "ecclesiastical authority," but this is only a perversion of the true. Only in the true Church of God will there be found real ecclesiastical authority.

What does the word "ecclesiastical" mean? It is a Greek word, and it is translated into English as *church*, or *the chosen*. So it means here being invested with full "church authority." Paul and Barnabas were serving in Antioch for quite some time, and they

needed every advantage that could be obtained through the agency of the church. There were many false teachers coming up, and many rumors against Paul and his work, so there needed to be a public confirmation of his call. Not Paul, not the Church, but the Holy Spirit arranged this public confirmation:

Acts 13
[2] As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

There was no committee coming together and saying,

"Now, we will choose Barnabas and Paul, they have shown themselves to be very promising workers, and we will lay hands on them."

There was nothing like this. It was the Holy Ghost who arranged this situation and the language is so clear that it could not be misunderstood. We are not told exactly how the Holy Ghost said this. I would expect that He spoke through the prophets that were there:

Acts 13
[1] Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Everybody could see that the Holy Ghost had spoken and there was no question about this and so Paul and Barnabas were set aside.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 161:
The Christian church was at this time entering upon an important era. The work of proclaiming the gospel message among the Gentiles was now to be prosecuted with vigor; and as a result the church was to be strengthened by a great ingathering of souls.

It goes on to say how they would be questioned and that it would help that they had received this public confirmation. Like-

wise baptism is a public declaration on the part of those who are members, that now they belong to the brotherhood of the church, and this helps the other believers very much to identify them as brothers and sisters in the family of God. If a person thinks,

> "Well the main thing is that I am committed to baptism with God, and the church has nothing to do with it,"

–then they rob the church of a very important testimony. Nobody should be baptized who is not really born again, but once he is born again, the church needs his public testimony in order to identify him.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 162-163:

> The circumstances connected with the separation of Paul and Barnabas by the Holy Spirit to a definite line of service show clearly that the Lord works through appointed agencies in His organized church. Years before, when the divine purpose concerning Paul was first revealed to him by the Saviour himself, Paul was immediately afterward brought into contact with members of the newly organized church at Damascus. Furthermore, the church at that place was not long left in darkness as to the personal experience of the converted Pharisee.
>
> And now, when the divine commission given at that time was to be more fully carried out, the Holy Spirit, again bearing witness concerning Paul as a chosen vessel to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, laid upon the church the work of ordaining him and his fellow laborer. As the leaders of the church in Antioch "ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

So, the church has authority, which means responsibility. We cannot be passive listeners only, we must make a distinction between the true messenger and false teachers. That is a very essential part of Gospel Order. That is the responsibility of the church and nobody can take this away from her.

Early Writings, p. 100:

> Again the danger of those traveling whom God has not called, was shown me. If they do have some success, the qualifications

that are lacking will be felt. Injudicious moves will be made, and by a lack of wisdom some precious souls may be driven where they can never be reached.

I saw that the church should feel their responsibility and should look carefully and attentively at the lives, qualifications, and general course of those who profess to be teachers. If unmistakable evidence is not given that God has called them, and that the "woe" is upon them if they heed not this call, it is the duty of the church to act and let it be known that these persons are not acknowledged as teachers by the church.

This does not describe a passive church. The church is not to just wait until a false teacher falls out by himself. No, it must clearly make a decision and say,

"This teacher is not recognized by us,"

–and so they make it known.

Early Writings, p. 100:

This is the only course the church can take in order to be clear in this matter, for the burden lies upon them.

If we have allowed teachers who have not given unmistakable evidence that they were called by God, we are guilty, because we have not taken up our responsibility which is clearly described here.

The Woe of God

"Unmistakable evidence," is evidence that can be clearly seen. The Lord makes it clear when He has chosen a worker, and especially a teacher for the church. And so He did in the Antioch church. There was unmistakable evidence that Paul and Barnabas were chosen, and the church could investigate this by looking at the qualifications, and asking the question,

"Is the 'woe' of God upon them?"

What is the "woe" of God? When someone is called of God to deliver a message, and they fail to do so, then they feel an im-

mense burden of guilt. This "woe" could be described as an anguish that is felt when Jesus has been forced to turn away from one who fails to deliver a God-ordained directive. One who is not sent of God will not feel this. Ellen White once saw in a dream the results that would happen if she would not faithfully transmit the message God gave her:

Early Writings, p. 76-77:

When the Lord first gave me messages to deliver to His people, it was hard for me to declare them, and I often softened them down and made them as mild as possible for fear of grieving some. It was a great trial to declare the messages as the Lord gave them to me. I did not realize that I was so unfaithful and did not see the sin and danger of such a course until in vision I was taken into the presence of Jesus. He looked upon me with a frown and turned His face from me. It is not possible to describe the terror and agony I then felt. I fell upon my face before Him, but had no power to utter a word. Oh, how I longed to be covered and hid from that dreadful frown! Then could I realize, in some degree, what the feeling of the lost will be when they cry,

Revelation 6

[16] Mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

Presently an angel bade me rise, and the sight that met my eyes can hardly be described. A company was presented before me whose hair and garments were torn and whose countenances were the very picture of despair and horror. They came close to me and took their garments and rubbed them on mine. I looked upon my garments and saw that they were stained with blood, and that blood was eating holes in them. Again I fell like one dead at the feet of my accompanying angel. I could not plead one excuse. My tongue refused all utterance, and I longed to be away from such a holy place.

Again the angel stood me upon my feet and said, "This is not your case now, but this scene has passed before you to let you know what your situation must be if you neglect to declare to others what the Lord has revealed to you. But if you are faithful to the end, you shall eat of the tree of life and shall drink of the river of the water of life. You will have to suffer much, but the

grace of God is sufficient." I then felt willing to do all that the Lord might require me to do that I might have His approbation and not feel His dreadful frown.

So a messenger knows very well they must faithfully present what God has given them. If they in any way soften the message down because it is not popular, because it seems to be too hard, because it may make enemies, then they will definitely feel the "woe" of God. What was shown to Mrs. White of what would happen to her if she was not faithful, this was the "woe" of God. This does not mean that God changes, or ceases to be loving. But it means that there is a separation in the relationship between Him and the messenger.

One of the evidences, or proofs for a person to know if they are called of God, is that they must really feel the burden to the point that if they refuse, then they fear to lose their life, and fear to be guilty of the loss of souls. Paul clearly had this evidence, because he says,

Romans 1

[14] I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

As a debtor you have to pay continually. And in this position, Paul never could finish paying off his debt.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 163:

God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church—Christ's body—is left in darkness.

It is the responsibility of each member of the church to communicate the light that they receive. That includes each one of us.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 163:

In His providence He places His servants in close connection with His church in order that they may have less confidence in themselves and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work. There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence.

There are always those who incline towards individual independence. They say,

"I am responsible to nobody and therefore I can do what I like."

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 163:

They seem unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his brethren, especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people. God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for he who does this despises the voice of God. Those who are inclined to regard their individual judgment as supreme are in grave peril.

We see this in the history of Eve. She regarded her individual judgment as supreme.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53-54:

The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone.

Her individual judgment told her otherwise:

On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger, but dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it.

And so,

Acts of the Apostles, p. 163:

> Those who...regard their individual judgment as supreme are in grave peril. It is Satan's studied effort to separate such ones from those who are channels of light, through whom God has wrought to build up and extend His work in the earth.

It is Satan's studied effort to separate those who are inclined to individual independence from the messenger of God. This can be done in several ways. They don't have to leave the church, but they can just *neglect to study present truth*. This separates them from those who are channels of light. A "studied effort" is something that has been really worked out through trial and experimentation until there is great skill. Satan is very skilled in knowing how to separate people from the channels of light.

> To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth, is to reject the means that He has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people.
>
> For any worker in the Lord's cause to pass these by, and to think that his light must come through no other channel than directly from God, is to place himself in a position where he is liable to be deceived by the enemy and overthrown.
>
> The Lord in His wisdom has arranged that by means of the close relationship that should be maintained by all believers, Christian shall be united to Christian and church to church. Thus the human instrumentality will be enabled to cooperate with the divine.

Gospel Order is a mighty gift of God to us and it is the only way to keep us really in His way. An example of how it works is shown in the calling of Paul and how he acted in agreement with the church, and the responsibility of the church toward him.

Second Missionary Journey

We want to turn our attention to Paul's second missionary journey. He was revisiting the churches he had visited on his first missionary journey. He went through Galatia, and then later Thessalonica, then down to Athens and finally to Corinth. For a

time in Athens he was standing alone and while he was there, he endeavored to bring the gospel to these people, but his work was not very successful. Athens at that time was a center of learning, like Corinth, and the people were very educated and thought very highly of themselves. They were wise in their own sight. Paul was trying to meet them halfway, and when they gave him permission to speak, he spoke in very carefully chosen words, which he thought would reach them. He used some words even from their own poets.[66] After the sermon was over, only a few souls accepted the message and altogether his labors were not very successful in there. So, when he came to Corinth he pursued another course in his preaching.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 244:

In preaching the gospel in Corinth, the apostle followed a course different from that which had marked his labors at Athens. While in the latter place, he had sought to adapt his style to the character of his audience; he had met logic with logic, science with science, philosophy with philosophy.

As he thought of the time thus spent, and realized that his teaching in Athens had been productive of but little fruit, he decided to follow another plan of labor in Corinth in his efforts to arrest the attention of the careless and the indifferent. He determined to avoid elaborate arguments and discussions, and "not to know anything" among the Corinthians "save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." He would preach to them "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." *1 Corinthians* 2:2, 4.

In Athens he was putting his message in the package of a wonderful speech, in a wonderful shining vessel, in order to make it more attractive to the people. But in Corinth he realized that the vessel must not receive any glory. The treasure must be lifted up, not the vessel. Those who have no treasure, who only have corruptible things to present, they wrap their ideas in a glorious vessel. It is similar in the fallen churches. They look very glorious in

[66] *Acts* 17:28.

outward show. The true church of God looks poor in comparison. But it has the treasure of the present truth.

1 Corinthians 2
[1] And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.
[2] For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
[3] I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.
[4] And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
[5] That your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Paul was absolutely uncompromising in Corinth, and his work was much more successful. That is the principle, we have such a treasure in an earthen vessel. The human thought is usually put into excellency of speech, and that is the message of human origin; while the true revelation comes in a vessel that preaches the message in weakness, in fear, in much trembling. And this is the message of divine origin. This is just a little remark on the life of Paul to show in what way he preached the message.

Last Journey to Jerusalem

Let us now come, to his last time as a free messenger before he was taken a prisoner. On his last journey to Jerusalem, Paul was full of fear for good reasons, because he knew that in Jerusalem there awaited him a very strong battle from the king of the north.

Romans 15
[30] Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me,
[31] That I may be delivered from those in Judea who *do not believe*, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints.

Who are those who "do not believe"? Are they those who are heathen? No! in Jerusalem there were no heathen. There were only believers; there were only those who believed in the word of God. But, they did not believe in the word of God as spoken through the messenger. Therefore in this sense they were unbelievers. So when Paul feared the unbelievers in Jerusalem and asked the Romans to pray for him that he may be safe from them, he was praying to be saved from those who did not believe in God's word *as spoken through His messenger*. That was his fear and justly so. And who were these people? Were these only the Jews, the Pharisees who were not converted to Christianity? No, it was the very Christians in that place.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 400:

In the earlier years of the gospel work among the Gentiles some of the leading brethren at Jerusalem, clinging to former prejudices and habits of thought, had not cooperated heartily with Paul and his associates. In their anxiety to preserve a few meaningless forms and ceremonies, they had lost sight of the blessing that would come to them and to the cause they loved, through an effort to unite in one all parts of the Lord's work. Although desirous of safeguarding the best interests of the Christian church,...

So when it comes to motives, how many points do the elders in Jerusalem get? 100%. And when it comes to performance, how many points to they get? None at all! Good motives are not the only factor that matter; good motives cannot make up for bad actions. God does not hold us guilty for our mistakes when we are ignorant because the light has not yet shone. But when the light is shining, and we do not take hold of it, but let our "good motives" lead us in the wrong direction, then this will lead to bad results, and we are accountable. We must exactly follow the procedures of Gospel Order. That is what is important.

We learn from this that the enemies of the cause may appear to be its friends, and may have very good motives. They may desire to safeguard the interests of God's cause. And while we cannot

judge the motives, we can discern the way. And the way of these unbelieving brethren, who worked against Gospel Order, was a bad way.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 400-401:

> ...they [that is, the leaders in Jerusalem] had failed to keep step with the advancing providences of God, and in their human wisdom attempted to throw about workers many unnecessary restrictions. Thus there arose a group of man who were unacquainted personally with the changing circumstances and peculiar needs met by laborers in distant fields, yet who insisted that they had the authority to direct their brethren in these fields to follow certain specified methods of labor. They felt as if the work of preaching the gospel should be carried forward in harmony with their opinions.

And as they dealt with others, so likewise with Paul: they purposed very firmly that they could not support him unless he would submit to their plans.

> Several years had passed since the brethren in Jerusalem, with representatives from other leading churches, gave careful consideration to the perplexing questions that had arisen over methods followed by those who were laboring for the Gentiles. As a result of this council, the brethren had united in making definite recommendations to the churches concerning certain rites and customs, including circumcision. It was at this general council that the brethren had also united in commending to the Christian churches Barnabas and Paul as laborers worthy of the full confidence of every believer.

Now when they made this recommendation, it was almost inexcusable that later on they were again influenced by false reports.

> Among those present at this meeting, were some who had severely criticized the methods of labor followed by the apostles upon whom rested the chief burden of carrying the gospel to the Gentile world.

We see two methods of labor: those specified by the elders in Jerusalem, and those that Paul followed. Those that Paul followed were the methods particularly given by God.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 401:

> But during the council their views of God's purpose had broadened, and they had united with their brethren in making wise decisions which made possible the unification of the entire body of believers.
>
> Afterward, when it became apparent that the converts among the Gentiles were increasing rapidly, there were a few of the leading brethren at Jerusalem who began to cherish anew their former prejudices against the methods of Paul and his associates.

The methods of Paul came by revelation. So when they criticized that, whom did they criticize? God himself.

> These prejudices strengthened with the passing of the years,...

Likewise, if there are any prejudices against the messenger, who brings the truth, these prejudices will always strengthen with the passing years. This happens very easily. Once it is there, it strengthens and grows. And so it was back then. They heard a report from here, and a rumor from there, and these stories would tell how there were many Gentiles coming into the church who did not keep the law of Moses, who did not abstain from blood and from fornication, and so forth.

> These prejudices strengthened with the passing of the years, until some of the leaders determined that the work of preaching the gospel must henceforth be conducted in accordance with their own ideas.

Definitely, there were prejudices coming up against Paul, as there are against any messenger of God, at any time. When these prejudices come up, people only feel secure if they can control the situation. In the year 1985, a person came to me having a lot of prejudices against the messenger of God. And they said,

"Because this and this and this is there, we must take the matter now into our own hands. We must steer the events now."

This is exactly what happened in 1985, and it is what happened in Jerusalem also.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 401:

...some of the leaders determined that the work of preaching the gospel must henceforth be conducted in accordance with their own ideas. If Paul would conform his methods to certain policies which they advocated they would acknowledge and sustain his work; otherwise they could no longer look upon it with favor or grant it their support.

A few months ago, someone came to me and said,

"If the messenger will do this and that, then I will acknowledge and sustain his work."

This is advocating methods and policies that have their origin in man.

If Paul would conform his methods to certain policies which they advocated they would acknowledge and sustain his work; otherwise they could no longer look upon it with favor or grant it their support.

That is really turning upside down the structure of Gospel Order. In Gospel Order, God reveals His truth through His channel to God's people. But here the people themselves bring up certain policies and certain methods which they advocate, and when the messenger does not take these up, they feel that they can no longer look upon him with favor, and grant him their support. This is exactly what happened back there. They determined that the work must be carried forward according to their opinions. So they did not believe the word of God as spoken through His messenger, but they believed the word of God as interpreted through them, and so they rejected Paul and did not support him. There was no excuse for their not supporting Paul because God had abundantly given evidence to them that Paul was His messenger.

Remember the call in Antioch? And many other examples as well. What was the problem of these men? We are told in the next sentence:

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 401:

These men had lost sight of the fact that God is the teacher of His people;

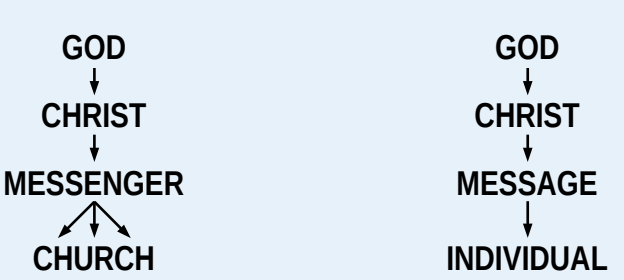
What did they see in Paul? A messenger who brought his own message. They lost sight of the fact that God was teaching through Paul, and also that each church member has God as their personal teacher, in order to illuminate the mind with the truth, and that the message may be implanted within them, as a living, active power.

> These men had lost sight of the fact that God is the teacher of His people; that every worker in His cause is to obtain an individual experience in following the divine Leader, not looking to man for direct guidance; that His workers are to be molded and fashioned, not after man's ideas, but after the similitude of the divine.

This leads us back to the principle of the body. To what does every member depend on? The head. It is the great center that gives information to each member. Each member, or worker, is to look to God for direct guidance. Every false messenger will try to mold and fashion his listeners after his ideas, while the true messenger, bringing the message from God, will give the people an instrument in their hands that forms them after the similitude of the divine.

We have seen this happen again and again. When a man acts as a false messenger in the church, and brings in converts, they usually have the same spirit as the one who taught them. They are formed after his similitude. He brought his own messages, he did his own work; so they tend to do the same. These people lose sight of the fact that the workers are not to be molded after man's ideas.

God Is the Teacher of His People



"And they shall be all taught of God."
John 6:45

"In the preaching of the word of God, the sign that should be manifest now and always is the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make the word a regenerating power to those that hear. This is God's witness before the world to the divine mission of His Son." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 407.

"Every worker in His cause is to obtain an individual experience in following the divine Leader, not looking to man for direct guidance...His workers are to be molded and fashioned, not after man's ideas, but after the similitude of the divine." *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 401.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 402:

In his ministry the apostle Paul had taught the people...

1 Corinthians 2

[4] ...not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

The truths that he proclaimed had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit,

[10] ...for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.
[11] For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God.
[13] Which things, [declared Paul,] we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Throughout his ministry, Paul had *looked to God for direct guidance.*

Does this mean he worked independently of the body? No. The body works naturally together. When you eat, left and right hand work together, provided they are trained. Likewise, the church of God will naturally tend to work together, while looking to God for direct guidance. Some people find this contradictory. They say,

"Either I follow God directly, and work apart from others, or I work together with others, and then I can't follow God directly!"

But this was not so in the life of Paul.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 402:

Throughout his ministry, Paul had looked to God for direct guidance. At the same time, he had been very careful to labor in harmony with the decisions of the general council at Jerusalem, and as a result the churches were...

Acts 16

5 ...established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

And now, notwithstanding the lack of sympathy shown him by some, he found comfort in the consciousness that he had done his duty in encouraging in his converts a spirit of loyalty, generosity, and brotherly love, as revealed on this occasion in the liberal contributions which he was enabled to place before the Jewish elders.

What a wonderful spirit! The natural human reaction would be this,

"What a pity that I brought these gifts. Had I known the spirit of these brethren, I wouldn't have brought them!"

But that was not the spirit of Paul. His was a spirit of giving, and he found comfort in this, that he had done his duty. Likewise, when we have been in fallen churches, and have supported it with our means, we might regret it after, when we think how we supported a body that was teaching error. But at the same time, we have done our duty to God. We have brought our tithes and

offerings in thankfulness to Him, and in this we can find comfort. And if our gifts are not appreciated or valued, still we can find comfort in the consciousness that we went where the Lord sent us, and said what the Lord gave us to say. And that is all that matters.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 402-403:

After the presentation of the gifts, Paul...

Acts 21

[19] ...declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

This recital of facts brought to the hearts of all, even of those who had been doubting, the conviction that the blessing of heaven had accompanied his labors.

[20] When they heard it, they glorified the Lord.

They felt that the methods of labor pursued by the apostle bore the signet of Heaven.

There were two methods of labor: those specified by the elders, and those followed by Paul. These two were contradictory. The elders thought to support only those who followed the methods specified by them. Paul did not follow those methods, so they thought,

"We will not support him."

But now Paul related his experience, and they realized that his methods of labor bore the signet of heaven. So what would have been the logical course to follow? Discard their methods and embrace those from heaven.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 403:

The liberal contributions lying before them added weight to the testimony of the apostle concerning the faithfulness of the new churches established among the Gentiles. The men who, while numbered among those who were in charge of the work at Jerusalem, had urged that arbitrary measures of control be adopted, saw Paul's ministry in a new light and were convinced that their own course had been wrong, that they had been held

in bondage by Jewish customs and traditions, and that the work of the gospel had been greatly hindered by their failure to recognize that the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile had been broken down by the death of Christ.

They saw very clearly that their methods were wrong, that Paul's methods bore the signet of heaven, and that because of pursuing their methods, they had hindered the progress of the gospel work. What a serious implication! Hindering the progress of the gospel work is one of the most serious sins. It is actually murder of the soul, because it means we prevent souls, for whom Christ has died, and who are on the verge of the kingdom, and of whom Christ longs to see them come into His fold, that we prevent them from finding the gospel of eternal life.

"I hindered the progress of the gospel."

We don't tend to see the seriousness of this. We are so accustomed to say,

"Yes, we have delayed Christ's coming."

Everybody says it. We say it altogether. But not "*I* have delayed it." Not "*I, myself.*" That is our problem. We have to understand more deeply what it really means to hinder the progress of the gospel.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 403:
This was the golden opportunity…

It was "golden" because it was a very limited opportunity. If we know that we only have a few hours left to live, how precious they will be to us. They will be "golden" hours. When the opportunity is limited, it is a golden opportunity, and so it was here.

This was the golden opportunity for all the leading brethren to confess frankly that God had wrought through Paul, and that at times they had erred in permitting the reports of his enemies to arouse their jealousy and prejudice.

Here was a very strong moving of the Spirit of God on the hearts of these men. They saw that their methods were wrong, and that they had hindered the progress of the gospel; they saw that Paul's methods bore the signet of heaven, there was no question about this; and they also saw that they had hindered the progress of the gospel work, that they were responsible for the weakness of the church at that time. Then what was their duty in this golden opportunity? To repent, and confess frankly the specific point: that they allowed the reports of his enemies to arouse their jealousy and prejudice. They did not start these reports, but they *allowed* them to reach their hearts. That was the problem.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 403:

But instead of uniting in an effort to do justice to the one who had been injured, they gave him counsel which showed that they still cherished a feeling that Paul should be held largely responsible for the existing prejudice.

So, in effect they said,

"Yes, we have hindered the progress of the gospel, and we are sorry, but *you* have done something wrong too, Paul! So let us now meet half way, and then everything will be good again."

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 403:

They did not stand nobly in his defense, endeavoring to show the disaffected ones where they were wrong, but sought to effect a compromise by counseling him to pursue a course which in their opinion would remove all cause for misapprehension.

There really was no other choice for them but to fully discard their methods, and to fully adopt the methods that heaven approved, and thus show those who had spread false rumors about Paul, wherein they were wrong, and to stand on the side of God's messenger. That was the only right course. But did they take this course? Sad to say, no. They went only half way. And there is a great danger today that we will only go half way. We must be prepared to search our hearts fully, to make sure our attempt to

become established on Gospel Order is not a "half way." We want to make this absolutely sure.

Acts 21
[20] You see, brother, [they said, in response to his testimony,] how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:
[21] And they are informed of you, that you teach all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

They were saying to Paul,

"All these, who have prejudice against you, are fine believers. They are fine believers and so we can't just discard them! We must try to win these fine believers, and so Paul, we must meet them half way."

Acts 21
[22] What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that you are come.
[23] Do therefore this that we say to you: We have four men which have a vow on them;
[24] Them take, and purify yourself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning you, are nothing; but that you yourself also walk orderly, and keep the law.
[25] As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

The confirmed that they were in agreement with the first Jerusalem council still, but they felt that these counsels were only applicable to the Gentiles, and not the believers from among the Jews. But this was a step backwards. The question originally considered was about the ceremonial law, but the deeper issue was about how righteousness is obtained and kept: not by works of

law, but by the hearing of faith. This applied to *all believers*. So they seemed to be in harmony with the council, but in reality they were not. This can also be with us, where we seem to be in harmony with Gospel Order, but in reality we are not. This danger really exists. So we must be very careful, and thorough not to let our old ways come back and take over.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 404:
The brethren hoped that Paul, by following the course suggested, might give a decisive contradiction to the false reports concerning him.

This is similar to the first and second temptation of Christ. What was the temptation?

Matthew 4 [also vs. 6]
[3] If you are the Son of God…

And what were they saying to Paul?

"If you are the messenger of God, which we believe you are, of course, but please make this clear that you are the messenger of God, by doing what we tell you to do."

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 404-405:
They assured him that the decision of the former council concerning the Gentile converts and the ceremonial law, still held good. But the advice now given was not consistent with that decision. The Spirit of God did not prompt this instruction; it was the fruit of cowardice. The leaders of the church in Jerusalem knew that by non-conformity to the ceremonial law, Christians would bring upon themselves the hatred of the Jews and expose themselves to persecution. The Sanhedrin was doing its utmost to hinder the progress of the gospel. Men were chosen by this body to follow up the apostles, especially Paul, and in every possible way to oppose their work. Should the believers in Christ be condemned before the Sanhedrin as breakers of the law, they would suffer swift and severe punishment as apostates from the Jewish faith.

So likewise today we can be sure, that Satan will send his ambassadors after us, to ridicule the message of Gospel Order whenever he can. But even more particularly will he work through members of the church, whenever he can. And then we will be tempted to make some sort of compromise to meet people half way, because we will be led to think they are fine believers too, and we should not offend them. But such a spirit will never bring the desired result. There is only one safe course: fully discard the methods specified by men; and fully adopt the methods that come from heaven, and stand on the side of him who has received the message directly from God through revelation. That's the only way to stand fully on God's side.

Let's turn a bit further in this chapter to the last pages.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 416:

The case of Paul was not the first in which a servant of God had found among the heathen an asylum from the malice of the professed people of Jehovah. In their rage against Paul the Jews had added another crime to the dark catalog which marked the history of that people. They had still further hardened their hearts against the truth and had rendered their doom more certain.

The powers of this world are not our real enemies. When I went with another brother behind the iron curtain into Romania, we both felt that the authorities were not our enemies. They represented the king of the south, atheists; but our real enemy is the king of the north, which is apostate religion; and that is found especially in the Christian countries. When Jesus ministered, He had no opposition from the Roman authorities, until those authorities were used by the religious leaders to enforce their bigotry and hatred.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 416-417:

Few realize the full meaning of the words that Christ spoke when, in the synagogue at Nazareth, He announced Himself as the Anointed One. He declared His mission to comfort, bless, and save the sorrowing and the sinful; and then, seeing that

pride and unbelief controlled the hearts of His hearers, He reminded them that in time past God had turned away from His chosen people because of their unbelief and rebellion, and had manifested himself to those in heathen lands who had not rejected the light of heaven. The widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian had lived up to all the light they had; hence they were accounted more righteous than God's chosen people who had backslidden from Him and had sacrificed principle to convenience and worldly honor.

Christ told the Jews at Nazareth a fearful truth when He declared that with backsliding Israel there was no safety for the faithful messenger of God. They would not know his worth or appreciate his labors. While the Jewish leaders professed to have great zeal for the honor of God and the good of Israel, they were enemies of both. By precept and example they were leading the people farther and farther from obedience to God—leading them where He could not be their defense in the day of trouble.

The Saviour's words of reproof to the men of Nazareth applied, in the case of Paul, not only to the unbelieving Jews, but to *his own brethren in the faith*. Had the leaders in the church fully surrendered their feeling of bitterness toward the apostle, and accepted him as one specially called of God to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, the Lord would have spared him to them. God had not ordained that Paul's labors should so soon end, but He did not work a miracle to counteract the train of circumstances to which the course of the leaders in the church at Jerusalem had given rise.

Remember the statement regarding the removal of Moses from the children of Israel?

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 470:

The removal of their beloved leader would be a far stronger rebuke to Israel than any which they could have received had his life and mission been continued. God would lead them to feel that they were not to make the life of their future leader as trying as they had made that of Moses. God speaks to His people in blessings bestowed; and *when these are not appreciated, He*

speaks to them in blessings removed, that they may be led to see their sins, and return to Him with all the heart.

Here the same is true in the taking away of the gift of Paul to the church. He did not work a miracle to counteract the mistaken zeal of the church elders.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 417-418:

The same spirit is still leading to the same results. A neglect to appreciate and improve the provisions of divine grace has deprived the church of many a blessing. How often would the Lord have prolonged the work of some faithful minister, had his labors been appreciated! But if the church permits the enemy of souls to pervert the understanding, so that they misrepresent and misinterpret the words and acts of the servant of Christ; if they allow themselves to stand in his way and hinder his usefulness, the Lord sometimes removes from them the blessing which He gave.

Satan is constantly working through his agents to dishearten and destroy those whom God has chosen to accomplish a great and good work. They may be ready to sacrifice even life itself for the advancement of the cause of Christ, yet the great deceiver will suggest to their brethren doubts concerning them which, if entertained, would undermine confidence in their integrity of character, and thus cripple their usefulness. Too often he succeeds in bringing upon them, through their own brethren, such sorrow of heart that God graciously interposes to give His persecuted servants rest. After the hands are folded upon the pulseless breast, when the voice of warning and encouragement is silent, then the obdurate may be aroused to see and prize the blessings they have cast from them. Their death may accomplish that which their life has failed to do.

In the light of what we have read, let's revisit a passage from the Bible to see more clearly how this wrong spirit in the church led to this fatal result:

Acts 21

[17] When we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

[18] And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

What was the spirit, as it seemed, of these elders? Friendly. They "received us gladly." The king of the north who wants to get control of God's church, does not desire to separate. Rather, this power wishes to establish itself at the very nerve center of God's church. This we see very clearly with these leaders, and in order to accomplish this work, a very good face must be presented. They received Paul in a very friendly way.

To a certain extent Paul was deceived by this. Their friendliness hid the fact that in reality they were unbelievers. However according to their profession and their outward appearance, they were great believers. And so Paul made this terrible mistake of making a compromise with them and thereby disobeying the voice of God, and this hastened the downfall of the church.

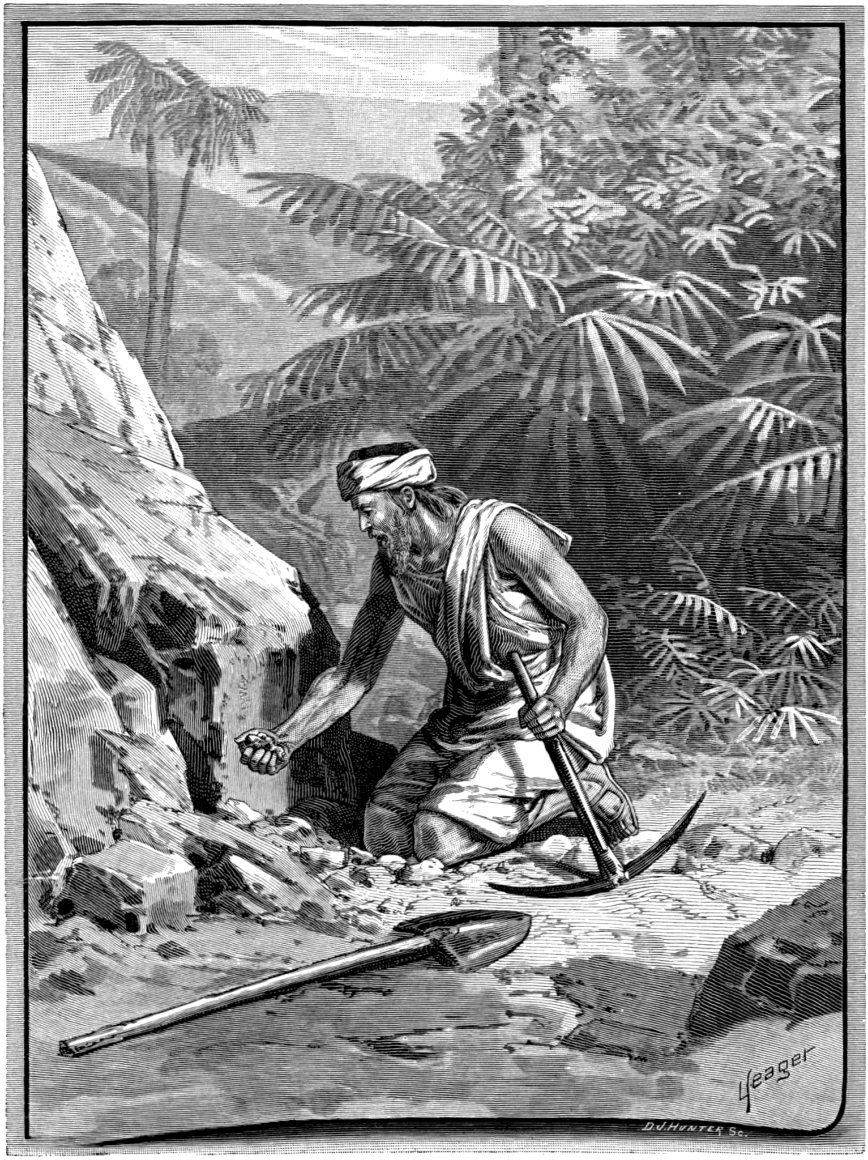
This will happen again in the last struggle. The king of the north will try to establish himself in the very heart of God's kingdom. As we restudy this story let us never forget its lessons, so that we are not deceived in any way, but only and ever build God's kingdom in His way: the way of Gospel Order.

Appendix A: Gospel Order Principles

Note: this is a summary of some of the principles laid out in this study of Gospel Order.

1. God works through creatures to reach creatures (the treasure is in an earthen vessel).
2. Christ is the only channel to the creatures.
3. We must look on what God has done as well as what He has said.
4. God's will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven.
5. God uses a one-man messengership to teach His people.
6. Each member of the body of Christ is a worker.
7. The messenger is only a channel.
8. God informs the church of who the messenger is.
9. God's calling is irrevocable. *Romans* 11:29.
10. The Holy Spirit is the administrator of the message.
11. The messenger is under the control of the Lord.
12. We should respect the work and position of other workers.
13. The church is a theocracy, not a democracy.
14. We should not be consumers, but producers (give the message to those who have not heard it).
15. Personal work is necessary.
16. There is a necessity of 2 or 3 witnesses.
17. The husband or wife of a messenger is not a companion-messenger.
18. There is a difference between a counselor and a messenger.
19. We should be subject to one another.
20. The church has a responsibility to study the message and make it a personal experience.

21. God's kingdom grows from one messenger to many messengers (in the early and latter rain).



Appendix B: The Christian's Faith Not to Be Prescribed by Men

Signs of the Times, August 27, 1894
By E. G. White
Note: This article shows the danger of a counterfeit Gospel Order, trying to bind men to listen only to false teachers.

AMONG the different denominations there seems to be a determination developing to bind the consciences of their members. They are building up barriers about their own sects, and forming a purpose to listen to nothing outside of their own doctrines. They are restricting themselves from hearing anything new, or any doctrine presented by any other people than those who belong to their own church.

But it would be well for them to inquire from what origin this determination arises, and who has sent forth this order? Certainly the Lord has made no such restrictions, for He has His message, and His messengers are to go forth and present it to the people, in warnings, reproofs, and instruction in righteousness; and He has given the people directions as to what they shall do. The apostle says,

1 Thessalonians 5
[21] Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

Many of the ministers of popular churches are softening down and diluting the plain word of truth. They are obscuring the light, and changing the message, in order to accommodate it to the prejudices, and adjust it to the opinions and habits, of the people. Thus they cater to the taste of the world-loving members of the church. But while they are so free to change the truth of God, on the other hand they advise their members to exercise the greatest caution lest they hear the message of God from the messengers He chooses to send to the people.

Oh, let there be no cautioning of the people on the danger of studying the word of God! Let there be no concealment of truth,

no measures taken to evade or ignore truth. Let no one entertain the erroneous idea that the people of this or that denomination are in need of no more light. Open the door of the heart, place yourselves in a position where you may catch new revelations of the character of God. Light comes from the very throne of God.

When some familiar truth presents itself to your mind in a new aspect, when a text of Scripture suddenly bursts upon you with new meaning like a flash of light that scatters the mist, and you see the relation of other truths to some part of the plan of redemption, God is leading you, and a divine Teacher is at your side. Will you not then open the door of your heart to receive more and more of the heavenly illumination? It is by contemplation of heavenly things that the soul is brought into fellowship and communion with the Spirit of God, and the soul that is teachable, that is continually seeking for fresh rays of light, will be blessed with brighter and brighter views of divine things.

But there are many classes of religious teachers who seem to be determined to close every avenue whereby fresh rays of light from heaven may come to the people. They would bind the members of their churches by certain rules and regulations that forbid them to go to other places of worship, or listen to messengers outside of a certain class of teachers. In this way men and women are led to give up the liberty that God has ordained for them, and they fail to improve the mind and gather up the divine rays of light which emanate from sources outside their own church.

1 Corinthians 6

[19] ...you are not your own;

[20] For you are bought with a price.

We are God's property, and are to honor and glorify God. But we do not honor and glorify God when we become the servants of men, when we consent to have our liberty restricted by men or by councils of men. We have been bought with the precious blood of Christ, in order that we may be just and generous to our own souls.

I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God, that you break every band that would restrict your liberty in Christ. God has light to impart to all His children that is of a more radiant character than any we have received, and you have no right to bind yourself in such a way as to shut yourself away from the light. You have no right to do after the inventions of any society of men, who would circumscribe the limit of your thought, and cause you to become a mere mechanical Christian.

You have many things to learn, and much to unlearn. You will have to sit at the feet of the great Teacher and learn of Him concerning themes that are higher and nobler than the themes which now engage your attention. I am free to address you who have shut yourselves away from the light, because I know that a higher Teacher than man is calling you. You have lost much in your religious life, because you have failed to improve the opportunities that have been presented to you from the Father of lights.

Fresh rays of light from heaven are always given that the character may be transformed, that the soul may be able to contemplate truth in a new relation. When Jesus is welcomed into the heart, He will refine and mould and fashion the character. Those who receive Him more fully, will not have less energy in their religious life, but their religion will be of a higher, holier type than ever before. They will work in such a way that their usefulness will be increased. God would have his professed children reach a higher standard, and ever go on, still reaching up to that which they have not attained. They should cherish every divine inspiration, for as His property He requires this of them.

No man or woman is to bind himself in such a way as to become a slave of men in any way. No man or set of men have the right of laying out to others what they shall or shall not do in religious matters, or in any way prescribing their faith. A voice speaks to us to which we are bound to listen. It is the voice of Christ, who says,

John 21
[19] Follow me.

He says,

John 8
[12] He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

The Christian is never to be tame and dull. Those who are imbued with the Spirit of Christ, will work in the Master's vineyard, and the heavenly fire of the soul will ever be kept burning. Our security is in Christ, in studying the guidebook He has given. Those who are studying the ways and methods of men and following their customs, are deceived if they think that they are following the directions of God in the matter. Jesus says,

Matthew 11
[28] Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
[29] Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls.

The service of Jesus does not consist in outward show simply. It is not a matter of form and ceremonies, of parade, exclamation, gestures, noise, and a display of the commonplace passions. Pure religion consists in keeping the heart and mind in communion with the great Leader, Jesus Christ. It consists in having the inward adorning of a meek and quiet spirit. The indwelling Holy Spirit will give life and tone and style that will not be after the inventions of men, not in imitation of any earthly, human leader, but after the Pattern, Christ. Religion does not consist in playing upon words, in uncouth gestures; bodily exercise profits little in this matter. There is no divine eloquence in this kind of exercise.

The religion of Jesus Christ is ever to be distinguished from all other religions by its holiness of character. In true religion will be found great truths clearly defined in words, and inwrought in the life of its professors as a principle from the divine Author. In true

religion the Holy Spirit will work in connection with human agents, confirming the truth of God. Every part of the service of Christ will be characterized by decorum and reverence.

The truth of Christ cannot be confined to a certain range, yet it will be active to create for its environment, manners and habits and practices that will be in harmony with its Author. Everything will be done decently and in order. Wild methods and strange freaks and confusion are not authorized by the God of order. The methods employed by the church of Christ should be such as will win souls from allegiance to the prince of darkness, and cause them to take their stand under the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel.

Some may say that these methods of reaching men will not avail to reach those who are poor and low down in the scale of humanity. But this matter must be regarded in an altogether different light by those who would be soldiers in the army of Christ. Do not cherish the error that you must follow after a pattern presented to you by some man. Study your Bible more, and let the habits and practices of men have less and less of your attention. Do not dishonor your God by thinking that it requires but little knowledge of "what says the Scriptures,"[67] to be a useful worker in His cause. You are to study the manner of the great Teacher, and keep His example ever before you. No human being is to be your Pattern. The Lord of heaven is to be the Teacher and Pattern for everyone who would win souls to God.

[67] *Romans* 4:3; 11:2; *Galatians* 4:30.

Related Sabbath Studies

2005—2020

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1. Gospel Order: The Way of the New Covenant

The Most Important Principles of Gospel Order
Sabbath, January 7, 2006

THE studies we have had about the old and new covenants correspond well with our Sabbath School lesson because we are truly in the new covenant only when Christ is in the center.

- The Old Covenant makes *us* the center.
- The New Covenant makes *Christ* the center.

For this reason the old covenant cannot give salvation; only the new covenant can. We want to know what this means in a practical sense. To help us in this regard we will spend some more time studying the subject, this time in connection with Gospel Order.

Last time, we asked if Gospel Order is really a part of the new covenant. Today, we want to change this to a statement and say that it is the way of the new covenant. We want to see what Gospel Order means for us when we live in the new covenant. In our study we will consider the most important principles of Gospel Order.

Principles of Gospel Order

When we first studied this message in 1989 we considered a number of principles. But all of them can be summed up in three main points, and perhaps these three can be summed up in one. To state all the principles in one would be to say:

Christ is the center, not humanity.

I have formulated three principles. You can ponder these in the light of your knowledge of Gospel Order and see if these are really the most important principles.

1. THE PRESENT TRUTH IS A REVEALED RELIGION

We could say it this way: the religion of Christ is always a revealed religion. We will see later what this means. But for now we want to state this as an important point. In this respect the re-

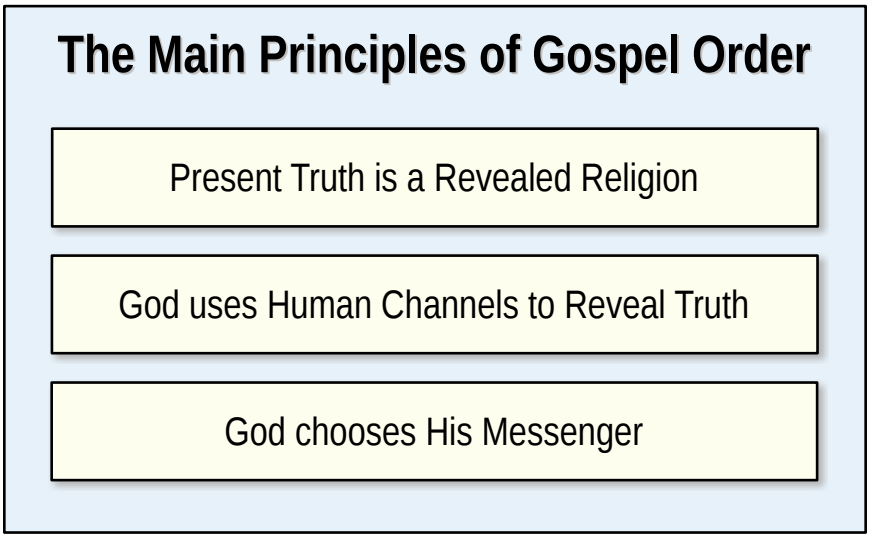
ligion of Christ is differentiated from the philosophies of the world which do not come into being through revelation but through human thought.

2. GOD USES PEOPLE AS CHANNELS TO REVEAL TRUTH

This, too, is an important principle. He could have used angels to bring us the present truth, but instead, He uses people as channels. One day we will all be used as channels to impart truth to others; perhaps even now. God wants to use people. In any case, He uses people as channels. That's the important point.

3. GOD CHOOSES HIS MESSENGER

No one can make himself a messenger, and no one can make someone else a messenger. God chooses him.



These are the three most important principles of Gospel Order. Perhaps there are some who have only one thought in their minds, which is that Gospel Order means having only one messenger. But that is too limited. Gospel Order has to do with these three principles, and the concept of one messenger is a part of them. That means that when God uses only one messenger, he must be God's choice. He is used as a channel to pass on the

truth, and the fact remains that religion is revealed rather than the result of human thought. When God uses more than one messenger as in the time of the early rain, or as will be the case during the latter rain, then the same principles apply. These principles are pivotal in Gospel Order, and we want to understand them.

Now we'll look at each principle more closely.

1. Present Truth is a Revealed Religion

The present truth is a revealed religion. What does that mean? Paul strongly emphasized this point in a few places. He talks about the truth that was revealed to him. What was he trying to say? He wants to say that his statements are not a philosophy that he thought up. They are not the result of logic. God gave these thoughts to him, and he is passing them on as God gave them.

NOT OF HUMAN ORIGIN

The thought is that the message that Paul had and that comes through every other messenger, does not originate with man, nor is it allowed to. If a message originates with man, then it is not from God. We would like to consider this with the help of two Bible texts.

> **Revelation 1**
> [1] The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place.
> [2] And He sent and signified it by His angels to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.
> [3] Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it, for the time is near.

What is it that this last book of the Bible contains? It's a revelation. And what does revelation mean? It means that it is something that God gives, and that channels pass on only to the extent that they have received it. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ

which God gave to Him. God is the Source. He gave it through Christ, and Christ passed it on through the angel, and the angel gave it to John. John wrote it to the seven churches, to whom he said,

> [3] Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy…

It is an important point that this revelation did not come about through human thought. It was a communication from heaven. And this communication was passed on to the extent that it was received. This means that the channel is simply an instrument. It passes on only that which it has received. This limitation dare not be changed as is plainly stated in the last chapter.

> **Revelation 22**
> [18] For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book.
> [19] And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

This matter is so important to God. It is so important to Him that we receive what He has to give, that He doesn't want anyone to add or take away from it. That is revelation. Revelation is something that doesn't originate with man. He adds nothing to it, nor does he take anything away from it. He is only a channel, as John and the elders of the church were. The same is true of the angel Gabriel who was also a channel that passed on the message to John. Then John in turn passed it on to the churches.

PASSING ON WHAT HE RECEIVES

So we firmly maintain the idea that the message does not in any way originate with man. That means that the messenger thinks up none of it. He passes on only that which he receives. There is a nice illustration of this. It is the feeding of the multitude when the disciples received bread from Christ and passed it on to the peo-

ple. This bread multiplied in Christ's hands. The bread He gave portrayed the bread of life. Jesus was demonstrating how Gospel Order functions. The disciples were to take bread only from Christ and pass it on to the people. That was their job.

Matthew 14
[13] When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities.
[14] And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude, and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.
[15] When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.
[16] But Jesus said to them, They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.
[17] And they said to Him, We have here only five loaves and two fish.
[18] He said, Bring them here to me.

You can't feed many people with only five loaves and two fish. In this case we have five thousand. In the same way we cannot do much with the little that we ourselves have. We couldn't possibly think up enough spiritual food to feed a multitude. We just couldn't do it. The prospect of success in such a situation should ever remain as clear to us as it was to the disciples. We have no bread of ourselves to give. Unfortunately, this fact is not always so clear to us. Sometimes we think that we can feed a multitude with the little that we have. But that is not the case. Jesus said,

Matthew 14
[18] Bring them here to me.

He had the people sit on the grass. Then He took the loaves and fish, gave thanks to God, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples. The disciples in turn gave it to the people.

It is an important point that the bread must first be given to Jesus, and then it must be received back from Him. It is not the case

that we don't use our heads at all, or that we can't or are not allowed to. Of course we may think, but we must give our thoughts to Christ and receive them from Him because the religion of Christ is a revealed religion. That means it is received from God.

> [20] So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained.
> [21] Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

I would like to read a statement about this from *The Desire of Ages*.

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 370:**
> The disciples were the channel of communication between Christ and the people.

This is a very important thought. The disciples were channels. What is a messenger? A channel. Just as the disciples were channels. He adds nothing and takes nothing away. He passes on that which he receives. The disciples were the channel of communication between Christ and the people.

> This should be a great encouragement to His disciples today. Christ is the great center, the source of all strength. His disciples are to receive their supplies from Him. The most intelligent, the most spiritually minded, can bestow only as they receive. Of themselves they can supply nothing for the needs of the soul. We can impart only that which we receive from Christ; and we can receive only as we impart to others. As we continue imparting, we continue to receive; and the more we impart, the more we shall receive. Thus we may be constantly believing, trusting, receiving, and imparting.

This means that nothing originates with us.

> **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 418:**
> But no man can impart that which he himself has not received. In the work of God, humanity can originate nothing. No man can by his own effort make himself a light bearer for God.

In the work of God man can produce nothing of himself. He can only receive. Why? Because the religion of Christ is a revealed religion. It is not the result of human thought.

SHOWS OUR DEPENDENCE UPON GOD

This principle of revelation shows our dependence upon God. Paul states this plainly:

> **2 Corinthians 4**
> [7] But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

Paul is saying that the human channel is an earthen vessel. This means that it is not a perfect vessel but a faulty one. Yet in this vessel is the treasure. And this treasure shows that everything is dependent upon a revelation from God. Basically, this principle makes it plain that we can do nothing, that we cannot develop truth in any way or to any degree; that we are really dependent receivers. There is another statement on this subject which I would like to read:

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 297:**
>
> **2 Corinthians 4** [RV]
> [7] We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves.
>
> This is why the preaching of the gospel was committed to erring men rather than to the angels. It is manifest that the power which works through the weakness of humanity is the power of God; and thus we are encouraged to believe that the power which can help others as weak as ourselves can help us. And those who are themselves 'compassed with infirmity' should be able to "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." *Hebrews* 5:2. Having been in peril themselves, they are acquainted with the dangers and difficulties of the way, and for this reason are called to reach out for others in like peril.

A NEW COVENANT PRINCIPLE

This is a principle of the new covenant. It is obvious when you read various statements. I would like to briefly look at a few. The first is from *Exodus* 14. Israel's experience at the Red Sea is described here. You remember the last time we studied the old and new covenants. We read about this in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Just as we read that there are two laws, a temporary one and an eternal one, so there are two covenants. The old covenant was given at Sinai.

Why was another covenant given when there already was one which was actually complete? Ellen White explains that the people were not yet ready for the new covenant. They couldn't yet enter into the new covenant because they didn't understand it. Nonetheless, God wanted to enter into the new covenant with them, and He gave them a practical experience to help them do this. This experience was their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. This deliverance was a very good and practical illustration of what the new covenant is.

First of all, their situation made it plain to them that they could not deliver themselves. That was impossible. Earlier, Moses had tried by using his military training, his skill, and his planning, but it didn't work. Only God could produce a plan to free Israel. It could not have come from man. These facts were so obvious that there was no doubt about it, nor was any doubt allowed or justifiable. We can read about them being freed:

> **Exodus 14**
> [30] So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.
> [31] Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt. So the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.

This means that the Israelites had a solid foundation in Gospel Order. You would think so, anyway. At least they could have.

Why? Because God showed them how His covenant worked. God was saying,

> "I will free you. And when you accept the instruments that I give you, the channels through which I work, in this case Moses, then you will have success."

2 Chronicles 20
[20] Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established. Believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.

That is the thought behind the experience of deliverance from Egypt. Let's read about another experience:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 290:
God in His providence brought the Hebrews into the mountain fastnesses before the sea, that He might manifest His power in their deliverance and signally humble the pride of their oppressors. He might have saved them in any other way, but He chose this method in order to test their faith and strengthen their trust in Him. The people were weary and terrified, yet if they had held back when Moses bade them advance, God would never have opened the path for them. It was "by faith" that "they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land." *Hebrews* 11:29. In marching down to the very water, they showed that they believed the word of God *as spoken by Moses*.

That is Gospel Order. They believed the Word of God, not the word of Moses. But it was the Word of God not spoken directly to them personally, but spoken to them through God's channel, Moses. That is the meaning of *Hebrews* 11:29. Let's read the next verse in *Hebrews*:

Hebrews 11
[30] By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.

This was the same faith, faith in the principle that present truth is a revealed religion. It was this faith that brought the walls of Jericho down.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 493:

Hebrews 11

[30] By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.

The Captain of the Lord's host communicated *only with Joshua;* He did not reveal himself to *all the congregation*, and it rested with them to believe or doubt the *words of Joshua*, to obey the commands given by him in the name of the Lord, or to deny his authority. They could not see the host of angels who attended them under the leadership of the Son of God. They might have reasoned:

"What unmeaning movements are these, and how ridiculous the performance of marching daily around the walls of the city, blowing trumpets of rams' horns. This can have no effect upon those towering fortifications."

But the very plan of continuing this ceremony through so long a time prior to the final overthrow of the walls afforded opportunity for the development of faith among the Israelites. It was to be impressed upon their minds that their strength was not in the wisdom of man, nor in his might, but only in the God of their salvation. They were thus to become accustomed to relying wholly upon their divine Leader.

VICTORIES GAINED THROUGH GOSPEL ORDER

They were to rely on God because truth is a revealed religion. Through this principle victories are gained. This is nicely described in:

2 Chronicles 20

[20] So they rose early in the morning and went out in the Wilderness of Tekoa, and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem. Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established. Believe His prophets [or in this case, messengers] and you shall prosper.

They formulated this into a song and marched that way into battle and they won. We can only win the battle against evil when we can sing the same battle cry.

If we, by questioning the message, sow seeds of doubt concerning God's leading, then we won't be able to sing this battle cry. It

is important for us to study this message and make it our own experience. When we do this, we will have the experience we have just read about. This is the principle of the new covenant. Believe His prophets and have success.

ANY DEVIATION LEADS TO RUIN

Another point is that every deviation from this principle leads to defeat. There is a good illustration of this in the experience of the early church when the next generation of leaders after the apostles took over. These new leaders were not content to just pass on what they had received. They thought they had to come up with new ideas. Thus, many erroneous teachings were introduced in the church.

Acts of the Apostles, p. 580-581:

But after a time the zeal of the believers began to wane, and their love for God and for one another grew less. Coldness crept into the church. Some forgot the wonderful manner in which they had received the truth. One by one the old standard-bearers fell at their post. Some of the younger workers, who might have shared the burdens of these pioneers, and thus have been prepared for wise leadership, had become weary of oft-repeated truths. In their desire for something novel and startling they attempted to introduce new phases of doctrine, more pleasing to many minds, but not in harmony with the fundamental principles of the gospel. In their self-confidence and spiritual blindness they failed to discern that these sophistries would cause many to question the experiences of the past, and would thus lead to confusion and unbelief.

As these false doctrines were urged, differences sprang up, and the eyes of many were turned from beholding Jesus as the Author and Finisher of their faith. The discussion of unimportant points of doctrine, and the contemplation of pleasing fables of man's invention, occupied time that should have been spent in proclaiming the gospel. The masses that might have been convicted and converted by a faithful presentation of the truth were left unwarned. Piety was rapidly waning, and Satan seemed about to gain the ascendancy over those who claimed to be followers of Christ.

Preset Truth is a Revealed Religion

- The message is not to be of human origin
  - Revelation 1:1-3; 22:18-19
- The messenger does not think up the message, he only passes on that which he receives
  - Matthew 14:13-21; The Desire of Ages, p. 370; Christ's Object Lessons, p. 418.
- This principle reveals our dependence on God
  - 2 Corinthians 4:7; The Desire of Ages, p. 297.
- It is a new covenant principle
  - Exodus 14:30-31; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 290, 493; Hebrews 11:30
- By this principle victories are gained
  - 2 Chronicles 20:20
- Any deviation from this principle leads to ruin
  - The Acts of the Apostles, p. 580

2. God Uses People as Channels to Reveal Truth

That God does this at all is amazing because people are basically faulty. Some are faultier than others, and some we consider to be totally unsuitable. Nonetheless, God uses them as channels to reveal His truth.

GOSPEL COMMISSION GIVEN TO HUMANS

There is much evidence in the Bible that the gospel commission has been given to the human agent. You know this statement:

> **Mark 16**
> [15] And He said unto them, Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

Jesus' statement to the disciples is quite plain. He said,

> "I send you to preach the gospel to every creature."

In *The Desire of Ages* it says that God sends erring men rather than angels to preach the gospel. Let's read it.

The Desire of Ages, p. 296

As His representatives among men, Christ does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save.

Then it says that Christ took upon himself humanity.

REJECTING THE CHANNEL IS TO REJECT CHRIST

In this connection, it becomes plain that when we reject the human instrument because he is just another person like us, we actually reject the instrument Christ sends. When we do this, we reject Christ. That needs to be very, very clear in our minds. We are not sinning against a human when we reject the instrument. We sin against Christ. When Israel no longer wanted Samuel as their highest judge but wanted a king instead, God plainly said to Samuel,

> "They haven't rejected you but me. That's the real issue. You were only my channel. You only passed on that which you received from me. Because they don't want the message, they reject you. You are not the issue; I am."

This is found in *1 Samuel* 8:7. In *Numbers* 14 God said the same thing concerning Moses. He said plainly,

> "They have rejected me. Not you Moses, but me."

Jesus sent His disciples out, and when they were rejected in one town, what should they do? They should brush the dust of that town off of themselves. Why? As a sign of how serious this sin is. They have not rejected Christ's disciples, but rather Christ.

The Desire of Ages, p. 489:

In sending out the seventy, Jesus bade them, as He had bidden the twelve, not to urge their presence where they were unwelcome.

Luke 10

[10] Into whatsoever city you enter, and they receive you not, [He said,] go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,
[11] Even the very dust of your city, which cleaves on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be you sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

They were not to do this from motives of resentment or through wounded dignity, but to show how grievous a thing it is to refuse the Lord's message or His messengers. To reject the Lord's servants is to reject Christ himself.

This is a plain statement. *To reject Christ's messengers is to reject Christ.*

When the Galatians reverted to old covenant ways, Paul reminded them of how they had treated him when they had accepted the gospel from him, the new covenant. He said that they accepted him as an angel of God. Humanly speaking Paul experienced suffering and weakness when he was among them, but they still accepted him "as an angel of God." That happened during the time when the Galatians accepted the new covenant.

Galatians 4

[14] And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

Paul asked them how they managed to let themselves be talked into going back to the old covenant.[68]

Galatians 1

[6] I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:
[7] Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

[68] Also *Galatians* chapter 4.

Galatians 3

[1] O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you?
[2] This only would I learn of you, Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?
[3] Are you so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?
[4] Have you suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

THE CHURCH IS GOD'S MESSENGER

The church as a whole is also a messenger, a messenger to the world. It is very important that the people of the world recognize that God uses this messenger to bring them the message.

Luke 10

[16] He who hears you hears me. He who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects Him who sent me.

This clearly shows the principle that to reject God's messengers is to reject Christ. Here is another statement to this effect:

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 122:

Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world.

When, in the midst of his blind error and prejudice, Saul was given a revelation of the Christ whom he was persecuting, he was placed in direct communication with the church, which is the light of the world. In this case Ananias represents Christ, and also represents Christ's ministers upon the earth, who are appointed to act in His stead. In Christ's stead Ananias touches the eyes of Saul, that they may receive sight. In Christ's stead he places his hands upon him, and, as he prays in Christ's name, Saul receives the Holy Ghost. All is done in the name and by the

authority of Christ. Christ is the fountain; the church is the channel of communication.

THE GREATEST INSULT TO GOD

What is the greatest insult you can give to God? It is not speaking some terrible curse; it is to reject His messenger. That is the greatest insult you can give Him. This is plainly stated:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 402:

It is hardly possible for men to offer greater insult to God than to despise and reject the instrumentalities He would use for their salvation.

That's a strong statement. But this is not a principle that only belongs to the Old Testament or the time of Moses. In *The Desire of Ages*, p. 324 we can read the same thing.

The Desire of Ages, p. 324-325:

Matthew 12

45 The last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so, [said Jesus,] shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

There are none so hardened as those who have slighted the invitation of mercy, and done despite to the Spirit of grace. The most common manifestation of the sin against the Holy Spirit is in persistently slighting Heaven's invitation to repent. Every step in the rejection of Christ is a step toward the rejection of salvation, and toward the sin against the Holy Spirit.

In rejecting Christ the Jewish people committed the unpardonable sin; and by refusing the invitation of mercy, we may commit the same error. We offer insult to the Prince of life, and put Him to shame before the synagogue of Satan and before the heavenly universe when we refuse to listen to His delegated messengers, and instead listen to the agents of Satan, who would draw the soul away from Christ. So long as one does this, he can find no hope or pardon, and he will finally lose all desire to be reconciled to God.

Sister White applies this principle to the rejection of her own writings:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 680:

If God has given me a message to bear to His people, those who would hinder me in the work and lessen the faith of the people in its truth are not fighting against the instrument, but against God. It is not the instrument whom you slight and insult, but God, who has spoken to you in these warnings and reproofs. It is hardly possible for men to offer a greater insult to God than to despise and reject the instrumentalities that He has appointed to lead them.

God Uses Human Channels to Reveal Truth

- The gospel commission is given to humans
  - Mark 16:15; The Desire of Ages, p. 296
- To reject the human channel is to reject Christ
  - Numbers 14:11; 1 Samuel 8:7; Luke 10:11; The Desire of Ages, p. 489; Galatians 4:14
- The church is God's messenger to the world
  - Luke 10:16; The Acts of the Apostles, p. 122
- The greatest insult to God is to reject His messengers
  - Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 402; The Desire of Ages, p. 324; Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 680
- This is a new covenant principle. It is the mystery of God
  - 2 Corinthians 4:7; Colossians 1:27

A NEW COVENANT PRINCIPLE

There is another point, which is that this principle is part of the new covenant. You can see this in the fact that it is the mystery of God. It's the same principle. What is the mystery of God? It is:

Colossians 1

[27] Christ in you, the hope of glory.

2 Corinthians 4

[7] We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

The raw fact that God chooses human beings as channels to impart His truth is the mystery of God. Christ came in human nature in order to draw near to us. Jesus uses human channels in order to bring the treasure near to us. This is His method, His way. Therefore, it is the way of the new covenant and not the way of the old covenant.

3. God Chooses His Messenger

God's messenger is chosen by Him and not by people. Many Bible texts make this plain. One is found in:

1 Corinthians 12

[28] And God has appointed these in the church; first apostles [or messengers]...

They are chosen by God, not people.

THE SIN OF CHOOSING OUR OWN MESSENGERS

People are inclined to messengers of their own choice, messengers who will tell them what they want to hear. Paul speaks of this in:

2 Timothy 4

[3] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers.

That means that they want to hear certain things. It really is a serious sin when we decide to listen to the messenger of our own choice and reject the messenger of God's choice.

The Desire of Ages, p. 324:

We offer insult to the Prince of life, and put Him to shame before the synagogue of Satan and before the heavenly universe when we refuse to listen to His delegated messengers, and instead listen to the agents of Satan, who would draw the soul away from Christ.

This can happen quickly. When people are discontent with God's order or His ways, when they feel threatened by these, they will express this quickly. Those who refuse to listen to God's messengers, but listen to false messengers instead, offer insult to the Prince of life. That means that they take a stand against Christ. This is described in this chapter as the sin against the Holy Spirit.

OUR MESSENGERS NOT ACCEPTED

When we reject the messenger of God's choice, He will not speak through other messengers. We can see this plainly in the case of king Saul. After he rejected Samuel and David, there was no more communication between him and God. God didn't answer his questions any more. Thus, he turned to the powers of darkness through the witch of Endor. By doing this he could have offered no greater insult to the Prince of life. That was the sin against the Holy Spirit. It sealed Saul's fate.



A NEW COVENANT PRINCIPLE

This principle is also a principle of the new covenant. It leads us to rely on God and not on ourselves when we accept the messenger of God's choice.

Romans 10

[13] For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

[14] How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and *how shall they hear without a preacher?*

[15] And how shall they preach, *except they be sent?* as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

God Chooses His Messenger

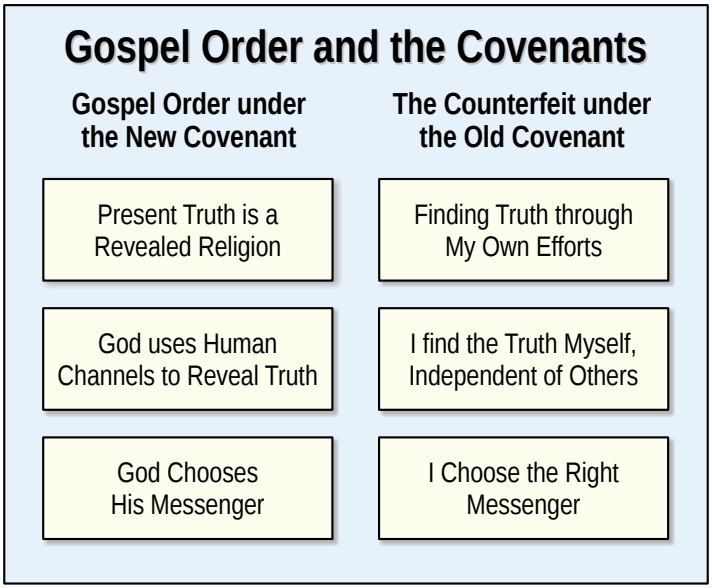
- The messenger is chosen by God, not by man
  - 1 Corinthians 12:28
- People tend to listen to messengers of their own choosing
  - 2 Timothy 4:3
- It is a grievous sin if we listen to the messengers of our own choosing
  - The Desire of Ages, p. 324
- God does not communicate through other channels if we reject the messenger He chooses
  - Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 675
- This is a new covenant principle because it leads us to depend on God, not on ourselves
  - Romans 10:14-15

Summary

Now, in summary we will compare Gospel Order under the old and new covenants. In the new covenant the present truth is a re-

vealed religion. What is it in the old covenant? It is finding the truth through our own efforts, through our own study and thought. That is really the old covenant

The new covenant says that God uses channels to reveal truth. What does the old covenant say? I don't need anyone else. I will do it myself. I must search out the truth for myself, independent of others. The new covenant says that God speaks through the messenger of His choice. What does the old covenant say? It says that I will choose the right messenger myself. I'll find out who he is.



We need to clearly understand that those who reject Gospel Order, enter in principle into the old covenant, and forsake salvation. So those who once believed the gospel but later rejected it, should be asked the same question that Paul asked the Galatians:

Galatians 3
[1] Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth.

It is amazing that they did this. We can think about these things.

2. Trust in God's Leading

Sabbath, January 14, 2006

TODAY we would like to look at a chapter in *The Great Controversy*. It is chapter 19 entitled, "Light through Darkness." Some of you may already know the subject matter of this chapter while others do not because it's been a while since you have looked at it. The latter is probably the case with most of you, so I will take a moment to summarize it.

The Early Advent Movement

Briefly, this chapter is about the Advent movement just after the disappointment. A parallel is drawn between this movement and the movement in which Christ and the disciples had a part. You know that the Adventists expected Christ to come in 1843 or 1844, but this expectation was not fulfilled. Therefore, many concluded that this movement was not from God. They believe that if God had really been leading them, then such a thing could not have happened; the error would have been exposed earlier.

This argument is not so easy to answer, as you know. Whenever things in God's church don't happen as people expect, then they begin to doubt that it was the work of God. There was a similar situation in the Old Testament. You are aware of the fact that Israel believed in war. They committed sin, practiced their own works, and finally rejected Christ. We know all of this. And Satan uses these things as an argument against the work of God on this earth.

There is, however, an explanation as to why these things happened. And whoever wants to can understand this explanation. It is logical, harmonizes the apparent contradictions, and is very clear when you understand the deeper things involved. The chapter we are looking at reveals the deeper things involved in the great disappointment. The reasons for it are clearly stated.

You know that after the great disappointment, after October 22, 1844, the Advent movement split up into several groups. I would

say that those groups were typical representations of these types of groups in all ages which have separated from the truth.

I would like to read the first paragraph in the chapter, and then I will say a few more things.

The Great Controversy, p. 343:

> The work of God in the earth presents, from age to age, a striking similarity in every great reformation or religious movement. The principles of God's dealing with men are ever the same. The important movements of the present have their parallel in those of the past, and the experience of the church in former ages has lessons of great value for our own time.

This means that the work of God has parallels. The events of 1844 have parallels not only with the disciples in the past, but with many situations all down through the centuries.

What happened in 1844? After the disappointment, there were, in principle, three groups. The majority said that the work was not from God. They rejected it and denied their past experience. They said that they had had a false experience, which was not from God.

I could relate many things the Adventists experienced before 1844. They had a mighty experience. The Holy Spirit worked in quite visible ways. The sick were healed. Sins were confessed. It was very obvious that God was speaking to His people. The truth was preached in a clear and definite manner. God's power, which was so obvious to everyone, was simply denied by the majority. It was denied because of the disappointment, because of something that was unexpected. They were not prepared to experience this disappointment.

The work of God has parallels in every age. That means that in every age there are disappointments. Anytime God uses human channels, and He does and must use them, then you are guaranteed to have disappointments because the human element is not perfect.

A couple of years ago we, as a church, gave a confession. In this confession it was made plain to us that we have delayed Christ's return because of our sins. We saw where we erred, and this caused a certain disappointment for us. We thought that no errors could occur in the church of God, that everything was perfect. Many will use this disappointment in the same way that those who left the movement in 1844 did. They will say that the movement is not from God.

I think it is obvious that this is the reaction of some whenever there is a disappointment. There is a rejection of the experiences of the past.

When we look at our past, can we see that God has been working? It is important that we ever keep fresh in mind that God has been working through His Spirit. We forget all too quickly the blessings we have received at camp. The good impression is lost, disappointment comes in, and this outweighs all of the blessings we received. God considers this to be a great sin. God does not want us to throw away the experience He has given us. He wants us to keep our experience fresh in our memory. We sing a song called *Count Your Blessings*, and we should do this often. Count them. We shouldn't let ourselves forget them.

One reason the Bible was written was so that the people would not forget God's blessings. The first five books of Moses, as well as Chronicles, Kings, and others were written for that reason as well. They were written to warn us, to teach us, but also to help us understand the richness of the blessings that we have received from God, not only as a church in the past, but in our personal lives, too. It is a great sin when we do not keep these blessings fresh in our minds. When we forget them, disappointments come. After that we become misled, then come difficulties, and then we reject our past experience.

So that is one group. The other group didn't want to throw away their past experience. They said they believed that God had truly led them. They could see that clearly. But they actually

didn't see that God was leading them. They saw the value of their past experience, but they couldn't appreciate it as a gift from God. They saw this gift as something that man had accomplished. So they decided to keep what they had accomplished and continue pushing the whole thing further. They tried to clear up the matter in their own strength. Thus, instead of waiting for further revelations from God, they tried to work out other calculations predicting when Christ would return. They did this repeatedly. They forgot that every time God gave them light on the time for an event, it was through revelation and not searching. It is necessary to cowork with God, to carefully study that which He gives, but in principle the message comes from God.

Both groups, the ones who threw away their experience, and those who kept setting new dates, didn't see that God had been leading them in the past. The second group would probably not state the case in this way, but in reality this is what they did.

I would like to read the paragraph one more time to keep it before us.

The Great Controversy, p. 343:

The work of God in the earth presents, from age to age, a striking similarity in every great reformation or religious movement. The principles of God's dealing with men are ever the same. The important movements of the present have their parallel in those of the past, and the experience of the church in former ages has lessons of great value for our own time.

Principles of Gospel Order

This chapter is about the Advent movement, and the chapter begins with the thought stated in this paragraph. Stated next is how God led His people in the Advent movement and everywhere in the past. This leads us back to the subject of Gospel Order and the covenants. I would like to read the next few paragraphs with you. They state the principles of how God leads.

The Great Controversy, p. 343:

No truth is more clearly taught in the Bible than that God by His Holy Spirit especially directs His servants on earth in the great movements for the carrying forward of the work of salvation.

What a statement! "God directs His servants…" That is one of the principles we learned in our study of Gospel Order. Can you remember the principles we studied last week? One is: *God chooses His messenger.* But there was something before that. *The religion of Christ is a revealed religion.* Or we could say,

"The present truth is always revealed. It is never worked out or discovered by people."

If someone comes to us and says,

"I have discovered something,"

–or,

"I have studied something out,"

–then good. That is nice. But that is not present truth. Study as much as I might, present truth comes through revelation and not through study. This is a very important point.

What is a third principle of Gospel Order? *God uses people as channels.* Nothing is taught more clearly in the Bible than that God uses messengers, to say the paragraph in short.

The Great Controversy, p. 343:

No truth is more clearly taught in the Bible than that God by His Holy Spirit especially directs His servants on earth in the great movements for the carrying forward of the work of salvation.

When the Bible teaches this truth more clearly than any other, and someone still reacts by saying that that is not the truth, such a reaction is seriously faulty. Can you imagine what such a reaction means? The Bible teaches nothing more clearly.

The point here is that God uses channels. That is a principle. Whether it is one channel or many is not so important. God uses channels, and the Bible teaches nothing more clearly than that. This is the fact that gets rejected, the fact that God gives me a message through a human channel. People say,

> "I don't want that. The Holy Spirit will teach me directly."

This is the issue. Again, nothing is taught more clearly in the Bible than that God uses human channels.

> **The Great Controversy, p. 343:**
> Men are instruments in the hand of God, employed by Him to accomplish His purposes of grace and mercy. Each has his part to act…

What is meant here is that each acts his part in his time. In every age or every time God has His messenger or messengers through whom He imparts His truth and moves the work forward.

> Men are instruments in the hand of God, employed by Him to accomplish His purposes of grace and mercy. Each has his part to act; to each is granted a measure of light, adapted to the necessities of his time, and sufficient to enable him to perform the work which God has given him to do. But no man, however honored of Heaven, has ever attained to a full understanding of the great plan of redemption.

Present Truth

This is a very interesting subject. This morning at the breakfast table, I asked everyone what difference they saw between truth and present truth. One said,

> "Present truth is a step. Truth is the staircase."

When God gives us present truth, He gives us one step out of the whole staircase. But He doesn't give us the whole staircase. We saw this in the study of "The Seven Angels."[69] God gives us a

[69] See the book, *The Seven Angels*.

part, but not everything. In every generation He imparts a little more. He is always imparting a little more. It never ends. That's the principle of growth. When does growth stop? Never. That means that there are always more steps. Our part is to climb each imparted step at a time even though we can't see the whole staircase. Someone might say,

> "I'm not going to climb until I see the whole staircase."

He will be waiting a long time. He will never move forward. On the contrary, he will go backwards. We must move forward even though we can't see how high it will lead us. If we see the step that God has given us, then we must step up onto it.

Again, no one has ever attained to a full understanding of the great plan of redemption. Not only do we not see everything, but because we don't see everything, we often have false concepts of the future. For instance, will the staircase go right or left or straight ahead? Will it get steeper or less steep? What will the staircase be like after the step that God has given me? Everyone, whether aware of it or not, has particular concepts of how things will continue. Usually these concepts are erroneous. What God gives us is the step for right now.

The Great Controversy, p. 343:

> But no man, however honored of Heaven, has ever attained to a full understanding of the great plan of redemption, or even to a perfect appreciation of the divine purpose in the work for his own time. Men do not fully understand what God would accomplish by the work which He gives them to do; they do not comprehend, in all its bearings, the message which they utter in His name.

That is quite a statement! They have a message to give, yet they don't understand it fully. This morning I present to you a message, and I don't grasp the full scope of it. I know only as much as you do now. The messenger sees no more than those to whom he imparts the message. People think that the messenger knows everything. But that's not so. Once Luther said,

"I am not the leader of this movement. I myself am driven forward, and I don't know where it will end up."[70]

That was a true statement. No messenger of God's calling has ever been able to see the whole staircase. He only sees the step which God gives him to preach. After it is preached, everyone else can see it too.

The Great Controversy, p. 343:

Men do not fully understand what God would accomplish by the work which He gives them to do; they do not comprehend, in all its bearings, the message which they utter in His name.

After this, it says why this is the case, and that it is impossible. The text revealing this fact is from *Job* 11:7. Take note of that, and of *Isaiah* 55:8-9; 46:9-10. These are very important texts for us. First we'll read the one from Job.

Job 11

7 Can you by searching find out God? can you find out the Almighty unto perfection?

Do you really think that you can search it out? This is a rhetorical question, and the answer is obvious. What is the answer?

"It is impossible. I cannot find the truth by searching for it."

That means that when we want to go farther than the step which God has given to us, we will end up somewhere other than where God wants us to be. We cannot search out the truth. We are not able. There are people who want to have every question answered. If a question remains open, then they don't want to proceed further. They want to wait until every question is answered. Perhaps we belong to this group, or at least have this tendency.

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[70] *The Great Controversy*, p. 126: "Said Luther, a few years after the opening of the Reformation, 'God does not conduct, but drives me forward. I am not master of my own actions. I would gladly live in repose, but I am thrown into the midst of tumults and revolutions.'"

The Old and New Covenants

I would like to name a few things that could be brought into question. We've been studying the old and new covenants. One question that keeps coming up is:

- Why did Jesus eat what the people ate? Why wasn't He a vegetarian? Why did He eat fish?
- Why did Adam have to kill a lamb? We're not supposed to kill animals, and therefore, we are not to eat them. They are also a part of God's creation.
- Why did Elijah kill the priests of Baal?

We might not know the final answer to each of these questions, but they will come with time. One point needs to be clear to us. Christ, Adam, and Elijah all did God's will.

We have studied the old and new covenants. I would like to look again at a question just so that we can understand better what it means that God gives us knowledge but not all at once. To do this I would like to show you a diagram. The question is,

> "What does it look like to live in the new covenant, and what does it look like to live in the old covenant? How can I know whether I live in the new or the old covenant? How, practically speaking, can I recognize the two ways?"

For example, Jesus ate fish. Was He in the old covenant? If we lived in the time of sacrifices, and we saw someone bring a lamb to the altar, would we say,

> "What you are doing is reprehensible!"

We know that God never wanted a king. Nonetheless, He chose David to be king. Must we conclude that David committed a sin because he allowed himself to be made king?

We need to understand what the old and new covenants are. In the old covenant I believe that I obtain forgiveness because I am obedient. In other words, I obey. Then I show God my obedience and tell Him that I would like to be forgiven now. That's the old

covenant. You try to earn God's righteousness through your own strength.

In the new covenant I first obtain forgiveness, and obedience is the fruit.

In the old covenant the people turned the ceremonial law into their saviour. They believed that if they brought a lot of sacrifices they could satisfy God. God had to say that their offerings didn't please Him. That is the old covenant way of making sacrifices.

In the new covenant, we look to Christ while we obey the law. In the Old Testament, an Israelite could bring his offering in the spirit of the new covenant, which meant that he looked to Christ while he obeyed the law, which included the ceremonial law in his case. It needs to be clear to us that even in the context of the ceremonial law a person could be in the new covenant.

In the old covenant I take up the sword in order to defend myself. The Israelites took the sword from the dead Egyptians at the Red Sea because they felt that they needed something in their hands. They saw that God had saved them, but they felt it was better to have something in their hands. This behavior, taking the sword in hand, was old covenant behavior. It was the principle of self-righteousness. They knew that God said they should take the land. They agreed with this, but they believed that they needed swords in order to accomplish it. This is old covenant thinking.

In the new covenant we must conclude that the sword could only be used at God's direction. This means that during the historical time of the old covenant from Sinai to the cross, not everyone who used the sword did it as an expression of the spirit of the old covenant in which they sought their own personal security. Those who used the sword in obedience to God's command were not in the old covenant, even though we might find this hard to fully understand.

In the old covenant, we choose the king because we want to be like the nations around us. In the new covenant I accept a king

and honor him, even though it was not God's original plan to choose a king. And if God chooses me as king, I will accept His choice, because He makes the choice. That's the new covenant. We cannot say that every king who accepted the job as a result of God's choice was in the old covenant. That was not the case.

In the old covenant I will seek help from the world because I am either afraid or am looking for worldly greatness. Both are possible. Many people are very afraid because of various things. With some it is insecurity. Others fear death. There are other things as well. As a result, they seek help from the world. In other cases they go to the world for recognition or greatness.

I can give you a few examples. Let's suppose I go to the doctor because I don't trust God completely and am afraid. This would be an expression of my old covenant condition. If I go to school and study with the goal of becoming great in the world, I give expression to my old covenant experience. You might say that you are studying in order to do a great service in God's kingdom, but it might really be due to old covenant thinking.

In the new covenant, things happen differently. In the new covenant I submit to God's leading. Then I become a blessing in the world, and it doesn't matter where I am or what I must do.

In the old covenant I look for a wife with my own works. How many have done this! How often have we had to say that that was an experience in the old covenant! So what then do I do with this wife in the new covenant? I accept her. I am faithful to her. Even though I found her as a result of my own works, I will, nonetheless, love her and honor her, as long as she allows it of course. And even if she doesn't allow it any more, I will love and honor her anyway. In other words, even though my situation is one which God never originally wanted to happen, I will be faithful to her just the same. That's the new covenant.

In the old covenant I seek my own righteousness. In the new covenant I seek the righteousness of God.

In the old covenant I define present truth through my own works. That means that I search out the truth myself. In the new covenant I rely on God to reveal the present truth to me.

In the old covenant I try to search out the whole truth and will not be satisfied until every question is answered. Otherwise, I won't accept the truth. In the new covenant I am satisfied with the truth that is revealed even when there are unanswered questions. I can say,

> "I don't have the answers to the questions, but I will wait until God gives more light. I know that this is the step that God has given to me at this time."

In the old covenant I do my work on the Sabbath as well. In the new covenant I rest from my work on the Sabbath.

Where Am I?

NEW COVENANT	OLD COVENANT
Forgiveness then Obedience (Righteousness is a Gift)	Obedience then Forgiveness (Righteousness is Earned)
Obedience is an expression of faith	Obedience is the saviour
Dependence is on God (God is my Defender and Shield)	Dependence is on my Sword (Self-defense, with God's help)
Look to God for my needs; be a blessing to the world	Seek help from the world for security, recognition, approval
Honor the king, but do not depend on him	Desire and establish kings to depend on
Bring problems to God / Follow God's plans	Bring solutions to God / Follow my plans
Seek the righteousness of God	Seek my own righteousness
God reveals present truth	I search for truth myself
Rest from my work on Sabbath	Do my own work on Sabbath (for God)

The Sabbath is an excellent example of the old or new covenant. If I can really put my own works aside and rest in God as if I couldn't do anything, and wait for Him to satisfy my needs on the Sabbath, then I have true Sabbath Rest. The same is true for Gospel Order. If I can completely rely on the revelation that God gives, then I have rest.

This doesn't mean that I don't have six days in which to work. We do have. This doesn't mean that there is no place for studying further into the truth in order to make it my own. There needs to be a reasonable balance between these two things.

The Truth and Human Understanding

I would like to return now to the chapter, "Light through Darkness." We would like to apply these principles to some extent.

The Great Controversy, p. 343:

Job 11

[7] Can you by searching find out God? can you find out the Almighty unto perfection?

Those who try to do this are living in the old covenant. They are saying to God,

"Yes Lord, we study the truth. We work it out."

But they do this in their own strength.

The Great Controversy, p. 343-344:

No truth is more clearly taught in the Bible than that God by His Holy Spirit especially directs His servants on earth in the great movements for the carrying forward of the work of salvation. Men are instruments in the hand of God, employed by Him to accomplish His purposes of grace and mercy. Each has his part to act; to each is granted a measure of light, adapted to the necessities of his time, and sufficient to enable him to perform the work which God has given him to do. But no man, however honored of Heaven, has ever attained to a full understanding of the great plan of redemption, or even to a perfect appreciation of the divine purpose in the work for his own time. Men do not

fully understand what God would accomplish by the work which He gives them to do; they do not comprehend, in all its bearings, the message which they utter in His name.

Isaiah 55

[8] My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

[9] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 46

[9] I am God, and there is none like me,

[10] Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.

First of all, God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours. Because they are so much higher than ours, we don't have a hope of searching out the truth through our own efforts. It just won't work. We can only wait until God reveals His truth. And when He reveals this truth, it is our responsibility to accept it and study into it. Let's read further.

The Great Controversy, p. 344:

Even the prophets [you could say *messengers*] who were favored with the special illumination of the Spirit did not fully comprehend the import of the revelations committed to them. The meaning was to be unfolded from age to age, as the people of God should need the instruction therein contained.

As I said, the messenger doesn't know any more than those to whom he preaches the message. It is not the case that the messenger is an especially intelligent person who can see farther than the others. He is nothing more than a channel that God uses; that's it. He passes on what he receives, and he doesn't understand everything; he can't answer all of the questions that arise.

Peter, writing of the salvation brought to light through the gospel, says: Of this salvation…

1 Peter 1

[10] …the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

[11] Searching *what*, or *what manner of time* the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.
[12] Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto *themselves*, but unto *us* they did minister.

This means that the prophets of the past didn't understand everything. So what did they do? Did they conclude that it didn't matter if they didn't understand some aspect of the message? Did they say,

> "We can't understand everything, so who cares. We won't try to understand anything then."

No. They looked into the message, but not to find the truth themselves. They studied what was revealed in order to understand it. That is our part. Gospel Order tells us that truth is revealed, not searched out or discovered. But when the time comes that it is revealed, we should do what the prophets did; diligently study.

What does this mean in practice? When we receive a message today, such as Christian Leadership, should we say that we would prefer to study something else? If we do, then we neglect the present truth. If we neglect present truth in any way, if we don't diligently study it, then Satan is immediately there to lead our thoughts away from the present truth. You can be sure of this. Doubts will come into our mind, and we won't be able to give a reason for our faith. We can only do this if we thoroughly study the message just as the prophets did. Even though they were the ones who preached the message, they were the ones who studied into it.

It is a similar situation with *The Desire of Ages* and *The Great Controversy*. I've read them through a couple of times, and I could say that I know it now. But I am not satisfied. I must study it further. I must. We should all feel this way. This is what the prophets did. They studied diligently into that which was revealed.

When questions arise, I can't pull answers out of the sky. I can only say what the Word says, therefore I have to study. "It is written" must be my answer to every question. Let's read further.

The Great Controversy, p. 344:

Yet while it was not given to the prophets to understand fully the things revealed to them, they earnestly sought to obtain all the light which God had been pleased to make manifest. They "inquired and searched diligently," "searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." What a lesson to the people of God in the Christian age, for whose benefit these prophecies were given to His servants! "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister." Witness those holy men of God as they "inquired and searched diligently" concerning revelations given them for generations that were yet unborn. Contrast their holy zeal with the listless unconcern with which the favored ones of later ages treat this gift of Heaven. What a rebuke to the ease-loving, world-loving indifference which is content to declare that the prophecies cannot be understood!

We have here the same situation as in 1844. At that time there were those who studied in their own strength and tried to come up with a new date, and there were those who threw it all away with the thought that they didn't understand it, and it wasn't important after all. Both groups missed the point that truth is revealed.

The mistake which Ellen White warns us of in this paragraph is the mistake of thinking that the truth cannot be understood. God will give more light for unanswered questions, but in His own time. We must do our part by diligently studying the present truth.

The Great Controversy, p. 344-345:

Though the finite minds of men are inadequate to enter into the counsels of the Infinite One, or to understand fully the working out of His purposes, yet often it is because of some error or neglect on their own part that they so dimly comprehend the

messages of Heaven. Not infrequently the minds of the people, and even of God's servants, are so blinded by human opinions, the traditions and false teaching of men, that they are able only partially to grasp the great things which He has revealed in His word. Thus it was with the disciples of Christ, even when the Saviour was with them in person. Their minds had become imbued with the popular conception of the Messiah as a temporal prince, who was to exalt Israel to the throne of the universal empire, and they could not understand the meaning of His words foretelling His sufferings and death.

Christ himself had sent them forth with the message:

Mark 1
[15] The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the gospel.

That message was based on the prophecy of *Daniel* 9.

Sister White writes about how the disciples were sent out with the message,

Mark 1
[15] The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the gospel.

Was this message from God? What do you think? Was it revealed truth? But wait. Didn't they preach that Christ would set up an earthly kingdom? Didn't they believe that Christ would come to sit on the throne of David and destroy the Romans and make Israel a great nation? Didn't they believe these things when they preached? Did they? Yes! Was it nevertheless the message from God? It was the message from God.

The disciples did not completely understand what the results of their message would be, but they preached it just the same. That is an interesting fact. They didn't understand where it would end up, but it was the message from God nonetheless. And it was preached at a time that was prophesied.

What we need to see here is the difference between the treasure and the vessel. The people themselves don't understand everything. Nevertheless, God sends out His messengers in His time in

order to give a very specific message. It is important that we obey this message, that we climb the next step even though we cannot see the whole staircase. Explanations will come with time. God will show us our errors. But when we don't obey because we don't have explanations, we are making a big mistake.

The same situation existed in 1844. The Adventists preached that Christ would soon appear. But they didn't know that He was really going into the most holy place in heaven. Nevertheless, the message they preached was from God. It was preached at the right time. It was the right message, even though not everything was understood. It was important for the hearers to accept this message. It was also important afterwards for them not to say that they had made a mistake in accepting the message. This was important for them.

It is likewise important for us to accept the messages that God sends, for nothing is clearer than the fact that He sends messages.

Summary

I would like to summarize briefly by saying that when God gives us messages it is our duty to study them diligently and compare them with the Word of God. When we see that it is the message from God, then we must accept it. We dare not cast it aside.

When we reject the message because it comes through a human channel that God has chosen to give other messages as well, then we are making a big mistake. If we reject the message because we see where we had wrong ideas in the past, which is the basis of our church confession, then we also make a big mistake.

We need to plainly see that despite the shortcomings of the human vessels God uses, despite the lack of understanding that we had, God has led us. We dare not cast away the experience God has given us in past camp meetings. We must take them seriously and accept them and keep them ever fresh in our minds. We must study these messages with earnestness and dedication.

3. Gospel Order and Rebellion

How Can I Prevent Rebellion from Starting in My Heart?
Sabbath, January 21, 2006

TODAY we would like to continue our study of Gospel Order. This time we want to study it from the angle of rebellion. The question we want to ask ourselves is,

"How can I prevent rebellion from starting in my heart?"

We could study about rebellion as it occurred in history, and we will do this. But we don't want to do this from curiosity or from a desire to improve our knowledge of history, but rather to obtain the lessons that are there for us. As we study history, we want to keep ever before us the question,

"How can I prevent rebellion from starting in my heart?"

We need to know where and how rebellion starts. This is important for us because we can see that rebellion has occurred again and again. This has cost us much effort on one side. On the other, truths have been revealed which we didn't appreciate or recognize so much before, for whenever the message is questioned, those who love it study more deeply into it, and God gives more light. Nevertheless, the situation involves much sorrow because people end up being lost. So the question we need to ask is,

"How can I prevent rebellion from starting in my heart?"

I want to emphasize the fact that no one can say that this question has nothing to do with him, that it is only important for others.

The Pattern of Rebellion

Let's read a text in this regard. It is *1 Corinthians* 10:6. Paul is talking here of the experience the Israelites had when they were delivered from Egypt and later came into Canaan. Then he says,

1 Corinthians 10

[6] Now these things became our examples…

He doesn't mean examples in the sense that they were good and that we should follow them. They were not good examples. What Paul means is that this history is given so that we can learn from it.

1 Corinthians 10

[6] Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.
[7] And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.
[8] Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell.
[9] Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents.
[10] Nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.
[11] Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

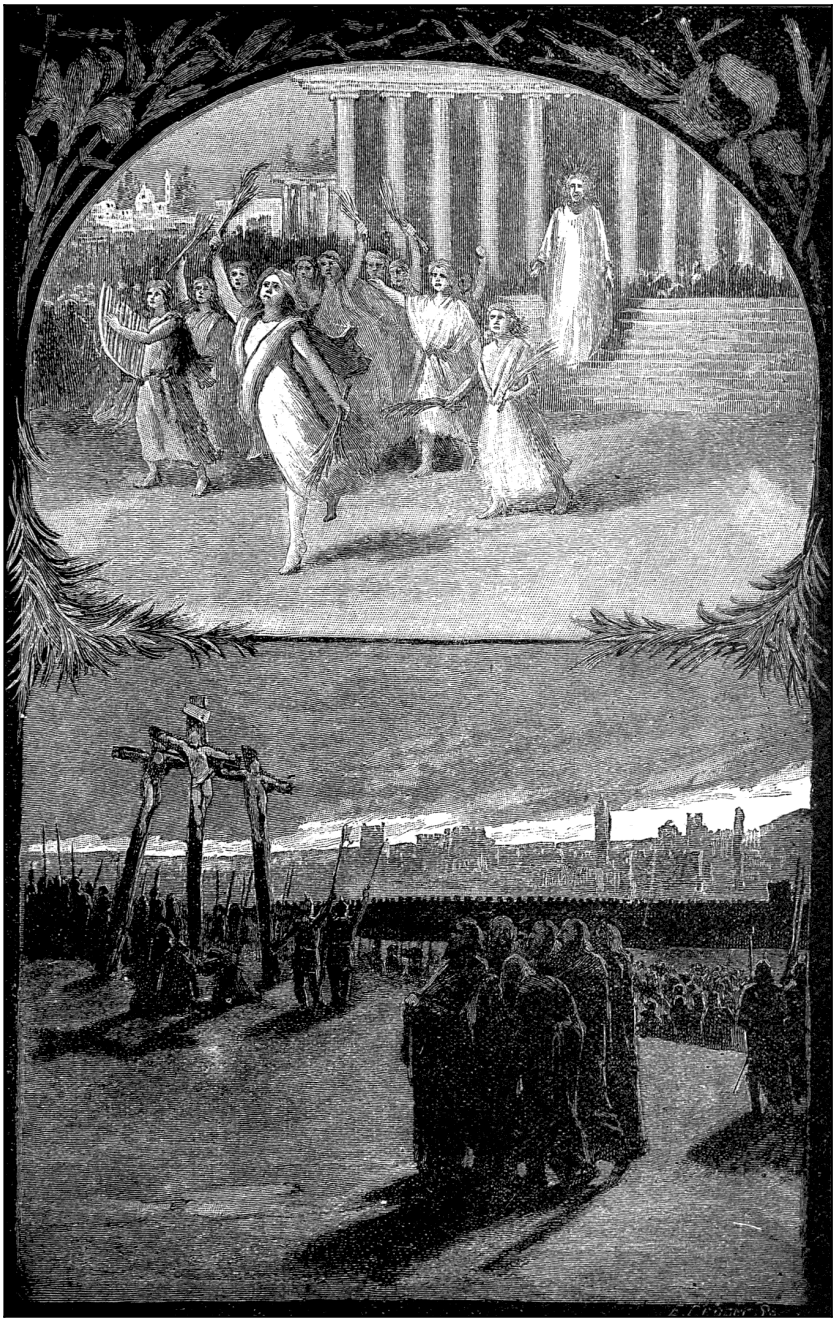
You can see here what Paul means by the word, example. He means, be warned. It is a warning for us upon whom the end has come.

[12] Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

If we think that it is beyond us to complain as the Israelites did in the wilderness because we don't have that kind of character, then we are in danger, for he who thinks he stands needs to be on guard. But usually such a person is less on guard than others.

[12] Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Then the promise is given that we will not be tempted above that which we are able to bear. God will always prepare us for coming temptations; therefore we don't have to fall. Yet even



The Disappointment of the Disciples

though God is loyal and preserves us, we need to see that we are in danger of not being open to the warnings.

I am convinced that God has given us Gospel Order for one reason—so that we don't go the way of rebellion as described in *1 Corinthians* 10; so that we don't have to spend forty years in the wilderness, but rather that we might enter the heavenly Canaan. Only a few have ever understood God's intentions. Those who have rejected the message and have been trapped in rebellion definitely have not understood God's intentions.

I would like to turn back to the verses we have just read and go through them point by point. History reveals a pattern of rebellion against Gospel Order. It's not just an occasional occurrence. In *Romans* 15:4 Paul tells us to heed the warnings handed down to us from the past.

> **Romans 15**
> [4] For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

LUST

Paul speaks of lust:

> **1 Corinthians 10**
> [6] ...we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

What does he mean? He is referring to the Israelites' being tired of manna all the time. It didn't taste good anymore. It was always the same thing. They wanted something different. In Egypt they had a variety of foods, but in the wilderness they had only manna. They felt that they had had enough and didn't want any more. They also complained against Moses and blamed him for leading them into the wilderness.

You know the story. It is described in *Numbers* 11. Described first is how they complained. Then some were killed, and they complained even more. Then Moses decided that all this was too much for him. He wasn't willing to endure any more of this con-

stant rebellion. When Moses—the humblest man on earth, whose character we wish we had, who spent forty years preparing for his work—when even he became weak at the critical moment and felt that he couldn't endure any more, then we can see what an immense burden continual rebellion is to those who bear responsibility for God's work. Paul says not to be as they were.

IDOLATRY

1 Corinthians 10

[7] And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

The next point is not to become idolaters. You know where they practiced idolatry. Moses didn't come down from the mountain as soon as they would have liked, and they wondered what had happened to him. Then they decided to do something else, so they made the golden calf. This was rebellion, just the same as before.

IMMORALITY

Then they practiced immorality as stated in:

1 Corinthians 10

[8] Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell.

You know what happened then. They were at Baal-peor and allowed themselves to be misled into idol worship because of its sensuality. You can read about this in *Psalm* 106.

Psalm 106

[28] They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.
[29] Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions: and the plague broke in upon them.

Then Phinehas killed Zimri and the Midianite woman and brought the matter to a halt.

[30] Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.

[31] And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.

Israel disregarded the laws given through Moses.

TEMPTING CHRIST

Then Paul says that they tempted Christ:

1 Corinthians 10
[9] Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents.

When did they tempt Christ? When they were about to enter Canaan through Edom. They no longer received water from the rock. But there was a good reason for this. They were almost in Canaan where there would be plenty of water. Yet they couldn't endure something other than what they were used to, not even for a moment. So they murmured against Moses, and snakes came as the result.

COMPLAINING

Complaining is stated in verse ten:

1 Corinthians 10
[10] Nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

The whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron again and again. The main incidents are as follows:[71]

1. To Moses in Egypt (1446 BC) – The people complain to Moses, that because of Him and His talk of a Promised Land, Pharaoh made things worse for them. Moses complains to the Lord (*Exodus* 5). The Lord delivers the Israelites and…

Exodus 13
[3] Moses said to the people, Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for by a power-

[71] PP Editor's note: Andreas only quoted some verses showing two instances of the murmuring. I have provided a complete list with dates, edited from some sources on the Internet.

ful hand the Lord brought you out from this place.

2. Before Crossing the Red Sea – The people complain and say to Moses at the Red Sea,

> **Exodus 14**
> [12] Is not this the word that we did tell you in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

God opens the sea and the Israelites march across on dry ground and the Egyptians were destroyed.

> **Exodus 14**
> [31] When Israel saw the great power which the Lord had used against the Egyptians, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses.

3. The Bitter Water – The people complain about the bitter water, and God provides sweet water.[72]

4. Against the Manna – The people complain about being hungry; God provides manna and quail meat.[73]

5. Thirst – The people complain about being thirsty, God provides water.[74]

6. At Moses' Absence for 40 days (1446 BC) – The people complain about Moses' absence and forsake the Lord by creating a golden calf and altar.[75] The Lord orders the Levites to kill 3,000 people by the sword because they worshiped the golden calf.[76]

7. Adversity and Food (1445 BC) – The people complained about adversity and food.[77] Moses is displeased and wants to die.[78]

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[72] *Exodus* 15:22-27.
[73] *Exodus* 16:1-7, 11-12.
[74] *Exodus* 17:1-7.
[75] *Exodus* 32:1-6.
[76] *Exodus* 32:28.
[77] *Numbers* 11.
[78] *Numbers* 11:10-15.

The Lord allows a very great plague.[79]

8. Discontent at Moses' Leadership – Miriam and Aaron complain about Moses' leadership. Miriam suffers with leprosy for 7 days.[80]

9. At the Difficulties of Entering Canaan – After the bad report of the 10 spies, the people complain about how difficult it looked to enter the Promised Land so they refuse to enter.[81]

10. At Moses' Leadership (1445 BC) – The people complain again and want to kill Moses and try to select another leader.[82] The Lord pronounces that all the men over 19 years old (except Joshua and Caleb) would die in the wilderness and not enter the Promised Land.[83] The 10 unfaithful spies die in a plague.[84]

11. Korah's Rebellion (1426 BC) – 19 years after the 12 spies were sent, key leaders rebel against Moses.[85] The earth opens and swallows the offenders ("all the men who belonged to Korah").[86]

12. Accusing Moses of Killing Korah & Followers – The people complain again and they accuse Moses of killing God's people (Korah, etc.). The ensuing plague kills 14,700 people.[87]

13. Murmuring Against Aaron (1426 BC) – The children of Israel murmur against Aaron, but God shows favor to Aaron through the budded rod.[88]

14. For Water (1407 BC) – 19 years later, the people contend with Moses again because of no water. God provides water.[89]

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[79] *Numbers* 11:33.
[80] *Numbers* 12:10-15.
[81] *Numbers* 14:1-9.
[82] *Numbers* 14:10-38.
[83] *Numbers* 14:28-30.
[84] *Numbers* 14:37.
[85] *Numbers* 16:1-40.
[86] *Numbers* 16:32.
[87] *Numbers* 16:41-50.
[88] *Numbers* 17:5, 10.
[89] *Numbers* 20:1-12.

Moses strikes the rock, instead of speaking to it as instructed by the Lord.[90]

Numbers 20

[12] But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, Because you have not believed me, to treat me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.

15. Impatience with the Journey (1407 BC) – The people complain against God and Moses.[91] God sends fiery serpents and "many people of Israel died,"[92] then He brings the solution to the fiery serpents in the brazen serpent.[93]

I would like now to read from *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

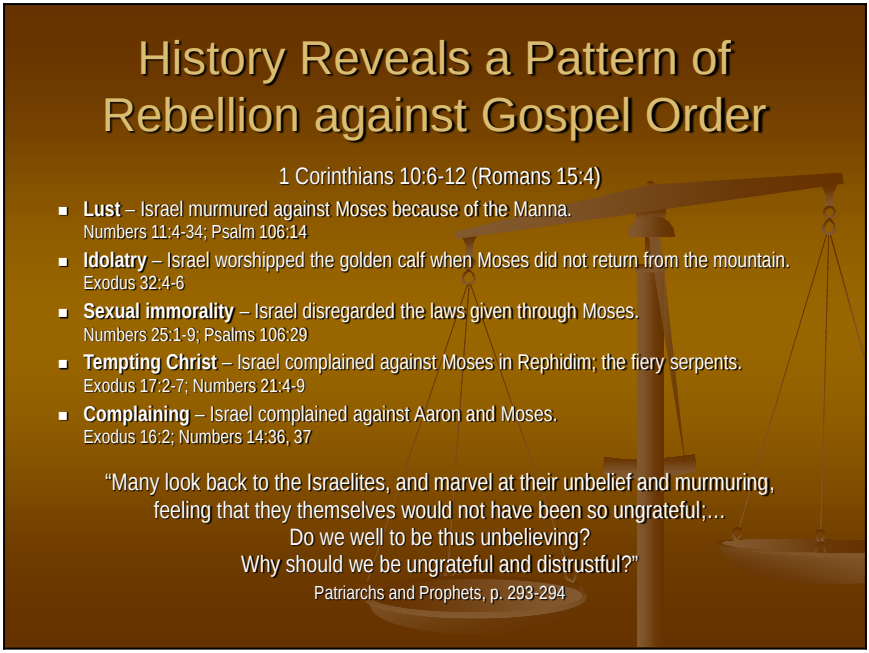
Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 293-294:

Many look back to the Israelites, and marvel at their unbelief and murmuring, feeling that they themselves would not have been so ungrateful; but when their faith is tested, even by little trials, they manifest no more faith or patience than did ancient Israel. When brought into strait places, they murmur at the process by which God has chosen to purify them. Though their present needs are supplied, many are unwilling to trust God for the future, and they are in constant anxiety lest poverty shall come upon them, and their children shall be left to suffer. Some are always anticipating evil or magnifying the difficulties that really exist, so that their eyes are blinded to the many blessings which demand their gratitude. The obstacles they encounter, instead of leading them to seek help from God, the only Source of strength, separate them from Him, because they awaken unrest and repining.

Do we well to be thus unbelieving? Why should we be ungrateful and distrustful?

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[90] *Numbers* 20:8-12.
[91] *Numbers* 21:4-9.
[92] *Numbers* 21:6.
[93] *Numbers* 21:8-9.



Korah's Rebellion

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 395:

> The former rebellions had been mere popular tumults, arising from the sudden impulse of the excited multitude; but now a deep-laid conspiracy was formed, the result of a determined purpose to overthrow the authority of the leaders appointed by God himself.

Distrust is one of the distinguishing marks of rebellion; distrust in God's leading, which can be expressed in various ways. How did Korah's rebellion begin? Let's observe a rebellion step by step. How does it begin and proceed? What is the first step? We have been studying about growth in a positive sense, but there is also growth in a negative sense.

First of all, who was Korah? He was not just anyone. He had a particular position.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 396:

> Korah, the leading spirit in this movement, was a Levite, of the family of Kohath, and a cousin of Moses; he was a man of ability and influence. . . .
>
> Korah and his fellow conspirators were men who had been favored with special manifestations of God's power and greatness. They were of the number who went up with Moses into the mount and beheld the divine glory.

He even had the privilege of going with Moses part way up the mount, and there he saw the glory of God. He saw revelations of God which only Moses and others with Korah were allowed to see. At that time Korah was not in rebellion. He was in complete harmony with the work of God. He was one of the people who supported Moses and the work of God and who contributed to the prosperity of the work.

Why is it that his name is associated with one of the worst rebellions that ever occurred in the history of Israel in the wilderness? The first step is described:

> But since that time a change had come. A temptation, slight at first, had been harbored, and had strengthened as it was encouraged, until their minds were controlled by Satan, and they ventured upon their work of disaffection.

Often we experience little temptations that we consider to be insignificant. Therefore, we don't take any particular measures against them. We actually allow them and give in to them because they are small. We think we need to resist the big ones but not the little ones. We tend to excuse ourselves as well because, after all, we're not perfect.

> They were unwilling to submit to the terrible sentence that they must all die in the wilderness, and hence they were ready to seize upon every pretext for believing that it was not God but Moses who was leading them and who had pronounced their doom.

The temptation, which started off slight at first, was dissatisfaction with the sentence that they had to go back into the wilderness. Moses, at God's direction, told them that they had to return to the wilderness. To Korah, this was absolutely unacceptable. He thought that Moses had discouraged the people and that if he had had more patience, then they could have done something. He was ready to admit that the people had faults and should not have complained, but to go back into the wilderness meant the destruction of all hope. It was too harsh a judgment.

These thoughts came into his mind and seemed to be small. In his mind he was only thinking of justice. He was not ready to accept the judgment of going back into the wilderness. He thought that there must be a better way. There must be some way of being saved from this sentence, for God can always save. Hadn't He saved them at the Red Sea, etc.? So he entertained these thoughts more and more. He yielded to this temptation.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 397-398:

> Korah reviewed the history of their travels through the wilderness, where they had been brought into strait places, and many had perished because of their murmuring and disobedience. His hearers thought they saw clearly that their troubles might have been prevented if Moses had pursued a different course. They decided that all their disasters were chargeable to him, and that their exclusion from Canaan was in consequence of the mismanagement of Moses and Aaron; that if Korah would be their leader, and would encourage them by dwelling upon their good deeds, instead of reproving their sins, they would have a very peaceful, prosperous journey; instead of wandering to and fro in the wilderness, they would proceed directly to the Promised Land.

Then he concluded that Moses had made other mistakes in particular situations. In other instances he believed that Moses could have done better. Moses was leading differently from the way that he thought it should be. He was too concerned about controlling others and making sure that everyone did things right. The peo-

ple weren't as bad as Moses thought. Moses could have been more trusting. He looked upon Moses as a real dictator.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 397:

They had discussed the question of the right of Moses to so great authority and honor, until they had come to regard him as occupying a very enviable position, which any of them could fill as well as he. And they deceived themselves and one another into thinking that Moses and Aaron had themselves assumed the positions they held. . . .

They said that the congregation were not at fault, since they desired nothing more than their rights; but that Moses was an overbearing ruler; that he had reproved the people as sinners, when they were a holy people, and the Lord was among them.

Furthermore, Korah thought that Moses was not consistent. One time he says that the people should go and then he says they should not go. Once he says to hold the Passover and another time to not hold it. Then he gets rid of circumcision. He believed that there was much ground for concluding that Moses contradicted himself.

So some of the people stirred up discontent among the masses, but they did this covertly. They needed to see how everyone would react first. They would say something like,

"What do you think about the situation? It seems a little oppressive."

At first the instigators were a little uncertain about how they would be received, but others strengthened them in their discontent by expressing their own discontent.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 396-397:

Professing great interest in the prosperity of the people, they first whispered their discontent to one another and then to leading men of Israel. Their insinuations were so readily received that they ventured still further, and at last they really believed themselves to be actuated by zeal for God.

They were successful in alienating two hundred and fifty princes, men of renown in the congregation. With these strong and influential supporters they felt confident of making a radical change in the government and greatly improving upon the administration of Moses and Aaron.

Others thought that it wasn't just that they all should have to return to the wilderness and that they weren't allowed to celebrate the Passover or practice circumcision. The list of complaints went on, and the discontent grew, until they came to Moses and openly accused him.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 398:

For a time this work was carried on secretly. As soon, however, as the movement had gained sufficient strength to warrant an open rupture, Korah appeared at the head of the faction, and publicly accused Moses and Aaron of usurping authority which Korah and his associates were equally entitled to share. It was charged, further, that the people had been deprived of their liberty and independence.

Numbers 16

[3] You take too much upon you, [said the conspirators,] seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?

I pondered how I should describe their behavior. We could say that they brought their concerns to Moses. Isn't it proper to bring our concerns to the leaders? But it wasn't just a matter of asking their questions. They *accused* Moses. They really didn't want answers to their questions. They wanted to change the leader. When people present their questions in such a way that they aren't questions anymore, but really the expression of the desire for a change, then it becomes apparent that something isn't right. The spirit of rebellion has taken possession of the questioners.

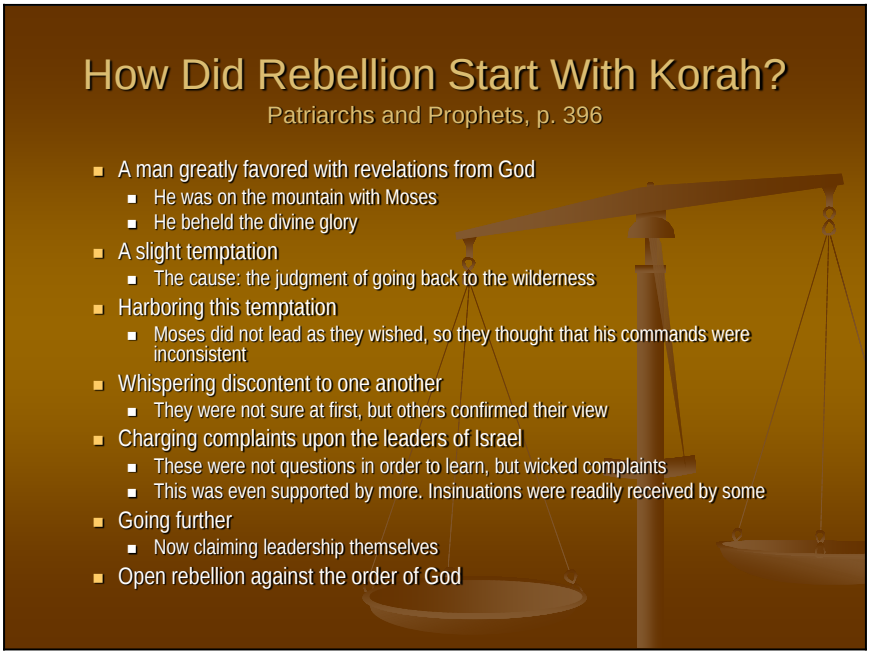
They accused Moses of being too strict, and said that the people were good. They felt that the people didn't deserve the treatment Moses had given them. Those were not questions. They were ac-

cusations. And it wasn't just Korah and a few others; the majority of the people were in on this. Some were only too willing to accept the implications against Moses. Korah and the others were not necessarily unified in everything, but they were united on one point—the way they were being led had to change. Things could not continue the way they were. They just couldn't accept it.

They went further in this rebellion. They claimed to have the task of leading themselves. They said,

> "If we could lead, things would be better."

Then the rebellion against Gospel Order was openly displayed. Moses could only say that God had given Gospel Order. He couldn't change things, nor could the others. He could only point out what God had said. God gave them an answer in the budding rod, and in the death of those who brought their own fire. God has always given answers.



The Basis of Rebellion

That is the development of rebellion from beginning to end. When we look at the end, we think that it is pretty bad. But think! It all begins with small temptations to which we yield. On what basis did rebellion begin? I don't mean just the rebellion of Korah, but any rebellion. What is actually the reason?

LUCIFER'S REBELLION

Let's consider Lucifer. What was Lucifer's reason for rebelling in heaven? There was no justifiable reason, but what was his reason? He was not content with his position. We can compare that with Korah who was also discontent. He didn't want to go back into the wilderness. Others, too, were not content. The Israelites, for example, were not content with the manna. Discontent is a basis for rebellion.

Lucifer was jealous. This is also an important point that we should recognize. One point which pressures people and consumes the soul is the feeling of being excluded. Lucifer wasn't allowed to be a part of every meeting. When the Father and the Son discussed the creation of the earth, Lucifer was not invited. Lucifer thought,

> "What were they talking about? What were they saying about me in this meeting? What bad things were they saying about me?"

This festered in him and made him more determined in his rebellion.

Lucifer wanted to be first. He became discontent and would not be satisfied unless he could be the highest. These were the reasons for Lucifer's rebellion. This is actually the pattern for all other rebellions. Every rebellion that has followed has these same things at its foundation: discontent, jealousy, feeling excluded; the desire to be the greatest.

Another point is distrust. Lucifer distrusted God. Lucifer misinterpreted everything God did. He thought that there must be

some bad motive behind all of God's behavior. If Lucifer didn't understand something that God did, then he concluded that something bad was happening. How often has it happened that people have heard a report, and before they understand the details, they are already harboring distrust in their hearts!

KORAH'S REBELLION

Why did Korah rebel? He too was discontented with the way God was leading him. It didn't have to do with just Moses. It was about the way God was leading. He was not content with this. He lost sight of the fact that God was leading Israel. Korah had been on the mount with Moses. He saw God's glory. And now he didn't know that God was leading.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 404:**
> Korah would not have taken the course he did had he known that all the directions and reproofs communicated to Israel were from God.

Should we say,

> "Poor man. He was the victim of deception. He couldn't help it that he thought the way he did because he didn't know that God was leading"?

Is this a good excuse for him?

> But he might have known this. God had given overwhelming evidence that He was leading Israel.

I would like to say again, that when a rebellion occurs, the rebels don't see anymore that God is leading. They just don't see it, and they really believe that God is no longer leading. But they have made themselves blind by closing themselves off to the light.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 404:**
> But Korah and his companions rejected light until they became so blinded that the most striking manifestations of His power were not sufficient to convince them; they attributed them all to human or satanic agency.

Korah wanted to be first, just as Lucifer had. And of course, he also harbored distrust.

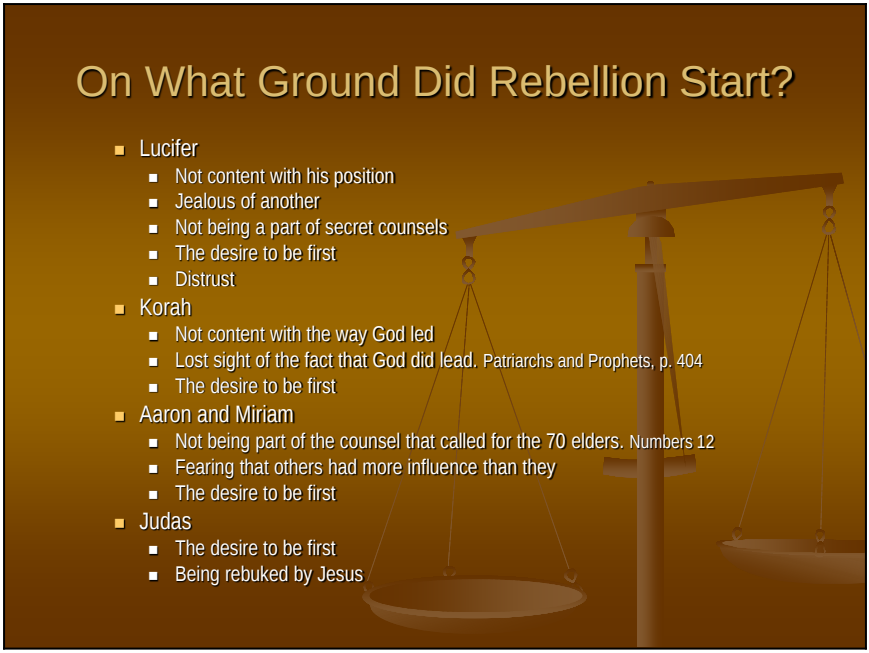
AARON AND MIRIAM'S REBELLION

How was it with Aaron and Miriam? You know the story of when they murmured against Moses and claimed that God not only spoke through Moses, but through them as well. It is true that Aaron and Miriam had received the gift of prophecy. However, they were not invited to every meeting. For example, they were not consulted concerning the choice of Moses' wife. True, they could not have been there when the decision was made, but the point is that they were unhappy because the choice was not in accordance with their ideas. They believed that without their ideas, things couldn't be done right.

There was also the choosing of the seventy elders. In that case Aaron and Miriam were completely excluded. Then these elders counseled together with Moses, whereas before that, Aaron and Miriam were the ones who counseled with Moses. They perceived this change as a bold obtrusion on their position. How could Moses do such a thing? Aaron and Miriam were not content. This gave them occasion to say that God not only spoke through Moses, but through them as well. They feared that others had more influence than they did. They wanted to be the greatest.

THE REBELLION OF JUDAS

How was it with Judas? Why did he rebel? For the same reasons. He wanted to be the greatest in the kingdom that Jesus would set up. When Jesus rebuked him, he felt it was more than he could bear. Then he wanted justice to be done. Jesus' rebuke rankled in his mind. It wasn't just that he felt ashamed in front of the others for a moment, but he continually turned the thing over in his mind and dwelt on the thought that he had been treated unjustly. He rehearsed to himself how much good he had done for the work of God, etc., etc. Thus Judas developed into a betrayer.



Rebellion in Our Movement

It is not only in the Old and New Testaments that we have examples of rebellion. We have them in our movement as well. When we consider the whole history of our movement from the beginning until now, we should ask ourselves what the reasons have been for rebellion. Why has it happened again and again? Is it because God hasn't given any more light? No. Is it because the leaders have made mistakes? No again.

CHERISHED IDEAS

Murmuring arises because the message disturbs cherished ideas. I have wondered how murmuring could arise over the message on God's character. That is a message you would think would make everyone happy. God doesn't kill anyone. Why should that lead to rebellion? When the message disturbs cherished ideas, it is taken as a personal attack. That is the initial temptation, and when one yields to this temptation, he then sees no more light, no more leading in that which God gives. That's the next step.

REBUKE OF SIN

Sometimes it happens that the message directly rebukes some sin. This has been the case particularly in the area of the reforms. Here sin has been plainly rebuked. Here are sins, plainly called such by the Word of God, and people haven't even cared. Suddenly they are rebuked, and they aren't pleased with that. They don't think they should be rebuked. They think they should be allowed to do what they want. They want to receive the message, but with the freedom to apply it how they will without having to answer to anyone. This is the attitude that many had. They have concluded that if the message rebukes sin, it cannot be from God.

PERSONAL OFFENSES

Sometimes people are personally rebuked. Then they feel accosted. Perhaps they accept it superficially, but they harbor thoughts of being unjustly treated. They might think that it shouldn't have been done publicly, shouldn't have been done at all, or any number of things.

Sometimes people are offended that they haven't been consulted about certain matters. I have pondered what thoughts arise when a meeting is held, and…

> "I am not there. Something important is being discussed, and I am not allowed to be there. Are they talking about me? Certainly they are! Otherwise I would be allowed to be there. It has to be about me. And they must be saying bad things about me. Otherwise they could tell me. No, they want to get rid of me, etc., etc."

So comes one thought after the other. We should really ask ourselves what thoughts we would have. Incidentally, there are other reasons why I am not invited to a meeting. Perhaps it's because they want to plan a surprise birthday party for me. Such a thought would not come from Satan but rather from God.

> "I was not invited to speak. I can speak well, but they didn't invite me. They didn't ask me to lead out anywhere. Suddenly I am no longer invited to do things. Perhaps they don't explain why, or perhaps they do, but I don't like their reasoning."

For example,

> "Bring your own family in order, and then you can lead out in Sabbath School again."

Some think that that is not in order, and they go over it and over it in their minds. Then the murmuring starts.

> "I have earned a certain position because of my qualifications, but I don't receive it. I've been here so long, and I haven't gotten this position. That's unjust. We can't allow that to continue."

Sometimes people harbor a secret desire for the highest place. I say secret desire because I have never heard anyone say to me,

> "I want to be the highest,"

–although I don't say that it could never happen. Usually this desire is stated in other ways, but regardless of how it is express, it is definitely there.

SUPERFICIAL ACCEPTANCE

Sometimes the message is not taken up with the whole heart, but only in order to receive recognition from the church.

> "I say 'Yes' when I hear the message. I say 'Amen' because any other response would appear strange. The others would think that I had become apostate, and we can't have that. So I will respond in the appropriate manner."

If we accept the message in this way, then sooner or later we are going to rebel. In other words, such a heart is a real hotbed for the kind of temptations as we have been studying here.

DISCONTENT WITH GOD'S LEADING

> "Is God really leading? When things happen the way they do, how can God be leading?"

Then rumors start. We hear this and that. A picture forms in our minds. Then we decide that things just aren't right, and we become discontent. The rumors support our thoughts, so we ac-

cept them. Then a fear of being misled is developed. This in turn leads to caution and wariness. Judas had to be very cautious so as not to be misled by Jesus. What an effort!

FEAR OF BEING OPPRESSED

There is the fear of being oppressed.

> "If I am not careful, I'll get into an oppressive situation."

Finally, there is distrust. Perhaps there are other reasons, but these are the main reasons for the repeated occurrences of rebellion.



Recognizing the Spirit of Rebellion

I don't want to leave this subject just yet. I want to ask the question,

> "How can I recognize the spirit of rebellion in myself?"

I also want to ask the question,

"How can I prevent this spirit?"

First of all, I need healthy self-distrust in order to recognize this spirit and to prevent it.

1 Corinthians 10
[12] Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

If I don't have healthy self-distrust, if I think that I can't fall, then I am in the greatest danger of falling. I need to pose more questions to help me see if I have already begun to yield to a slight temptation.

"What sort of feelings do I have when I think that something negative is being thought or said about me? What thoughts do I have?"

And if I have negative thoughts and assumptions, do I harbor them? The next question is,

"What feelings do I have when my work is brought into question?"

Let's say that I have performed some particular task and have put so much effort into it, and now it is all being questioned.

That reminds me of something that happened to me when I was a child. I wrote a whole page full of letters from the alphabet in order to demonstrate that I had been obedient and done my homework. When my mother looked at it, she said that they didn't look nice. I felt really hurt by that simply because my work wasn't appreciated. We need to ask ourselves what we would think if our work was not appreciated. Whatever it might be that we contribute, what thoughts do we have when this is not appreciated as we think it should be?

"What do I think when my life style is constantly brought into question by the message?"

When a message comes, do I think exaggerated thoughts? Do I think it is saying that everything I do is wrong? That is rebellious thinking.

"What do I think when the world mocks me because of my religious beliefs?"

"What do I think when I am rebuked?"

"How do I perceive authorities? Do I cringe?"

"What do I think when others take away my responsibilities?"

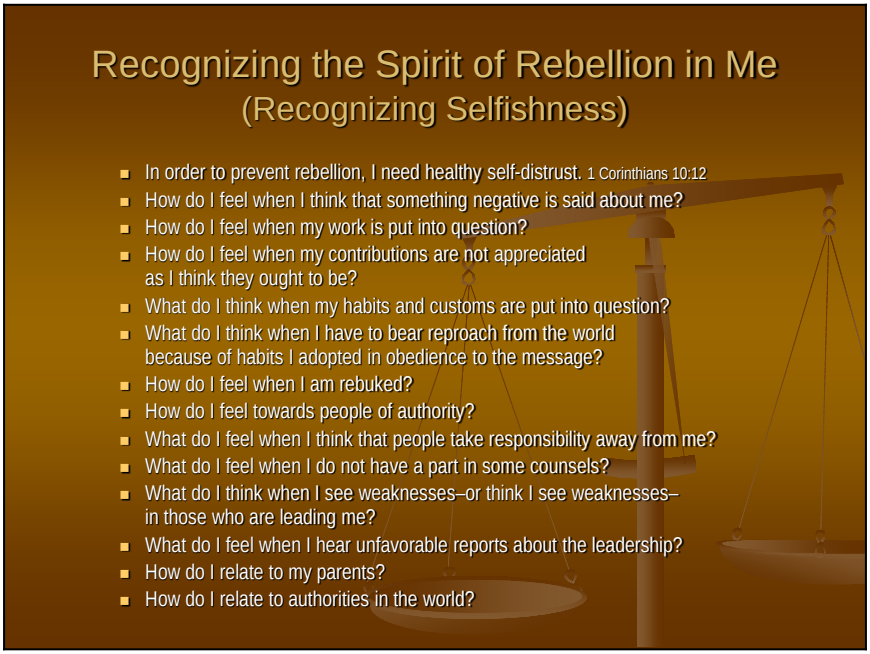
"What do I think when I am excluded from meetings?"

You might say,

"Those are all good reasons for rebellion."

But when those are the reasons, then the seed of rebellion is already there.

"What do I think when my leaders discover either real or imagined weaknesses in me?"



"What do I think when I hear a negative report about how the church is being led?"

"How do I relate to my parents?"

"How do I relate to authorities in the world?"

These are questions that I need to ask myself in order to recognize a temptation which is slight at first. If these things burden me, then I must see that they are from the devil. As a child of God, I don't need to be disturbed by these things. If I am rebuked, I can even be thankful for it.

Escaping the Spirit of Rebellion

The next question we would like to ask is,

"How can we avoid being ensnared by this spirit when it is so hard to do?"

GOSPEL ORDER

The answer is through Gospel Order. This was stated in the beginning. It helps us escape the grasp of this sin. That is why God gave us this message. Actually, we could say that God has always dealt with us in this way. So why has He given us a message that explains everything? Simply to protect us from the spirit of rebellion. That is the reason. A necessary part of Gospel Order is remembering what God has done for me.

Life Sketches, p. 196:

We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.

We have nothing to fear except that. The next thing to remember is that God leads. When this fact is really clear to us, then there will be no reason to fear being misled. Fear will be averted. You know the description of Christ in *Revelation* 1, where He is portrayed as the One who stands in the midst of the seven lamp stands and who holds the seven stars in His right hand. I would

like to read a statement from *The Acts of the Apostles* in reference to this.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 586:

Revelation 2

[1] These things says He that holds the seven stars in His right hand.

These words are spoken to the teachers in the church—those entrusted by God with weighty responsibilities. The sweet influences that are to be abundant in the church are bound up with God's ministers, who are to reveal the love of Christ. The stars of heaven are under His control. He fills them with light. He guides and directs their movements. If He did not do this, they would become fallen stars. So with His ministers. They are but instruments in His hands, and all the good they accomplish is done through His power. Through them His light is to shine forth. The Saviour is to be their efficiency. If they will look to Him as He looked to the Father they will be enabled to do His work. As they make God their dependence, He will give them His brightness to reflect to the world.

The thought here is that Christ holds the stars in His hand; therefore the fear of being misled is averted. Fear of being misled will no longer be a reason for rebellion when I remember that God is leading and not man.

CONCENTRATE ON PERSONAL HEARTWORK

Another point is that I need to search my own heart and not the hearts of others. Those who are caught up in rebellion spend a lot of time thinking about the faults of others, particularly the faults of those who are leaders in the church. But that is a wrong way of thinking. I need to concentrate on my own heart.

I need to invite others to correct me. Be open with one another. We should really want others to show us our weaknesses.

Another point is that I need to be willing to suffer disgrace when it happens to the church, and not become critical. For example, when something happens among us that really does put us in a bad light before the world, are we ready to bear the shame

and to say that we have done wrong, or do we want the removal of those who are mainly responsible for the incident? Do I want the main burden to rest on them, or am I willing to bear the disgrace with the people of God? We need to ask ourselves this question over and over.

THINK OF CHRIST, NOT SELF

The next point is to put Christ in the highest place and not myself. Paul said this repeatedly.

> **Galatians 2**
> [20] I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

I dare not allow any distrust or suspicion to arise in me when, for example, I am excluded from any meeting. Think of the birthday instead of thinking that they are saying bad things about you. Such distrust is unnecessary. Maybe they want to surprise you with something good. When brothers who are united and really love the message meet together, they do that for the best interests of everyone and not to cause anyone harm. Distrust can arise only when I lose sight of this. Even if a group of people do speak evil of me, I still don't need to be hurt over that. They hurt themselves, not me. There is no reason to get upset when others talk privately. We don't need to be burdened by that.

BROTHERLY LOVE

I need to deal in a brotherly manner with the faults that are in others. Jesus plainly said to go to your brother and talk with him alone and try to win him. A brotherly manner means in a loving way. Korah didn't do that. He harbored negative thoughts about Moses until they grew really big. Then he talked to others about the matter. Then he addressed Moses in an accusing manner. And because of this he could no longer be helped. If we would deal with issues in a brotherly manner from the very beginning, the problem could often be nipped in the bud.

Another point is to foster love; this will drive away all fear of being oppressed. The fear of being oppressed is so unreasonable, for a Christian cannot be made to feel oppressed. But he who has this fear will soon become an oppressor.

AVOID RUMORS

Another point is to have nothing to do with rumors. Don't even listen to them. If something bad is said about another, particularly about those whom God uses to lead His cause, then it is important that we do not believe it. Don't even listen. Shut your ears. If we are forced to listen for some reason, then just be sure that you don't needlessly expose yourself to it.

Once I received numerous letters about the messenger, and I simply didn't want any more. I just didn't want them because I saw that it was leading in the wrong direction. When rumors are spread, it is the work of Satan. He is trying to destroy God's work.

TRUST IN GOD'S LEADING

Another step you could take in dealing with rumors is to rebuke the one telling them. Often they don't even know what they are talking about. They conjecture but speak as if it were all the truth.

Finally, I must trust that God is leading by keeping sacred history ever before my eyes. I recommend reading *Psalm* 106 often. There the loyalty of God is portrayed in the way He led His people. It also tells of how the people murmured against Gospel Order again and again. But thankfulness is also expressed in the *Psalm* for the fact that God has led His people nonetheless. It is important that we foster thankfulness by making ourselves familiar with God's leading in history. This includes the Old Testament, the New Testament, and everything right up to today, including our movement.

It is my wish for us all that we really take these steps to heart, and that we recognize the little beginnings of rebellion. We have seen how rebellion has often broken out among us. Again and

again, here and there, this spirit is still flickering. If we knew where this would lead us, then perhaps we would be shocked. But when we consider these incidents to be small temptations, we shrug them off with the thought that it will pass. Don't be so superficial. Look more deeply into these things. Earnestly go to work on your own heart, and make heartfelt confessions. Really recognize that the problem is with us.



Then really love and appreciate the instruments that God has given to us, those with whom we are to work together for our blessing. This is my wish for us all. Amen.

4. Present Truth

Why We Need It, and How It Is Revealed
Sabbath, January 28, 2006

2 Peter 1
[12] Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the *present truth*.

OUR theme this morning is the "Present Truth." We want to see what present truth is and why it is so important for us. We also want to see how God imparts present truth and what His prerequisites are for imparting it. One thing is certain: we dare not take it for granted that God will give present truth to us. Nonetheless, God has given present truth in every age. He always has and always will. In a moment we will see just what this is.

Just how important present truth is has been stated in the Bible. Even though the expression "present truth" is not used much, the meaning is still there. It is found in:

Ephesians 6
[10] Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.
[11] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
[12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
[13] Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
[14] Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,
[15] And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace,
[16] Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

[17] And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,
[18] Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,
[19] And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,
[20] For which I am an ambassador in chains, that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Paul speaks here of the gospel, and the word *gospel* is so common to us that we don't think of the fact that in the time when Paul was speaking, it was present truth. That was the message that was preached back then. The disciples preached this when Jesus sent them out with the commission to tell everyone that the kingdom of God was at hand. Likewise, in the verses we have just read, Paul is preaching the gospel, which at that time was present truth. He was telling the Ephesians how important it was for them in their present time to get that armor on in order to succeed in the conflict against the powers of darkness.

We want to see why we need the present truth. We also want to see how it is revealed.

Truth and Present Truth

First, just to clarify the expressions, do you know what the difference is between *truth* and *present truth?* You might say that present *present truth* is also *truth*. That's correct. But why do we define the word, *truth*, a little closer by putting the word, *present*, in front of it?

I have made a comparison here. On the left is a list pertaining to truth. On the right is a list pertaining to present truth. Truth, for example, is the light God has revealed in the past. There are many things God has revealed in the past, and that was truth. But not everything that God has revealed in the past is also present truth. We considered this when we studied the subject of chang-

ing our focus. Do you remember? God directs the attention of His children to one thing and then to another.

An illustration of this would be a magnifying glass and a book. The glass magnifies a particular part of the book, that portion which we are presently reading. Everything in the book is important, but that which is under the glass is of particular importance to us at the moment. Perhaps we have read the whole page, but when we get to the last couple of sentences, we find them under a magnifying glass. At that moment those sentences become important. They become the *present* truth.

Truth satisfies a basic but general need that people have. Truth is truth regardless of its age or who has it or where it is found. Truth is simply truth. But *present truth* is something particular. God always gives it as a solution to a present emergency. You might wonder why I say, "emergency." I could even say, "crisis." Present truth is always the answer to a crisis.

For example, before the world was destroyed by the flood, God gave a present truth through Noah. That truth is not present truth today, but then it was. Those who rejected it were destroyed by the flood. Another example: those who heard the message from Jonah were listening to present truth. They accepted it and were therefore saved. We can see plainly that the truths preached in these cases were solutions to a then-present emergency. God knew what would happen, and He had a solution for it. It was a solution for the present emergency.

You can find truth in the world; however, it is usually mixed with error. Sister White writes that the churches have each a little truth. And generally speaking you can find truth in the world. The problem, as we know, is the mixture of truth with error, which often occurs. However, we don't find present truth in the world. God has given this to His people.

Truth, when mixed with error, or when not brought into the soul, has no particular power. For many, the truths revealed in the past have no power at all. They are taken superficially, and not

valued for what they really are, or they are so mixed up with erroneous interpretations, which justify sin, that they no longer possess power to free the soul. But when these same truths are purified from false interpretations, and combined with the gospel light, then they receive power.

Truth and Present Truth

Truth	Present Truth
Light that has been revealed in past ages	Light that is revealed today
Meeting a basic, general need	Meeting a present emergency
Can be found in the world as well	Is found only with God's people
Often mixed with error which robs it of power	Is the truth combined with the Gospel, and has the power of the Gospel

***Example**: The Sabbath is truth, but combined with the Gospel, and in light of the last day events, it has become present truth.*

The Sabbath and the Everlasting Gospel

I would like to illustrate this with an example: the Sabbath truth. Perhaps I should say that the Sabbath truth is not something that God first gave in 1846. It was around a long time before that. The early church kept the Sabbath. And there never was a time in all of history when there was not a people who kept the Sabbath—in all of history from the creation until today. I could name some of the people. In Luther's time there were reformers who kept the Sabbath: Oswald Glait, Andreas Fischer, to name a couple. Later there were Baptists in England. There was a doctor named Cham-

berlain. He kept the Sabbath. This fact can be found written on his gravestone today. In his time there were many Baptists in America who kept the Sabbath.

Later, the number of Sabbath keepers in England decreased for some reason. But some of them emigrated to America in the time of the Pilgrims and settled in Rhode Island where there was true religious freedom. In England they didn't have freedom. Many had been thrown into prison just because they kept the Sabbath.

Then, in 1843, the Seventh-day Baptists in America set aside a day on which they fasted and prayed that the Sabbath truth would be brought to the people's attention. In the same year a woman named Rachel Oakes, a Sabbath keeper, spoke to her preacher about the need for him to keep the Sabbath. The preacher was an Adventist who didn't see the importance of the Sabbath. She was attending a meeting where he was holding a communion service. She was not an Adventist and did not believe in the soon return of Christ. She didn't believe in the first angel's message, nor in the second, and neither in the third. She couldn't believe these things because she couldn't believe that a people who didn't keep the Sabbath could be acceptable to Christ and go to heaven.

Nonetheless, this woman spoke to the preacher, Frederick Wheeler, about the Sabbath. This prompted him to give the matter some thought, and soon after he started keeping the Sabbath. His friend, Thomas Preble, also an Adventist preacher, accepted the Sabbath shortly after this, either through his influence or that of Rachel Oakes. Preble then wrote a pamphlet on the Sabbath, which Joseph Bates read, leading him to accept the Sabbath truth. And thus the Sabbath truth was brought to the Adventists. These facts are plainly documented.[94] So the Sabbath truth was kept before, and partly understood, but it was to receive greater power in the revelation of the gospel under the message of the Third Angel.

[94] See *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, by Leroy Froom, Volume 4, p. 942-947.

Thomas Preble, although he was one of the first Adventists who accepted the Sabbath, lost this truth later. He even fought against it. Why? Why didn't the Seventh-day Baptists look for Christ's return although they had the truth about the Sabbath? The answer is plainly given in the following statement. It shows the difference between truth and present truth.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 337:

Elder K knows not of what spirit he is. He is uniting his influence with the dragon host to oppose those who keep the commandments of God, and who have the testimony of Jesus. He has a hard warfare before him. As far as the Sabbath is concerned, he occupies the same position as the Seventh-day Baptists. Separate the Sabbath from the messages, and it loses its power...

What messages? Sister White gives the answer in the rest of the sentence.

...but when connected with the message of the third angel, a power attends it which convicts unbelievers and infidels, and brings them out with strength to stand, to live, grow, and flourish in the Lord.

The expression, *the third angel*, means the three angels' messages of *Revelation* 14:6-12. Sister White says plainly that to separate these truths from the Sabbath means that the Sabbath loses its power. The Sabbath truth will have no power if the ever-growing light of the gospel (or, the present truth) is rejected. The third angel's message starts with these words:

Revelation 14

[6] Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having *the everlasting gospel*...

And this everlasting gospel is the message of power. We can preach the law as much as we like, but if we don't see the gospel in the law, then our preaching has no power. Can you see that? We can preach the law, but if we don't see the gospel in the law, then our preaching will convince no one. But when it is combined

with the message, when it is present truth, when we see the gospel in it, then it can lead people out of the world,

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 337:
...with strength to stand, to live, grow, and flourish in the Lord.

Then Sister White says something about the church in Wisconsin and how they lost the gospel. Even though they were keeping the Sabbath, they were no longer doing this as present truth. They had the seventh day, as a legal exercise, but not the new revelations of gospel light.

It is time for God's people in Wisconsin to find their position. "Who will be on the Lord's side?" should be sounded by the faithful, experienced ones in every place. God requires them to come out and cut loose from the various influences which would separate them from one another and from the great platform of truth upon which God is bringing His people.

God wants His people to concentrate on the present truth, not just one aspect. That is an important point. Many separate from us and hang on to one of the other of our teachings, but since they do not any longer have the present truth, then the teachings they retain have no power.

Qualities of Present Truth

So then, what is present truth?

1. TRUTH IS PROGRESSIVE

Present truth means that the light which God gives constantly grows. Present truth can actually be two things. It can be new light, something that was not known before. When Jesus was here and declared himself to be the Lamb of God, that was truly new light for the people. That doesn't mean that they could not have known this before, but the fact is that they didn't know it. That Christ would die as the Lamb of God was a totally new thought to that generation, since Abraham. Abraham was proba-

bly the earliest one who saw this when he offered up his son.[95] But then this light grew.

In many cases we can't say that the present truth is completely new. For instance, the Sabbath truth was not completely new. But the meaning and power of the Sabbath was more clearly seen when presented in connection with the three angels' messages. That is when the role of the Sabbath in the preparation for Christ's return was seen. To those who kept the Sabbath in the past, and received the gospel as it was unfolded at that time, there was a blessing in the Sabbath. But the light is constantly growing.

Proverbs 4

[18] But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.

That the light should grow more and more is a fundamental principle of Protestantism. In *The Great Controversy* we read about John Robinson who preached that the light grows. Perhaps you remember the covenant the Pilgrims made in which they promised to walk in the light that God had given and would give.

The Great Controversy, p. 291:

When first constrained to separate from the English Church, the Puritans had joined themselves together by a solemn covenant, as the Lord's free people, "to walk together in all His ways made known or to be made known to them."[96] Here was the true spirit of reform, the vital principle of Protestantism.

This is another way of saying that they weren't satisfied with what they had. They weren't willing to believe that they had everything. They expected more light from God. Robinson spoke to the Pilgrims about advancing light as they were about to depart

[95] PP Editor's note: Although Adam and Eve were told about the sacrifice of the Son of God (see *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 66), Abraham certainly had a more personal experience in it that went beyond the knowledge of others before him. Abraham went through the trial of offering up his own son, and thus was given a personal revelation of what it cost the Father to give up His only begotten Son.

[96] J. Brown, *The Pilgrim Fathers*, page 74.

for America. He told them not to think that God had no more light for them, but to be prepared for more, regardless of the instrument through whom it might come. Robinson said that he couldn't go with them, but that God would raise up other instruments:

The Great Controversy, p. 291-292:

"Brethren, we are now erelong to part asunder, and the Lord knows whether I shall live ever to see your faces more. But whether the Lord has appointed it or not, I charge you before God and His blessed angels to follow me no farther than I have followed Christ. If God should reveal anything to you by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth of my ministry; for I am very confident the Lord has more truth and light yet to break forth out of His holy Word. . . .

"Remember your church covenant, in which you have agreed to walk in all the ways of the Lord, made or to be made known unto you. Remember your promise and covenant with God and with one another, to receive whatever light and truth shall be made known to you from His written word; but withal, take heed, I beseech you, what you receive for truth, and compare it and weigh it with other scriptures of truth before you accept it; for it is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick antichristian darkness, and that full perfection of knowledge should break forth at once." (Martyn, vol. 5, pp. 70-71.)

It is sad that they didn't accept the instrument when he did come. Roger Williams was not a welcome figure in Puritan society in America. But the fact that light grows is a fundamental principle of Protestantism.

The Great Controversy, p. 297:

The great principle so nobly advocated by Robinson and Roger Williams, that truth is progressive, that Christians should stand ready to accept all the light which may shine from God's holy word, was lost sight of by their descendants.

You might think that we know this already. That may be, but do we see the practical application for us? Let's read another statement:

The Review and Herald, June 29, 1886:

The Scriptures are constantly opening to the people of God. There always has been and always will be a truth especially applicable to each generation. The message given to Noah was present truth for that time; and if the people had accepted that message, they would have been saved from drinking the waters of the flood. Now suppose a certain people should say, "We have all the truth that our fathers had; we don't want any more," and the God of heaven should send them a message as He did to Nineveh. What would be the result?

What would they say?

"We don't need any more messages. We have everything."

They wouldn't be ready to receive more warnings. And they would die.

The Review and Herald, June 29, 1886:

What would be the result?—The same as would have resulted to the Ninevites if they had not repented. Sentence was pronounced upon them, but their repentance saved them.

Fortunately, the people of Nineveh didn't think that way. They were not…

Revelation 3

[17] …rich, and increased with goods, and *in need of nothing*.

2. A SPECIAL REVELATION NEEDED AT THE PRESENT TIME

What is present truth? It is a revelation of truth that is needed today. We need it! It is not just something interesting or something that broadens our understanding. It is really needed. It gives us a greater faith in the power and promises of God. As already stated, it is a message for a crisis. And if I don't really want to be a part of God's people and recognize the crises that are there, then I

won't see that I need a solution to anything. I won't pray for an answer, and I certainly won't agonize in prayer.

The people of God need the present truth. Let's read about this:

> **Early Writings, p. 63:**
> I saw the necessity of the messengers, especially, watching and checking all fanaticism wherever they might see it rise. Satan is pressing in on every side, and unless we watch for him, and have our eyes open to his devices and snares, and have on the whole armor of God, the fiery darts of the wicked will hit us. There are many precious truths contained in the Word of God, but it is "present truth" that the flock needs now. I have seen the danger of the messengers running off from the important points of present truth, to dwell upon subjects that are not calculated to unite the flock and sanctify the soul. Satan will here take every possible advantage to injure the cause.

Why do we need the present truth? Because it is the only bulwark against the temptations of Satan. He will do everything he can to injure God's cause. When we look at things this way, we can see how important the present truth is. It is a protection.

3. A MAGNIFYING GLASS

The present truth is also a magnifying glass, which shows us at the right time just what we need.

Prerequisites for Present Truth

We would like to consider another question that is important for us.

> "What are the prerequisites that need to be satisfied before God can give us present truth?"

There is always a danger that we will busy ourselves with side issues instead of concentrating on the present truth. Another danger is not recognizing the present truth when God gives it. You might think,

> "That's not hard. I just have to listen to what is preached, and then I know what present truth is."

But it is not just that simple. Sadly I must say that many have thought this way when the message on Gospel Order was preached. They heard it, agreed with it, and concluded that they were in the present truth. I don't think it is that simple. I believe that God has and will allow crises to come upon us so that we will become more earnest about present truth. We need to see what the conditions are, under which God imparts present truth.

1. THE INTEREST OF THE BELIEVERS

The first point that must be present is that the believers have a genuine interest in the present truth. If we don't have a real interest in solutions to the problems we see and experience, then we will not recognize God's answers to these problems. We might agree intellectually with what we hear. We might see the various points and agree with them in our minds, year after year. But when a crisis comes, we will not pass the test.

The only way to personally accept present truth is when we strive for it. And that is not only the work of the messenger. Everyone has this responsibility.

> **Proverbs 29**
> [18] Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint.

The German text says that "the people become wild and desolate." This means that when God doesn't give present truth, the people of God become disunited and cannot move forward. Sister White makes the following statement:

> **Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 119:**
> I saw that the reason why visions have not been more frequent of late, is, they have not been appreciated by the church.

This is quite interesting. As the church loses interest, the visions decrease. The question is,

> "How much do we appreciate the truth? How much of it do we understand and receive?"

Let me read another statement that shows how important it is that we all have a part in the development of present truth and that it is not just the work of the messenger.

Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 36:

Point after point of truth should be investigated; for there is no limitation to the truth of God, and in its study a most lively interest should be felt by both teachers and pupils, that they may know what God has said. For years the voice of God has been saying to us, "Agitate, agitate, agitate." Study every point of truth, that you may know for yourselves what is truth in distinction from error.

Can we now better understand the text in *Ephesians?* Equip yourselves with the truth. We should look at it again.

Ephesians 6

[11] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
[12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
[13] Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

This is exactly what Sister White writes.

Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 36:

Let students search for themselves, that they may know the deep things of God. Let this work be done in the Spirit of Christ. Put no restriction upon the students.

The only restriction, of course, is that which the truth itself gives. But we don't need to lay these restrictions on anyone. They are either in the heart or not. One restriction, for example, would be that I have nothing to do with spiritualism.[97] Whoever does, will not appreciate the truth. That's plain.

[97] Spiritualism: communications with spirits claiming to be from the dead or departed souls.

But the students should not be restricted in the sense of rules to forbid the study of certain things. The only condition is that we busy ourselves with the present truth and strive to make it our own heartfelt experience.

We could make restrictions, for instance, that forbid anyone from coming to certain conclusions. We must take care not to think in terms of "black and white" to use the expression. We must be open to new light that God gives us.

I don't think I need to say a lot more about this. We could come up with a long list of things. The important thing is to have the spirit of study and research.

2. WHEN MORE LIGHT IS NEEDED

Under what conditions does God give present truth? The first is that we have a genuine interest in it, furthermore, when there is an apparent contradiction that requires an answer. Have you experienced apparent contradictions? When there is one, that is usually the place where God sends more light, because the matter requires more light.

3. WHEN THE ENEMY ATTACKS THE TRUTH

Another condition is when the enemy attacks the truth. He tests the truth through and through.

4. TO MEET A CRISIS

Another is when the church or the world is in a crisis. In the case of the world we have already considered the situation when the flood was on its way. The world was in a crisis, and God sent present truth as the answer. The church too experiences crises. Probably the best example of this is the church after the great disappointment in 1844. The church was convinced that Christ would appear. They fearlessly told their neighbors that He would soon be here. They were definite. He will appear tomorrow. They sold all their possessions. And then He didn't appear. Some said,

> "Now I am in disgrace. What will everyone think of me? I am thoroughly disappointed and confused."

So they decided to deny the truths that God had given them. But, no! It was truth. And whether I am disappointed or not makes no difference. It was truth. And since God has led me in the past, He will also lead me now. And the few people who thought this way received more light from God. A crisis is a cause for God to give more light.

When Is Present Truth Given?

- When the believers have a genuine interest in it
  - Proverbs 29:18
  - "I saw that the reason why visions have not been more frequent of late, is, they have not been appreciated by the church." Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 119
  - "Point after point of truth should be investigated; for there is no limitation to the truth of God, and in its study a most lively interest should be felt by both teachers and pupils, that they may know what God has said. For years the voice of God has been saying to us, 'Agitate, agitate, agitate.' Study every point of truth, that you may know for yourselves what is truth in distinction from error. Let students search for themselves, that they may know the deep things of God. Let this work be done in the Spirit of Christ. Put no restriction upon the students." Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 36
- When there is a seeming contradiction which needs an answer
- When the truth is attacked by the enemy
- When the church or the world is in a crisis

How Is Present Truth Given?

How do God's people receive present truth? How does God do this? You could say that is it simple. God gives a message to a messenger. We sit down and listen. Then we say "Yes," and then we receive the message. It is not as simple as that. I think we all see this in the light of what we have studied.

1. INSPIRATION AND PRAYERFUL STUDY

What we need to see is the need for cooperation between God and man. Perhaps, in the light of our indolent tendencies, we would like to have present truth come through a prophet, whomever that might be. We would like him to pray, and then he receives a dream or a vision or something of the like. Then he stands up front and tells us what he received. Wonderful! And thus we always receive everything as a clear picture with no fuzzy edges. It would be simple and easy. But such thinking would show that we had no concept of cooperation between God and man.

It wasn't too long ago that God's people did have a prophet, Sister White. She had visions. I never have; I have never had a prophetic dream, but Sister White had them regularly. That was indeed a wonderful thing. I would like to ask Sister White her thoughts on various things. But when she was asked by others, she sometimes had nothing to say. And even when Jesus was here, he had nothing to say at times. Why? Because the development of present truth doesn't happen this way. It is given through a combination of diligent study and divine power. This combination must always be there. When this combination isn't there and we rely on one or the other, then the truth will cease to advance.

What does this mean practically speaking in the development of present truth? I would like to read a statement of how the Adventists in 1844 received the truth. It was *not* so, that Sister White had a dream that the seventh day is the Sabbath after which she told the people and then they accepted it. She *did not* dream that Christ had entered the most holy place, and then told the people that this was the message, and then the people accepted it.

> **The Review and Herald, May 25, 1905:**
>
> After the passing of the time in 1844 we searched for the truth as for hidden treasure. I met with the brethren, and we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word. Again and again these brethren came to-

gether to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, "We can do nothing more," the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me. I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me.

Can you see the cooperation between the human and the divine? God did not give a message through visions and dreams, on the contrary, the believers studied diligently, and when they could go no farther, then God gave a vision or dream, and then they could appreciate it. Do we study the present truth in this way? Do we pursue the truth in this spirit? Do we participate so earnestly that when God gives new light, we can say,

> "That is exactly what we need. We weren't able to move any further ahead in our study, but now we have the light."

Is that the way things are with us? We need to sincerely ask ourselves this question.

2. THE USE OF EARTHEN VESSELS

There is another point concerning the combination of the human and the divine. We have the divine thought, and we have prayerful study. It is true that God gives us thoughts, but they do not replace our own study. We have divine leadership. God leads His people. But it is our job to put it into words, research the scientific and historical facts that the world has, and present the matter in the best way that we possibly can. But only under God's guidance. If we rely on either the one or the other solely, it won't work. There must be cooperation between the human and the divine.

I would like to read from *The Great Controversy* in this regard:

The Great Controversy, p. xi:

> The great events which have marked the progress of reform in past ages are matters of history, well known and universally acknowledged by the Protestant world; they are facts which none can gainsay.

What did Sister White write in *The Great Controversy?* Exactly that which she writes here. If it is the case that *The Great Controversy* is just a collection of facts, is it really new light? Why was *The Great Controversy* written anyway? Incidentally, some would say that D'Aubigne[98] wrote it better, that he described everything in more detail. Wylie[99] too says a lot more. Why did Ellen White write *The Great Controversy?* Let's read further.

> This history I have presented briefly, in accordance with the scope of the book, and the brevity which must necessarily be observed, the facts having been condensed into as little space as seemed consistent with a proper understanding of their application. In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but in some instances no specific credit has been given, since the quotations are not given for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject.

There are cases where Sister White quoted an author without citing his name. That is not the way we are allowed to do things today. But why did she intentionally do this? She did that because she did not want to present the person as an authority.

I would like to compare this with the Sabbath and the gospel. When Adventists accepted the Sabbath, they could have constantly pointed to the Seventh-day Baptists as the Sabbath authorities. The Sabbath came from them; therefore, we all should

[98] *History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century* and *History of the Reformation in the Time of Calvin.*
[99] *The History of Protestantism.*

study with them. But they didn't do this. Instead, they themselves wrote about this truth. Why? Because it was important not to present the Baptist writers as authorities, since they had the Sabbath without the power. They rejected the messages God gave and separated the Sabbath from them.

It was the same in principle with many authors whom Sister White quoted. They were not authorities for the people of God.

The Great Controversy, p. xi-xii:

In narrating the experience and views of those carrying forward the work of reform in our own time, similar use has been made of their published works.

It is not so much the object of this book to present new truths concerning the struggles of former times…

What? No new truths in *The Great Controversy?* Was this not new light in its time?

It is not so much the object of this book to present new truths concerning the struggles of former times, as to bring out facts and principles which have a bearing on coming events. Yet viewed as a part of the controversy between the forces of light and darkness, all these records of the past are seen to have a new significance…

In other words, we have light that on the whole is already there, but, now that it is connected with the unfolding gospel, it receives new significance.

The Great Controversy, p. xii:

…and through them a light is cast upon the future, illumining the pathway of those who, like the reformers of past ages, will be called, even at the peril of all earthly good, to witness "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Sister White makes it clear that what she writes is not altogether new, but it is new. Why? Because the things which are already known are presented in a new context. The true meaning of these truths is being brought out in the light of the great contro-

versy. This makes it different. We could enter school and study history. And what would we hear most of the time?

> "From then until then this king lived, and from then until then this king lived, then was this war, and he won this battle, and he lost this battle—and that is history. THE END."

But when we read *The Great Controversy*, we read about the same things yet in another light. We come to understand the meaning of the events. Have you ever read Sister White's description of the Civil War in America? It's very exciting in the light of the great controversy. They are the same events, but the gospel can be seen in them in contrast to the normal descriptions of history. We can also see the cooperation of the human and the divine. We can see God's hand guiding the events of history.

3. UNEXPECTED CHANNELS

Then there was Balaam, an apostate prophet, through whom God gave some of the most sublime revelations of Christ's first appearance on this earth as a man. His prophecies even led the wise men to Christ. That doesn't mean that we can depend on Balaam, because he misled God's people into idolatry.

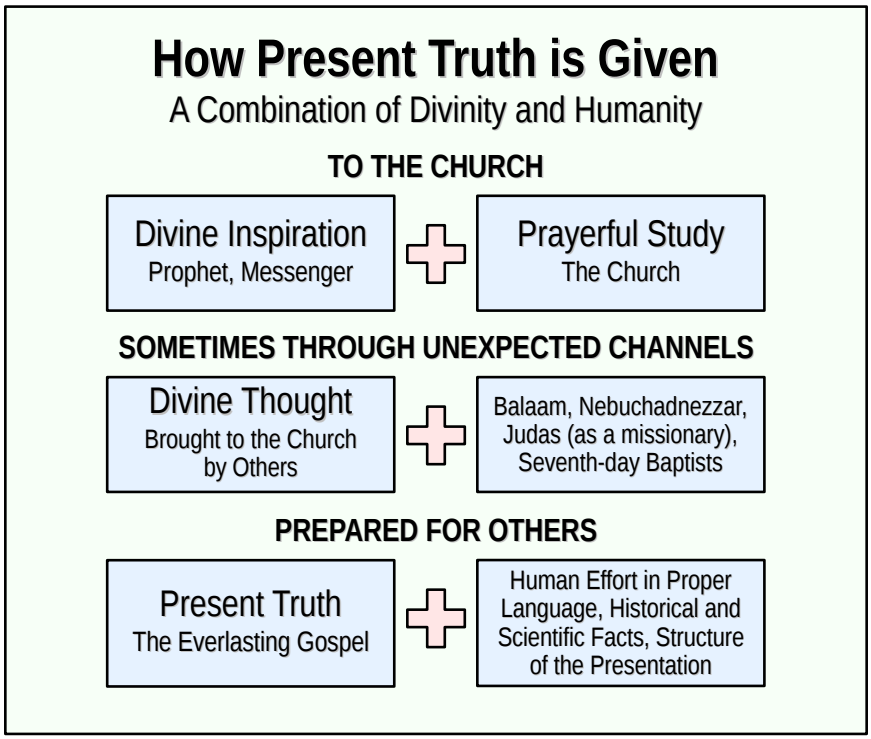
There is Nebuchadnezzar who was certainly not a born again king at the time when he received revelations from God. Nonetheless, it was important light.

There is Judas who was not born again but, nevertheless, preached the message that the kingdom of God was at hand.

And, as already said, there were the Baptists who were not the people of God and rejected the truth, but were still the instruments through whom the Adventists received the light. But how? Only as a result of God's leadership.

I would like to point us again to Gospel Order. We have learned that we should not look for our meal in the neighbor's trashcan. And we shouldn't. God doesn't want us to go out to the Balaams, Nebuchadnezzars, and Judases in search of truth. Not at all! But we should never be too proud to accept truth from whatever in-

strument God chooses to use. We should recognize that when the truths that are in the world are placed in connection with the gospel, they receive a new power, a new luster. They beam, as they never did before. And that is often present truth.



I would like to close with these thoughts. This study reveals to us our responsibility and duty to participate in the development of present truth, and the need to be cautious not to cut off channels through which God is working for us.

5. Freedom from Error and Bigotry

Sabbath, February 4, 2006

TODAY we want to study something that really pertains to all of us, even if we are not so aware that it does. It is our need to be freed from error and bigotry. We would like to study how God leads because He wants to save us from both of these problems. They are two sides of a coin. He who is bigoted will fall into error without fail, and living in error usually results in bigotry in one way or another. God wants to free us from these things.

Controversy Over the Nature of Christ

We would like to begin with a study on the nature of Christ. When we look at history, we will see that there has always been a controversy over Christ's nature. You already know that this was the cause of the great controversy in heaven. Lucifer did not want to accept the fact that Christ was God. This was his problem and that is why he rebelled. Actually, we should say that his problem was the secret desire to have this position, but he couldn't see that Christ was qualified for this position whereas he was not.

When we consider Christ's situation when He came to this earth, we see the same problem repeated. Only a few people could see that He was God. In the early church, near the end of the first century, a controversy developed over the nature of Christ. John wrote about this. He said,

> **1 John 4**
> [3] Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist.

This shows that from the beginning of the Christian church there was a question about Christ's nature. Some books were being discussed which were not written by the apostles or by God's prophets of the past, but by false teachers. These writings are called the Apocrypha. The thoughts contained in these writings indicate that people back then were really thinking about Christ's nature. They questioned whether or not He really was a man, or a

half god, or god. The Greeks also had ideas of their gods, whom they considered to be not completely gods but only half.

Then two teachers arose: Arius and Athanasius; who also propagated false teachings about the nature of Christ. They always centered on the same issue:

> "Was Christ all God or only similar to God?"
>
> "Is He only the best of God's creation, or is He really the same as God in nature?"
>
> "Or is He even the same being as God? Maybe there aren't two beings?"

Another question arose, which was often discussed:

> "Was Christ completely human?"
>
> "Did He only come *in the form* of a human being, or was He really human *in nature?"*
>
> "Did He only have the form of a man outwardly, or was He one inwardly?"

That is, did He by nature experience everything as man does? What does it say in *The Desire of Ages?* Physically, mentally, and morally His nature was the same as ours.[100] These were the questions that came up repeatedly. It is not coincidental that this should be a point of contention, because our salvation depends upon our correctly understanding Christ's nature. We need to understand who He was and who He is.

In our message the nature of Christ is a very important point. Without a correct understanding of Christ's nature, we cannot be saved, for Christ is Intercessor between God and humanity. He connects us with God. If this Intercessor didn't function properly, then we would have no connection and thus no salvation. For this reason the question is really important. It is not a side issue. Christ was human. We read in *The Desire of Ages* that He submitted to the great law of heredity.

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[100] *The Desire of Ages*, p. 24, 45, 49, 117, 122-123, 311-312, 664.

The Desire of Ages, p. 45:

> The story of Bethlehem is an exhaustless theme. In it is hidden "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." *Romans* 11:33. We marvel at the Saviour's sacrifice in exchanging the throne of heaven for the manger, and the companionship of adoring angels for the beasts of the stall. Human pride and self-sufficiency stand rebuked in His presence. Yet this was but the beginning of His wonderful condescension. It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life.

These are not insignificant words. Had Christ come with the nature of Adam before the fall, that would have been something in itself. But He accepted the law of heredity, not only by accepting Adam's nature right after the fall, but by accepting Adam's nature after four thousand years of sin. We can read more about this in *The Desire of Ages*, in the chapter about the temptation in the wilderness. Many think that Christ could not have sinned, but that is not the case. He could have fallen. He became a man, and the human nature He accepted had been affected by four thousand years of sin.

The Desire of Ages, p. 117:

> For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity.

Why did Jesus do that? Why was it so important? Because of our salvation. Our salvation depends on the ability to be reconnected with God. In order to become connected with God, His love must be revealed, and Christ came to this earth in order to reveal it.

The Desire of Ages, p. 23:

Nearly two thousand years ago, a voice of mysterious import was heard in heaven, from the throne of God, "Lo, I come."

Hebrews 10

[5] Sacrifice and offering You would not, but a body have You prepared me:

[7] ...Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of me,) to do your will, O God.

In these words is announced the fulfillment of the purpose that had been hidden from eternal ages. Christ was about to visit our world, and to become incarnate. He says, "A body have You prepared me." Had He appeared with the glory that was His with the Father before the world was, we could not have endured the light of His presence. That we might behold it and not be destroyed, the manifestation of His glory was shrouded. His divinity was veiled with humanity,—the invisible glory in the visible human form.

This great purpose had been shadowed forth in types and symbols. The burning bush, in which Christ appeared to Moses, revealed God. The symbol chosen for the representation of the Deity was a lowly shrub, that seemingly had no attractions. This enshrined the Infinite. The all-merciful God shrouded His glory in a most humble type, that Moses could look upon it and live. So in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, God communicated with Israel, revealing to men His will, and imparting to them His grace. God's glory was subdued, and His majesty veiled, that the weak vision of finite men might behold it. So Christ was to come in "the body of our humiliation" (*Philippians* 3:21, RV), "in the likeness of men." In the eyes of the world He possessed no beauty that they should desire Him; yet He was the incarnate God, the light of heaven and earth. His glory was veiled, His greatness and majesty were hidden, that He might draw near to sorrowful, tempted men.

That was the reason why Jesus, as God, accepted the human nature that we have. You are all aware of the record of Christ's ancestry in *Luke* 3 and *Matthew* 1. Let's take a moment to look at Christ's forefathers. We can't look at them all, but let's consider a few.

Abraham: Take Abraham, for instance, and consider his experience. Abraham tried to fulfill God's promises in his own strength and produced Ishmael through a second wife. For a long time he believed that this was the promised son. True, Abraham later repented of what he had done, but it revealed a definite weakness in him. At another time he lied to Abimelech about Sarah. This weakness was revealed later in his children. These are not good things to have in an inheritance.

Jacob: Jacob betrayed his brother and lied to his father.

Judah and Tamar: Judah and Tamar's child was one of Christ's forefathers. Do you know the story? Tamar dressed up as a prostitute and planted herself in a spot where she knew Judah would pass by. When he came by, she made her offer, and he accepted. The result was a child who was one of Christ's forefathers.

Rahab: Rahab was in the line of Christ, and she was the prostitute of Jericho.

David: David committed adultery and murder. Solomon was the son of this relationship.

Manasseh: How about Manasseh? Have you read his story? He was a very godless king.

I have mentioned only a few of Christ's ancestors and have presented only the bad side. Naturally, there were also strengths which were passed on to Christ. But the question for us is:

> "What kind of human nature must Christ have had when people with these traits were His ancestors?"

Can you still accept Him as your Saviour? Can you, in the light of what his ancestors made Him? That is the question that we should spend some time considering. Because this question is so hard to answer and is so contrary to the natural wishes of humanity, people either reject the idea that Christ is God or they reject that He was a real man. This is the easiest way to resolve the difficult issue presented by the corruption of Christ's forefathers.

Controversy Over the Nature of Christ

- Since earliest times the Nature of Christ has been a matter of controversy between different concepts
  - Was He (is He) fully God?
  - Was He fully man?
- It is essential for our salvation to understand who Christ was and is
  - Christ became man. He accepted the great law of heredity. The Desire of Ages, p. 48 and p. 117
  - Christ came to reveal the love of God. For this purpose He needed to accept the great law of heredity. The Desire of Ages, p. 23
  - Think what this means (Matthew 1):
    - Abraham did his own works with Ishmael
    - Jacob betrayed His brother
    - Judah and Tamar's child was the result of sensuality
    - Rahab was a harlot
    - David committed adultery and murder. Solomon was the son of Bathsheba.
    - Manasseh was a very godless king
  - What kind of nature would Jesus have with all those ancestors? Can you still accept Him as your Savior? People reject either His divinity, or His humanity.

I would like to change the subject for a moment. We will come back to it. It was only an introduction to help us understand the mystery of God and how He works. The mystery of God has its best representation in Christ, but it is also revealed in other things.

Failure of the Children of Israel

We would like to take some time to consider the children of Israel and their mistakes. We'll start when God called His people out of Egypt. The Israelites had a problem with getting involved with the religion of Egypt. In heart they were half Egyptian, I would almost say; but on the other side they were proud Hebrews. Concerning their religion, they were not pure.

When we look at the history of Israel up to the Babylonian captivity, it becomes obvious that they had a problem mingling heathen ideas and practices with their own. They had a particular problem with dishonoring the Sabbath. We have considered this in our past studies. We saw that there was a direct relation be-

tween dishonoring the Sabbath and disobedience to God. In other words, their dishonoring the Sabbath was the reason for their involvement with heathen religions. It was also the fruit of taking on heathen practices. It was both the reason and the fruit.

In *Nehemiah* 13 there is a clear description of this problem. He told them that they were dishonoring the Sabbath, and this is why Nehemiah was so distressed. This happened after the Babylonian captivity. Let's read about this briefly.

Nehemiah 13

17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day?

18 Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.

It was not just a matter of not keeping a day holy. It was an expression of their separation from God, of their mixing in heathen ideas. We can read more about this in *Prophets and Kings*.

Prophets and Kings, p. 620:

In his study of the causes leading to the Babylonish captivity, Ezra had learned that Israel's apostasy was largely traceable to their mingling with heathen nations.

Ezra studied the causes of Israel's captivity. He lived in the time when Israel had been led out of Babylon, and naturally he wanted to know what the cause of the captivity had been.

Many who are delivered from a sin are just happy to be free and don't want to go back. But they do fall back into the same sin. Why? Because they don't study the causes leading them into sin. They are superficial. Ezra was not superficial. He studied intensively into the causes. And what did he discover?

...that Israel's apostasy was largely traceable to their mingling with heathen nations. He had seen that if they had obeyed God's command to keep separate from the nations surrounding

them, they would have been spared many sad and humiliating experiences.

God had given a solution to this problem. And what was the solution, particularly in the time of Nehemiah and Ezra? What did Ezra do? He held the law of God up high. He read it, not only to himself, but to the people. Nehemiah did this as well. In their time there was a strict separation from the heathen. When the Samaritans asked if they could help the Jews rebuild the temple, permission was denied. In their time there was also Sabbath reform. We just read about this in *Nehemiah* 13 where he told the people that Sabbath breaking was the reason they had gone into captivity.

In *The Desire of Ages* we read that the Sabbath separated God's people from the surrounding nations.

The Desire of Ages, p. 283:

No other institution which was committed to the Jews tended so fully to distinguish them from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. God designed that its observance should designate them as His worshipers. It was to be a token of their separation from idolatry, and their connection with the true God.

No other institution separated them from the surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. That means that when they didn't keep the Sabbath, there was no longer a separation from the other nations. In other words, Sabbath reform meant separation from the heathen and their influence. That is why Sabbath reform was so important. Whenever the Sabbath is treated lightly, separation from the world is not so strong.

So, during the time that Israel accepted the Sabbath, heathen ways were rooted out and discarded. The Babylonian captivity, the history, and the teachings that came through Ezra and Nehemiah all led to Israel being really healed of idol worship. However, idol worship does not consist merely in the outward worship of images. From this outward manifestation they were healed. Idol worship appears in another form, namely in the worship of self. As a people, they were not healed of this.

That meant that the law was perverted because of their selfishness. They didn't worship images, but selfishness was still there. How did this express itself? Sister White describes it plainly. Through selfish misuse of God's gifts they built walls between themselves and the heathen. The Sabbath was also misused. This time the Sabbath was not dishonored in the same way it had been before, but perverted. Yet by being perverted it was also dishonored.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 14:

But the people of Israel lost sight of their high privileges as God's representatives. They forgot God and failed to fulfill their holy mission. The blessings they received brought no blessing to the world. All their advantages they appropriated for their own glorification. They shut themselves away from the world in order to escape temptation. The restrictions that God had placed upon their association with idolaters as a means of preventing them from conforming to the practices of the heathen, they used to build up a wall of separation between themselves and all other nations. They robbed God of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example.

The restrictions designed to protect them were used to build walls of separation. This is the result of another form of idol worship—the worship of self. Outwardly they were no longer idol worshipers. They appeared on the surface to be totally different from the other nations. But in character they were like every one else.

In this way the Sabbath was dishonored. When Jesus appeared on earth, He found a completely different Sabbath from that which Nehemiah brought in as a reform. Jesus found a Sabbath that God never gave in the beginning.

The Desire of Ages, p. 283:

As the Jews departed from God, and failed to make the righteousness of Christ their own by faith, the Sabbath lost its significance to them.

What sort of significance did it have? It was to separate them in heart from heathen influences.

The Desire of Ages, p. 283:

Satan was seeking to exalt himself and to draw men away from Christ, and he worked to pervert the Sabbath, because it is the sign of the power of Christ. The Jewish leaders accomplished the will of Satan by surrounding God's rest day with burdensome requirements. In the days of Christ the Sabbath had become so perverted that its observance reflected the character of selfish and arbitrary men rather than the character of the loving heavenly Father. The rabbis virtually represented God as giving laws which it was impossible for men to obey. They led the people to look upon God as a tyrant, and to think that the observance of the Sabbath, as He required it, made men hard-hearted and cruel. It was the work of Christ to clear away these misconceptions. Although the rabbis followed Him with merciless hostility, He did not even appear to conform to their requirements, but went straight forward, keeping the Sabbath according to the law of God.

This was God's solution to that problem. Jesus broke down the middle wall of partition, as it says in *Ephesians* 2:14. He presented the true significance of the Sabbath.

Matthew 12

[8] The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

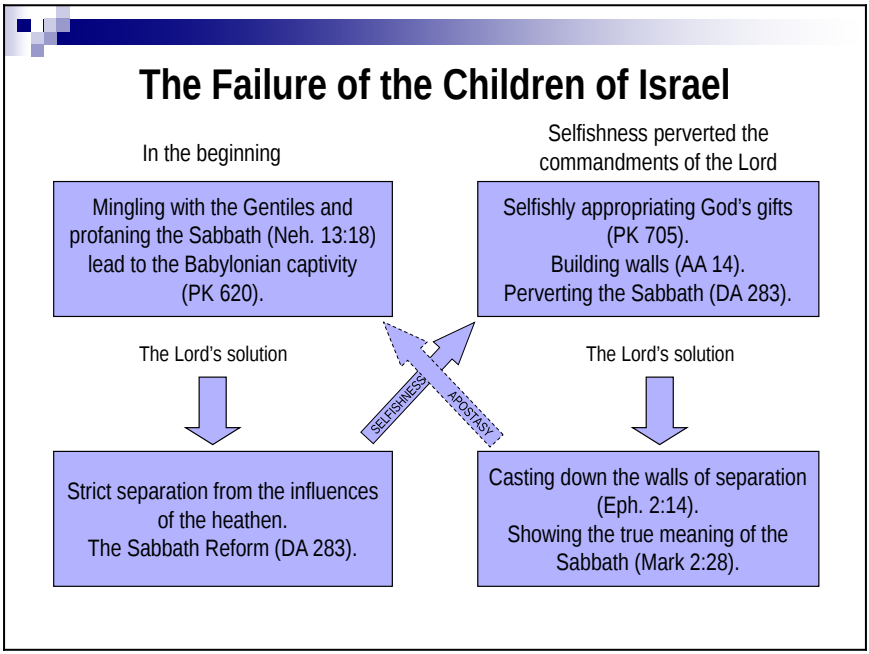
Mark 2

[27] The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,
[28] Therefore [for this reason] Christ is Lord of the Sabbath.

This is what Christ said. He was restoring to the Sabbath its true purpose.

Today, many people say that Christ did away with the Sabbath. But where do these people end up? When they imagine that this wall is broken down, they conclude that they can mingle with the heathen and that the Sabbath is not so important. And indeed, when the early church followed this path, after one hundred

years the separation between them and the heathen philosophers was not so distinct. Tertullian, who is quoted in *The Great Controversy*, was a philosopher who was converted to Christianity. He brought with him many heathen ideas. The line of separation was no longer distinct. Soon Platonic errors became a part of Christian teachings, and the Sabbath lost its importance. Instead, Sunday became more and more popular. That was the result of the church falling back into the errors which were Israel's problem in the beginning.



The Lesson for Us

We need to look upon this history as an example of our mistakes. We look at the history of the Israelites, not to criticize them, but to learn from them. What is our mistake? What was our situation in the beginning? We had among us self-sent messengers. Sister White writes plainly in *Early Writings* that self-sent messengers are a curse to the cause. By listening to these messengers, the people were showing disrespect for the message which God sent

through His messenger. There are church members who can testify to the fact that while they were involved with these false messengers, they didn't see the true message clearly. They were not able to respect the truth while they listened to the self-sent messengers.

Therefore, God had to free us, and what did He do to accomplish this? What is God's solution? Gospel Order! Gospel Order not only separated us from the influence of others, it also gave us an understanding of the role of the messenger. We want to read this well-known statement again to remind us of what God has given us in order to free us from this curse.

Early Writings, p. 124:

The different parties of professed Advent believers have each a little truth, but God has given all these truths to His children who are being prepared for the day of God. He has also given them truths that none of these parties know, neither will they understand. Things which are sealed up to them, the Lord has opened to those who will see and are ready to understand. If God has any new light to communicate, He will let His chosen and beloved understand it, without their going to have their minds enlightened by hearing those who are in darkness and error.

I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors.

In this way, by separating us from those who are daily imbibing new errors, God has saved *us* from many errors.

I saw that neither young nor old should attend their meetings; for it is wrong to thus encourage them while they teach error that is a deadly poison to the soul and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The influence of such gatherings is not good. If God has delivered us from such darkness and error, we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has set us free and rejoice in the truth. God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go; for unless He sends us

> to those meetings where error is forced home to the people by the power of the will, He will not keep us. The angels cease their watchful care over us, and we are left to the buffetings of the enemy, to be darkened and weakened by him and the power of his evil angels; and the light around us becomes contaminated with the darkness.

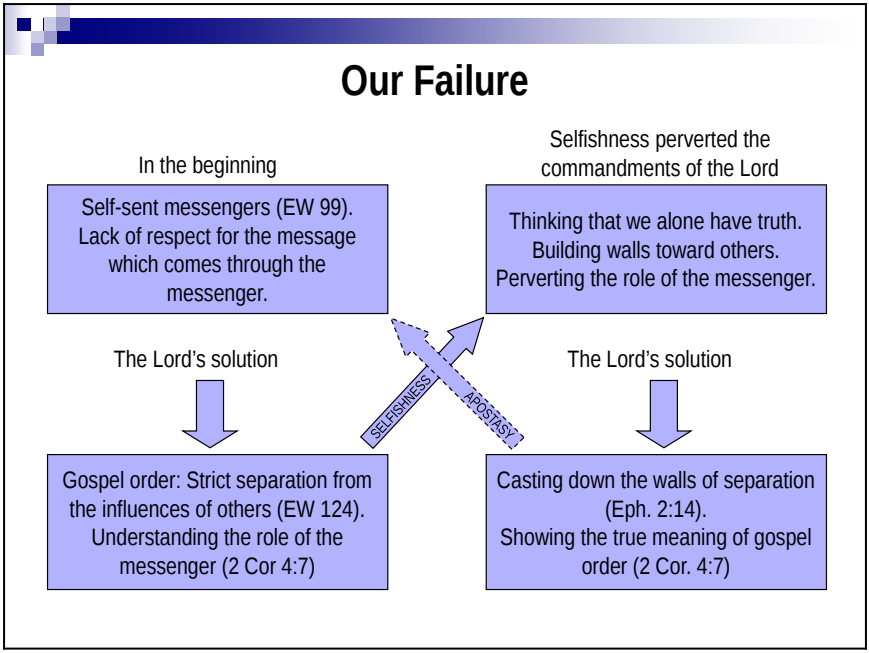
This is what God has given us. Furthermore, we have received a better understanding of the role of the messenger.

> **2 Corinthians 4**
> [7] But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

That means that the vessel is earthen, but God has placed His treasure in this vessel. The Israelites did not appreciate the gift of the Sabbath. From their mistake we must learn to value the gift of the messenger. The Sabbath is also a messenger, as we learned in our study of Gospel Order.

If we don't really have Gospel Order in our heart, if we aren't really free from self, what will we end up doing? We will pervert the law of God, the message, and Gospel Order through selfishness. We will end up believing that only we have the truth, and we will build up walls against others just as the Israelites did. We will also put the messenger on a pedestal as if he were a special type of human being. All of this will be the result if we don't understand Gospel Order and have it in our heart.

What is God's solution to this sickness? He breaks down the middle wall of partition. He also shows us the true meaning of Gospel Order. He shows that the treasure is to be the center of attention and not the vessel. This is the solution God gives us. When walls are being broken down, and when we see that others have truth, it is at this point that we can fall into the other error of searching for wisdom in the world, and we lose sight of the peculiar meaning of present truth. These are the problems God has had with us both today and in the past. We need to understand what these problems are.



Truth from Unexpected Corners

I would like to consider a couple of examples with you. First of all, the truth comes in a completely unexpected way. The story of Job gives us an example.

> **Job 5**
> [17] Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects. Therefore, do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.
> [18] For He bruises, but He binds up. He wounds, but His hands make whole.
> [19] He shall deliver you in six troubles, yes, in seven no evil shall touch you.

Who said this? Go back a little. That's right. It was Eliphaz the Temanite. Who was he? He was one of Job's friends. But the friends of Job were theologians. They weren't just anybody. They were of a class that had authority in theological matters. However, they were not theologians who pleased God; they were apostates. That's what we would call them today. They had fallen away from the truth. The question I would like to ask is this:

"Did God speak through Eliphaz?"

Let's look at the evidence denying that God spoke through him. He was an apostate theologian, and God does not speak through apostate theologians. Right? Let's look at what he said.

Job 5
[18] For He bruises, but He binds up. He wounds, but His hands make whole.

What was he trying to say? He wanted to say that God was making Job suffer, that God struck Job. He wanted Job to agree with this. He was saying that God could remove the punishment when He wanted to. That is the philosophical logic in what Eliphaz was saying.

"Since God had done the hitting, He can also take away the punishment. So accept the fact that God has hit you."

Job simply could not accept this reasoning. Therefore, Eliphaz became insistent. He kept on talking and pressing his point. "God strikes." That is error. Right? And Satan used Eliphaz to tempt Job. Do you then believe that God spoke through Eliphaz? God *did* speak through Eliphaz, but he didn't realize it. He did speak the truth, but he himself did not understand the meaning of what he was saying.

Let's read what Sister White says about this:

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 11-12:
We also need to learn that trials mean benefit, and not to despise the chastening of the Lord nor faint when we are rebuked of Him.

Job 5
[17] Happy is the man whom God corrects:...
[18] He makes sore, and binds up: He wounds, and His hands make whole.
[19] He shall deliver you in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch you.

> To every stricken one, Jesus comes with the ministry of healing. The life of bereavement, pain, and suffering may be brightened by precious revealings of His presence.

You wouldn't conclude that God directly strikes us with sickness, would you? We understand God's character differently. But Sister White quotes this text. Why? Because it is truth, and truth is truth regardless of who says it. That is a point that we really must understand.

There is another point. Other writers repeat the same truth. The same truth that Eliphaz spoke can be found in other places:

> **Proverbs 3**
> [11] My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction.

> **Hebrews 12**
> [5] And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons, My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him.

For us, that which Eliphaz said is the truth. For Job it was also the truth which he later learned when God spoke to him. Eliphaz was sinful. His behavior was sinful. Nevertheless, the Lord used him to reveal truth.

So it was with Christ. Christ came in sinful flesh and condemned sin in this flesh. In *John* 3, Jesus said to Nicodemus,

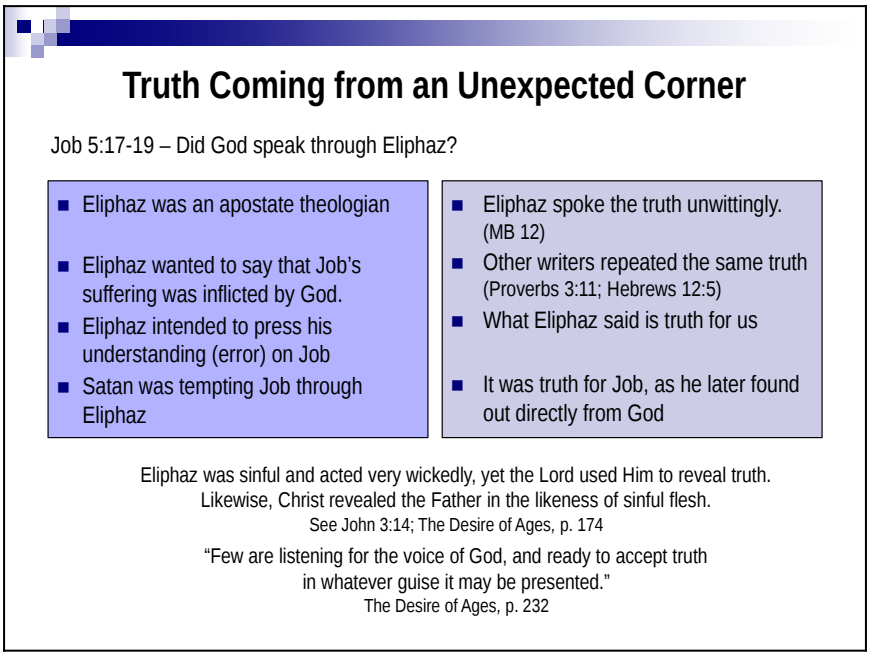
> **John 3**
> [14] And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

The serpent was a symbol of the destroyer. But here it was used as a symbol of Christ taking sinful flesh upon himself, and bearing our sin. Christ had to come in sinful flesh in order to save us. In the beginning of our study we considered Christ's human nature and what His forefathers were like. He came in this type of human nature in order to save us. For this reason many reject Christ. Even His contemporaries questioned,

John 1
[46] Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

The Desire of Ages, p. 232:
Few are listening for the voice of God, and ready to accept truth *in whatever guise it may be presented.*

"In whatever guise it may be presented." Only a few. This is the reason why so few are open to the truth today.



Accepting the Lord's Solution

Can we accept the remedy for bigotry? It is actually bigotry which prevents us from accepting the truth in whatever guise it might come. Can we accept what God says without falling into the sins of our forefathers, without taking on some other error? Can we really be open? Can we accept the truth when it is spoken by those who are not in the church, by those who don't even know the message and who are perhaps our enemies? Such was

the case with Job's so-called friends. They weren't his friends really. They were actually his enemies.

Balaam spoke the truth even though he wanted to curse Israel and was a bad example to others. Would we have accepted the message he brought?

The Sabbath truth was preached by those who had rejected the first angel's message, namely the Seventh-day Baptists. Through them the Sabbath truth came to the Adventists. I read about this in our last meeting together.[101]

The Pharisees spoke the truth even though they didn't live it. Jesus told the people plainly to do what they said but not what they did.

Matthew 23
[2] The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:
[3] All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not follow after their works: for they say, and do not.

Two of the disciples met a man who was preaching Christ, and they forbade him to do this. What did Jesus say about this?

Mark 9
[39] Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

Luke 9
[50] Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

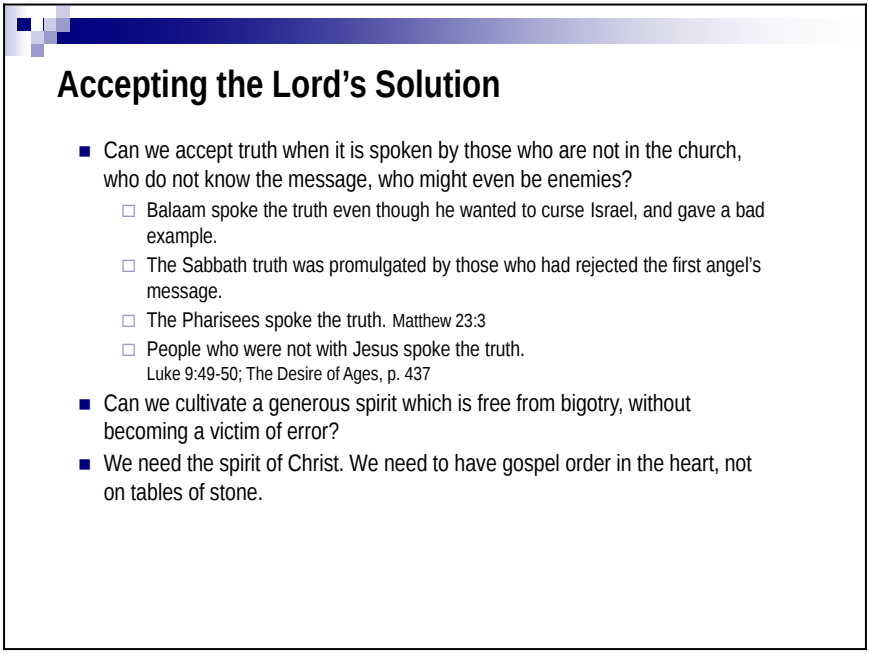
Don't forbid him. Sister White says clearly that we need to have a generous heart.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 544:
None who showed themselves in any way friendly to Christ were to be repulsed. The disciples must not indulge a narrow, exclusive spirit, but must manifest the same far-reaching sympathy which they had seen in their Master. James and John had

[101] See the previous article, *Present Truth*, in the section, "The Sabbath and the Everlasting Gospel."

thought that in checking this man they had in view the Lord's honor; but they began to see that they were jealous for their own. They acknowledged their error and accepted the reproof.

Can we foster a generous heart, free from bigotry, without falling into error? That is the question we must ask ourselves. What is the answer to this question? The answer is to make Gospel Order our heartfelt experience. We need the spirit of Christ. It is not enough to read about it or listen to a study once in a while and just take it in intellectually. We must have it in our heart. This is important, and we need the spirit of Christ.



6. Respect for Gospel Order

Sabbath, March 11, 2006

I BELIEVE that our study today is an important one. We will look more closely at Gospel Order, and this time from the angle of respect. I would like to read a text that is often quoted in connection with faith and works. Luther didn't like this text because he didn't really understand it. Often those who quote this text don't really understand Luther. But, regardless of all of this, we want to cite this text. It is found in *James*.

> **James 2**
> [14] What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?
> [15] If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,
> [16] And one of you says to them, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?
> [17] Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

If we content ourselves with preaching the gospel, while at the same time we do nothing, does this text apply to us? But if it is so important to preach the gospel by the things we do—by helping others with food and clothing—then why do we need to preach? Is preaching a waste of time? Shouldn't we just do practical things? The question that arises in this connection is:

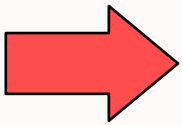
> "What type of work is really being described here? Do we have the gospel on one side, and the right arm of the gospel on the other? Is that what this text is talking about?"

Gospel and Right Arm: Misconceptions

I would like to pose a few more questions concerning the gospel and the right arm. I would like to compare them in a way that portrays the relationship of the two *as we often think of them*. But I also want to present this comparison with a big question mark behind it all. I mean that I want us to test what is being presented in this diagram. Is it really correct?

IS THIS CORRECT?

The Gospel Work	The Right Arm Work
Healing from Sin	Healing from Sickness
The Preaching of the Gospel	Practical Work
The Work of Faith	The Work of Sight
The Work of Healing from Spiritual Poverty	Relieving Physical Poverty
Dealing with Eternal Issues	Dealing with Temporal Issues
The New Covenant	The Old Covenant



This would mean that the Gospel and the Right Arm are *two separate works*

To summarize the diagram:

- The work of the gospel is to heal from sin. In comparison to this is the right arm whose work is to heal from sickness.
- The work of the gospel is the preaching of the gospel. The work of the right arm is the practical work.
- The work of the gospel is the exercise of faith. The work of the right arm has to do with visible things; physical or material things, as opposed to those things which we see by faith.
- The work of the gospel has to do with healing from spiritual poverty. "Blessed are the poor in spirit."[102] The work of the right arm is relief from physical or material poverty.
- The work of the gospel is to deal with eternal things. The work of the right arm is to deal with temporal things.

[102] *Matthew* 5:3.

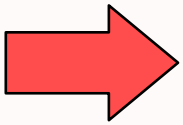
- The work of the gospel is the new covenant. But those who don't understand the new covenant need the right arm, which means that the right arm must be the old covenant (??).

If what I have shown you here is correct, what would it mean? It would mean that the gospel and the right arm are *two separate works*. This thought becomes firmer when we ask the question,

> "For whom is the gospel and for whom is the right arm? Who should receive the benefits of the gospel and who should receive the benefits of the right arm?"

FOR WHOM?

The Gospel Work	The Right Arm Work
For those who are ready for the Gospel	For those who are not ready for the Gospel
For the Christians	For the Heathen
For those who desire to have the Gospel	For those who do not want the Gospel
For the Spiritual	For the Materialistic
The Reality for people who came through the Right Arm	As a Temporary Substitute for the Gospel



This would mean that the Gospel and the Right Arm are *two separate works*

To summarize the diagram:

- The gospel is for those who are ready for it, those who have some preparation, who have at least one physical healing behind them so that they know how everything functions.

The right arm is for those who are not ready for the gospel. They don't grasp the gospel yet; therefore, they receive the work of the right arm first. In other words, the sick receive physical care to prepare them to accept the gospel.

- The gospel work is for Christians. The right arm is for unbelievers.
- The gospel work is for those who long for the gospel, those who really search for it. But these are in the minority. So the rest receive the work of the right arm because they don't yet want the gospel.
- The gospel work is for the spiritually minded. The work of the right arm is for the materialists, those who don't yet understand spiritual things.
- The gospel work is for those who have been prepared for it by the work of the right arm. The right arm work is a temporary substitution for the gospel since they don't yet understand the gospel.

Is this correct? If it is correct, then we have *two separate works*. If these two diagrams correctly represent the relationship between the gospel and the right arm, then the right arm work would seriously obstruct the work of the gospel. I would like to show you why.

An Earthly Inheritance

Let's read a text in the Bible, which is found in *Luke*. Jesus had been preaching, and a man who had a problem came to him. He saw that Jesus was smart and had a lot of power and authority to deal with opposition, so he decided to make Jesus his Judge, to rule in his favor since he had been wronged by his brother.

Luke 12

[13] Then one from the crowd said to Him, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

To all appearances this man's case was a just one. Moses had directed how an inheritance was to be disbursed. The oldest got two parts, and the other children received each the same size por-

tion. That was the law. I don't know if this man was the oldest or not, but at any rate he claimed that he hadn't received his just portion. So he turned to Christ in the full confidence that He would help him. How surprised he was at Jesus' answer!

Luke 12

[14] But He said to him, Man, who made me a judge or an arbitrator over you?

[15] And He said to them, Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.

Jesus refused to give the man that which he sought. It is not so that Jesus didn't know what was right or not. It is not so that Jesus was against that which Moses had directed, or that he wanted to abolish it. No! That wasn't the point. This man had a grasping spirit, and Jesus simply would not give him what he wanted. Had Jesus accepted the work of Judge and made a decision, regardless of whether the decision had been in the man's favor or not, this would have confirmed and strengthened the man's covetousness. But Jesus had come to give this man the gospel, not the so-called work of the right arm. I say *so-called* because the true right arm would not behave this way. Jesus did not give him something else. He gave him the gospel.

But few people understand this. If you had been in Jesus' position with His knowledge of the law and all the angles of the case, would you have reacted as Jesus did? I am convinced that most of you would have sat as judge and made sure that justice was done for the man. You would have arbitrated in order to bring peace to the man's family. The value of the inheritance would have been assessed, and through simple arithmetic it would have been divided according to the law. The unjust brother would have been informed of what the law says and that the problem was simple to solve.

Why let strife continue when it could be so easily solved? But the issue goes deeper than this superficial strife.

Jesus knew the principle that there is nothing else to give mankind except the gospel. He did no other kind of work for them. He just gave them the gospel. And the gospel would set them free from the causes of their strife. If we think about it a little, we will see how wise this was. If Jesus had dealt with this problem according to arbitration and simple calculation, then next week something else would have come up. Why? Because covetousness would still have been there. Arbitration might have solved the surface issue, but the underlying cause would not have been solved. Jesus worked on the cause of the problem.

Let's consider this man for a moment. What was his problem? He was interested only in his inheritance. That was his consuming interest. Nothing else mattered except this. He couldn't see that Jesus came to give us much more. It's as if one person offered another a bar of gold, and the other didn't care because he was too busy clinging to his marble. Then someone says to him,

> "Look man, you're being offered this big chunk of gold."

But the other says,

> "But I want my marble!"

Such behavior is totally irrational in the eyes of heaven. Yet that is the way this man was. He was interested only in his cheap inheritance. This inheritance was of such value to him that he was willing to have it in the place of Christ's power. But people act this way today. They run to the highest courts in the land in order to obtain the smallest things, which are quickly consumed either by life's activities, or the lawyers. But that is the way humanity is.

Bunyan illustrated this very well, in the book *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part 2:

> ...the Interpreter took them apart again, and had them first into a room where was a man that could look no way but downwards, with a muck-rake in his hand. There stood also one over his head,

with a celestial crown in his hand, and proffered to give him that crown for his muckrake; but the man did neither look up nor regard, but raked to himself the straws, the small sticks, and the dust of the floor.

Then said Christiana, "I persuade myself that I know somewhat the meaning of this; for this is a figure of a man of this world. Is it not, good sir?"

Interpreter: "You have said the right," said he; "and his muckrake does show his worldly mind. And whereas you see him rather give heed to rake up straws and sticks, and the dust of the floor, than to do what he says that calls to him from above with the celestial crown in his hand; it is to show that heaven is but a fable to some, and that things here are counted the only things substantial. Now, whereas it was also showed you that the man could look no way but downwards; it is to let you know that earthly things, when they are with power upon men's minds, quite carry their hearts away from God."

The man with the muck rake couldn't see the treasure and didn't want it. So it was with the man who came to Jesus. Jesus' time on this earth was precious, and He wasn't here all that long. But the man spent this time pursuing a temporary, earthly treasure. He substituted his selfish purposes for the mercy of heaven; he wanted heaven's mercy, but only for his selfish purposes. Jesus had power, and it could have been used selfishly, but He would not be distracted from the work of the gospel. He was firm in dealing with the man. He had only one thing to offer him, and that was freedom from the cause of his problem.

Only One Way

The story stops before the end. Perhaps the man went away disappointed. Perhaps he was even angry with Christ and badmouthed Him to every one. He might have complained that Christ didn't care about anyone's needs and rights but only preached theories without doing anything practical. It is likely the case that many would have reacted this way.

But if Jesus had given the man what he wanted, then He would have ceased to offer only one way of life. He would have actually been offering him *another gospel*. Giving another gospel would actually mean to make the first gospel invalid.

How "Works" (or "the right arm") can become an Obstacle to the Gospel Work

Luke 12:13-14

- The absorbing theme for this man was his inheritance.
- The temporal was so important for him that he wanted to enlist the power of Christ for it.
- The precious time of Jesus was sought for an earthly and temporal gain.
- The man desired the grace of heaven for selfish purposes.
- Christ had power which could be used for selfish benefit.
- Jesus did not allow himself to be diverted from the work of the gospel.

If Jesus had answered the request of the man, He would have stopped to offer *only one way* and would have given him *another gospel*

God offers only one solution—the gospel. The gospel is the solution to sin. That is readily seen by everyone. But the same gospel is also the solution to sickness. It is also the solution to poverty. Again, the same gospel. It is the solution to slavery. Paul did not write a single letter calling for an end to slavery. He even sent a slave back to his master with a letter in which he did not say to stop holding slaves. Instead of dealing with slavery this way, he preached the gospel which struck at the root of slavery.

The gospel is the solution to strife and war. It is the solution to injustice, as in the case of the two brothers we read about. The gospel is the solution to social problems. And it is the solution to all problems. This fact is nicely stated:

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 254:

The gospel of His grace alone can cure the evils that curse society.

That means that we have something to give people today that hospitals, rehabilitation centers, etc. cannot give them. The gospel work is that on which we need to concentrate. Let's read the whole paragraph.

In Christ's treatment of this case [that is, the case of the two brothers] is a lesson for all who minister in His name. When He sent forth the twelve, He said,

Matthew 10

[7] As you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.
[8] Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely you have received, freely give.

They were not to settle *the temporal affairs of the people*. Their work was to persuade men to be *reconciled to God*. In this work lay their power to bless humanity. The only remedy for the sins and sorrows of men is Christ. The gospel of His grace alone can cure the evils that curse society. The injustice of the rich toward the poor, the hatred of the poor toward the rich, alike have their root in selfishness, and this can be eradicated only through submission to Christ. He alone, for the selfish heart of sin, gives the new heart of love. Let the servants of Christ preach the gospel with the Spirit sent down from heaven, and work as He did for the benefit of men. Then such results will be manifest in the blessing and uplifting of mankind as are wholly impossible of accomplishment by human power.

How often have we tried to help someone with all our might, and failed! Why? We can't accomplish it in our strength. We can only give them the gospel, and we can only give that if we have it. This reminds me of the first healing that took place after

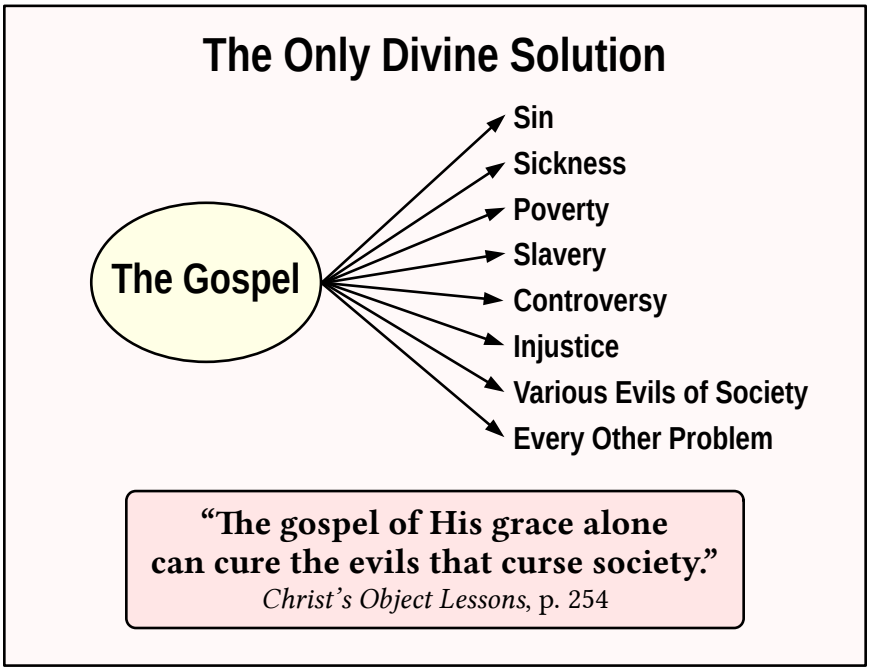
Christ's resurrection. It was the healing of the lame man in the temple. The man asked for money, but what did Peter say to him?

Acts 3
[6] Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you.

What Peter had was the gospel and only the gospel. Then Peter was questioned as to how he healed the man. His answered,

Acts 4
[12] There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

This statement represents the core of the Bible. There is no other way that God offers except the gospel.



Jesus Refuses to Offer an Alternative

We will look at some other situations where Jesus refused to give something other than the gospel.

JUDAS

Take Judas for example. When he connected himself with Christ, he hoped to become a part of the kingdom which would have a more glorious rule than that of Rome. But Jesus simply said to him,

Matthew 8

[20] Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.

In other words,

"I will not give you what you want."

Judas didn't take this at face value. He thought that Jesus was probably just being modest, or maybe He didn't mean it seriously. He still thought that something would happen in accordance with his ideas of an earthly kingdom. He was constantly trying to build this earthly kingdom. In the end he even betrayed Jesus in order to force Him to establish the kingdom. But when Jesus allowed himself to be bound and tried, Judas watched anxiously, and finally in anguish came forward and confessed his act of betrayal. Then he knelt before Christ and implored Him to free himself. But Jesus said, "No." He said,

The Desire of Ages, p. 722:

For this hour came I into the world.

"This is the only means of salvation. I will give you nothing else. The gospel is the only way."

AN ATTEMPT TO MAKE HIM KING

At one time the people tried to make Him King. They had their opportunity. It occurred after the feeding of the five thousand. The enthusiasm was immense, and the movement had momentum. But Jesus would not allow it. Why? He had nothing to give except the gospel.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER

The rich young ruler wanted to follow Jesus, but Jesus wouldn't allow it, or so it appears at first glance. He wouldn't allow it on the ruler's terms. The man wanted to follow Jesus and remain rich at the same time. But Jesus said,

> "No. If you will fulfill the condition of selling everything you have, then you can follow me. Otherwise, you cannot."

This sounds hard, and others perceived it that way. It appears loveless and was perceived as such by many.

NICODEMUS / THE BRAZEN SERPENT

Nicodemus is another one. He came to Christ at night in order to debate with Him. But Jesus would have nothing to do with theological debates: absolutely nothing. Jesus instead came right to the point of the gospel. I would like to read a few paragraphs in *The Desire of Ages*. Jesus speaks here of the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness and that likewise the Son of Man must be lifted up.

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 175:**
> Those who had been bitten by the serpents might have delayed to look. They might have questioned how there could be efficacy in that brazen symbol. They might have demanded a scientific explanation. But no explanation was given. They must accept the word of God to them through Moses.

Trust and obey.

> To refuse to look was to perish.

But couldn't they have been offered another way? Something at the last moment: perhaps some kind of medicine, or anything? At least some pain medication so that it wouldn't hurt so much? Nothing of the like was offered. "Look and live." That was the only thing God offered them.

> Not through controversy and discussion is the soul enlightened. We must look and live. Nicodemus received the lesson, and carried it with him. He searched the Scriptures in a new way, not

for the discussion of a theory, but in order to receive life for the soul. He began to see the kingdom of heaven as he submitted himself to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

As he respected Gospel Order.

The Desire of Ages, p. 175-176:

There are thousands today who need to learn the same truth that was taught to Nicodemus by the uplifted serpent. They depend on their obedience to the law of God to commend them to His favor. When they are bidden to look to Jesus, and believe that He saves them solely through His grace, they exclaim, "How can these things be?"

Like Nicodemus, we must be willing to enter into life in the same way as the chief of sinners. Than Christ, "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." *Acts* 4:12. Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy for sin. And we cannot even repent without the aid of the Spirit of God. The Scripture says of Christ,

> **Acts 5**
> [31] Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

Repentance comes from Christ as truly as does pardon. How, then, are we to be saved? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," so the Son of man has been lifted up, and everyone who has been deceived and bitten by the serpent may look and live.

> **John 1**
> [29] Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.

The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to

subdue all things to himself. Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ,

Psalm 40

[8] I delight to do your will, O my God.

That is what Jesus gave him. He gave only one means, and Nicodemus understood.

THE JEWISH NOBLEMAN

The Jewish nobleman is another example. We have seen some whose outcome was positive and others that were negative. The Jewish nobleman is an example of a positive outcome. But when he first came to Jesus, Jesus also said to him,

> "I will not give you what you want."

The man requested the healing of his son, and Jesus said that he wouldn't believe unless he saw signs and wonders. Then this man saw that there was only one way, and he chose to go that way.

WITHDRAWAL FROM CAPERNAUM

When Jesus was in Capernaum and healed many people there, such an excitement developed that He withdrew. He realized that if He stayed there any longer, even though He would have been able to heal many more people, they would cease to see the gospel in His work. Before that happened, Jesus withdrew. Why? Because He wanted to give them *only one thing*, and that was *the gospel.*

PAUL'S PREACHING

Paul also understood that there was only one way. When he was in Athens, he spoke with the philosophers about philosophy. He spoke with the wise about wisdom. But in Corinth it became clear to him that he needed to concentrate on one thing—the gospel. His success there confirmed the correctness of his decision. He said,

1 Corinthians 2

[2] For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

He was saying that the preaching of Christ was the only thing that saved the Corinthians from the world. In Athens only a few were saved. I am not saying that Paul did not preach the gospel in Athens. But in Corinth he concentrated on the gospel and spoke more plainly of it. Perhaps we could put it this way: The more clearly we concentrate on the gospel, the greater will be our success.

The Failure of Alternatives

We want to look at some examples where other ways were offered. We can't spend a lot of time on these, but we will look at them.

PAUL'S LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

You know the story about Paul's last journey to Jerusalem. He came with many gifts from the Gentiles. In Jerusalem there was much prejudice against him, his work, and his co-workers because it was felt that he was leading the people away from Judaism. That wasn't the real issue however. Nonetheless, Paul tried to do everything he could to dissolve these prejudices.

Upon what alone should he have totally depended in order to deal with this problem? On what alone? The gospel. Instead, he tried to solve the problem through an offering system. The leading men urged him to do what they wanted.

> "Go to the temple and perform this ceremony. Then everyone will see how faithful you are to the law, for you are that way aren't you?"

And Paul thought to himself that if he could save them in this way, then he would gladly do it. But will it work to try to save someone in some other way than the gospel? Will it? Not at all! The results of Paul's efforts demonstrate this very plainly.

AARON AND THE GOLDEN CALF

Aaron provides us with an even clearer example. Aaron saw that the people became agitated. Moses was gone, and they cried for a solution which they thought was to return to Egypt. Aaron de-

cided to take a step in their direction. He called for their golden earrings, thinking they would be too proud to give them up. But they did. Then he gave them the golden calf which was something other than the one way God had prescribed.

ELI'S SONS

A story which is often repeated, even today, is that of Eli. What did Eli give his sons? Was it the gospel? Certainly, he had explained the gospel to them. But he gave them something else. He gave them a home where they could practice their sins. That was something other than the gospel. It appeared as if he gave them much love and tolerance, but he gave them something other than the gospel. And we know what the results were.

Living by the Word...Alone

We could lengthen the list, but I will stop here. I would like to read:

> **Matthew 4**
> [4] Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

You know the text. The context is the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. The devil told Him that He had to do something about His hunger. For Christ it would have been easy to take care of His own hunger. He could have created His own food, or He could have left the wilderness and gone where there was food. He could have filled fishing nets full of fish. He could have done a lot of different things. Satan told Him to be reasonable and do something. But Jesus said,

> **Matthew 4**
> [4] Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

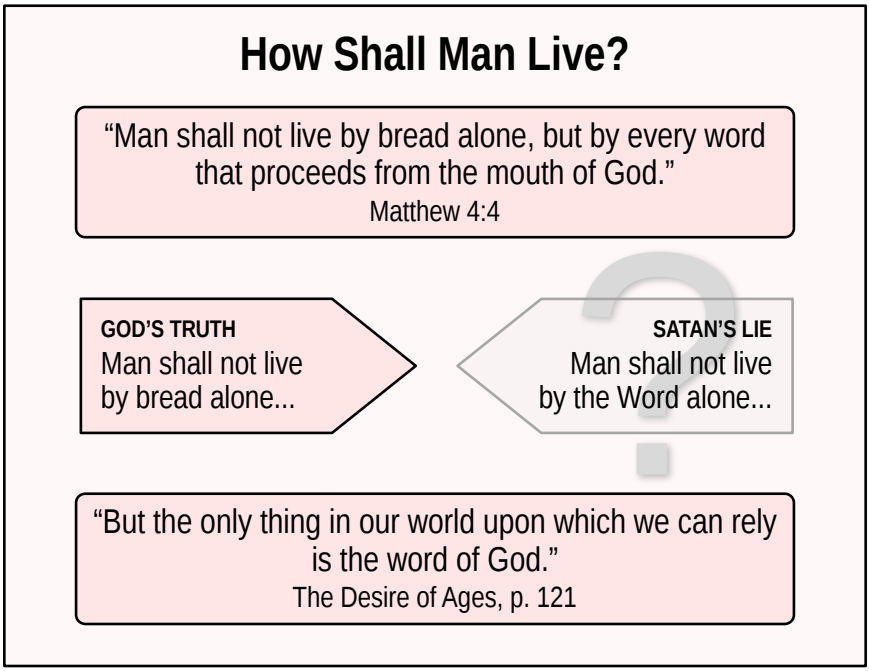
Man lives not from bread alone. Satan agrees. You don't live from bread alone. But He also believes that you don't live from the Word alone. And didn't we read this principle in *James?* Man doesn't live by faith alone. What good is it to tell the cold and

hungry to go away and be warm and full? You have to give them something. Man doesn't live from the Word alone: that is *Satan's argument*. With this he tries to prove that you should give the people something other than the gospel.

Is this true?

The Desire of Ages, p. 121:

But the only thing in our world upon which we can rely is the word of God.



This is the only thing. Food is not dependable. Its supply is threatened on every hand. The only dependable thing is the Word of God. This is nicely described in *The Desire of Ages*, in the chapter "The Temptation." I really recommend that you read this chapter again. It confirms the fact that man shall live by the Word alone. Why do we even have food to eat? Simply because of God's Word. It is through His Word that food is given to us. If we try to obtain food in another way, then we won't receive it.

Let's read the text again about faith and works.

James 2

[14] What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?
[15] If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,
[16] And one of you says to them, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?
[17] Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

James is not speaking of a *living* faith, but of a *dead* faith. He is not speaking of a *living* love, but of a *dead* love.

[18] But someone will say, You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.
[19] You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

James explains clearly what kind of faith he is talking about. This is not true faith. He is not portraying faith and works as being *against* each other. Instead, he is portraying what false faith is. He is showing how false works would result from a false faith.

The right faith and the right works
alone constitute the gospel.
The right arm of the message
is the work of the gospel.

The right arm of the message, if it is truly the right arm and not a separate work, is the work of the gospel. And if it is not the work of the gospel, then we need to repent and cut off this false work. It hinders the gospel. This is something that needs to be very clear to us. Let us pray that our eyes will really be opened to see the glory and power of the gospel, which frees us from all selfishness. Amen.

7. Apostasy from Gospel Order

Sabbath, March 18, 2006

TODAY we want to look at the problem of apostasy from Gospel Order. We want to consider how apostasy occurs, and what we can do to prevent it. In one of our last studies we looked at the matter of rebellion. I would say that rebellion is a further step that comes after apostasy. We need to know what causes it and how to avoid these causes.

What we particularly want to study in this regard is the experience of Solomon. We could also study about Lucifer. These are the two best examples for studying how apostasy develops. We will consider the fundamental things which happen when someone becomes apostate. Incidentally, we could also study the papacy and how the early church fell.

Major Traits of Apostasy

We also want to look at the distinguishing characteristics that identify the way leading to apostasy. There are three major traits that identify apostasy. The first is…

1. THE EXALTATION OF SELF

What happens when we exalt self is that we separate ourselves from God. We become independent of Him. We think our abilities come from ourselves, or else we consider them such a part of ourselves that they cannot be taken from us. Then we use these gifts for ourselves and not for others or the glory of God.

This is seen plainly in Lucifer's case when he began to selfishly use the gifts that God had given him. He said that these gifts were his, that they belonged to him. He said that this is what he had and what he could do. Nebuchadnezzar is also a good example. He claimed for himself the honor of building Babylon by his might and his power. And we will see later what happened in Solomon's case.

The second thing that always occurs in connection with apostasy is…

2. MISREPRESENTATION OF GOD

A false concept of God's character. This means that we misrepresent God to the world, but the world believes this misrepresentation because we claim to be God's children. And as we read in *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, Christians who do this make their own laws. They make these laws in order to force themselves to obey the law of God, and they expect everyone else to obey these laws as well.

Consider the laws about Sabbath keeping that the Jews made. These laws put God in a very bad light. They represented Him as being oppressive and forceful, as one who wants to take away all our happiness. That is not God; but that is how He is represented.

A third distinguishing trait is…

3. OPPRESSION OF OTHERS

This does not happen right away, but it is always a part of apostasy. The exaltation of self will always end in the oppression of others.

We can see this plainly in Solomon's case. At the beginning of his reign he was one of the wisest and most humane kings who ever lived. At the end of his reign he was a tyrant. Thus he is represented in *Prophets and Kings*. It is amazing when you consider how this came to be. The wisest and most humane king became a tyrant.

The papacy is similar. First it exalted itself. Along with that came teachings that misrepresented God's character. Finally it became oppressive. That means forcing others to submit to its opinions.

God's children have also repeatedly been accused of being oppressive by those who reject God's law and don't want to submit to Him. They even accuse God of being oppressive. But this is not

our concern here. What we want to understand is how a person gets to the place where he becomes oppressive.

Major Traits of Apostasy

1. Self-Exaltation

We become independent of God. We look upon our skills as though they are inherent in us. We then use them for self and not for the blessing of others.

2. Misrepresentation of God

The character of God is falsely represented to the world, because we still claim to be God's children. We are formulating our own laws.

3. Oppression of Others

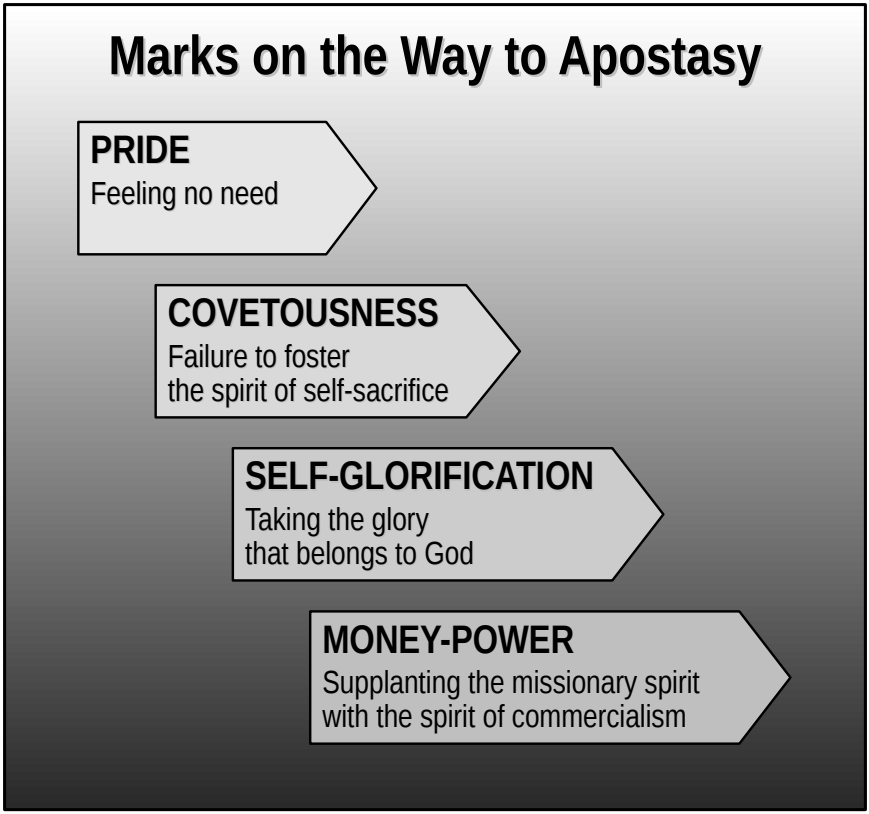
Self-exaltation will always result in the suppression of others (see Solomon, the Papacy). We will then try to force others to comply with our opinion in one way or another.

Marks on the Way to Apostasy

There are distinguishing marks which identify the way to apostasy. They are named in connection with Solomon's apostasy, and we want to look at them:

1. Pride: this is when you don't sense your need.
2. Neglecting to foster the spirit of self-sacrifice.
3. Ascribing to yourself the glory that belongs to God alone.
4. Supplanting a missionary spirit with the spirit of commercialism.

These are the four things brought out in the development of apostasy. I believe we could see them in different cases, but today I would like to study the experience of Solomon in particular.



1. PRIDE

Let's start with the first point—pride. When it is there, you don't have any sense of need. Such a person will make statements, reproach others, or complain, but won't ask any questions. He thinks he knows everything. Pride leads him to stop asking, and therefore he receives no answers. This is plainly described:

> **Revelation 3**
> [16] So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth.
> [17] Because you say, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing, and don't know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

This person thinks he can be his own leader but doesn't realize that he is…

Revelation 3
[17] …wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

This characteristic is one of the first signs of apostasy. Questions are no longer asked, and there is self-satisfaction. In principle, this is the expression of pride. In *Prophets and Kings* a definite connection is made between apostasy, pride, and the loss of a sense of need.

Prophets and Kings, p. 60:
Whenever pride and ambition are indulged, the life is marred, for pride, feeling no need, closes the heart against the infinite blessings of Heaven.

In the beginning of Solomon's reign he really saw his need. He said,

"I am a child and need to be led at every step. Lord, help me."[103]

At the end of his reign he didn't think he needed God's leadership any more. He even had atheistic thoughts. This is the result of losing your sense of need. The reason for this loss was pride.

If the Lord gives us success in any way, we must be careful. There are many things in which we can be successful. These could be business matters or spiritual matters. People might praise us for the thoughts we express in church. We might be good at music, and others recognize this. We might be good at sports. Success has many facets. Success itself is not the problem. The real problem is the danger of becoming independent of God. That was Lucifer's problem in Heaven. He was very successful and lost sight of his dependence upon God.

Prophets and Kings, p. 60:
In the valley of humiliation, where men depend on God to teach them and to guide their every step, there is comparative

[103] *2 Chronicles* 10:1-12.

safety. But the men who stand, as it were, on a lofty pinnacle, and who, because of their position, are supposed to possess great wisdom—these are in gravest peril. Unless such men make God their dependence, they will surely fall.

PRIDE: Feeling No Need

- "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked…" Revelation 3:16-17.
- "Whenever pride and ambition are indulged, the life is marred, for pride, feeling no need, closes the heart against the infinite blessings of Heaven." Prophets and Kings, p. 60
- When the Lord gives success in any line, there is the great danger of losing sight of our dependence on God.
- "In the valley of humiliation, where men depend on God to teach them and to guide their every step, there is comparative safety. But the men who stand, as it were, on a lofty pinnacle, and who, because of their position, are supposed to possess great wisdom—these are in gravest peril. Unless such men make God their dependence, they will surely fall." Prophets and Kings, p. 60.

He who has success stands in greater danger of becoming independent of God than he who is not so successful. Think of the early church. In that time the church was very successful. It was also relatively pure. But as the church gained more recognition, to the point that even the emperor joined it, then it lost its purity. Then apostasy came up. Success is attended by danger. This doesn't mean that apostasy must happen, but the danger is there. We must be keenly aware of our weakness.

2. LOSS OF THE SPIRIT OF SELF-SACRIFICE

Another characteristic in the development of apostasy is the loss of the spirit of self-sacrificing service. We need to spend more

time on this point because it is so important. For this we will read more from *Prophets and Kings*.

Prophets and Kings, p. 61-62:

Prominent among the primary causes that led Solomon into extravagance and oppression was his failure to maintain and foster the spirit of self-sacrifice.

When, at the foot of Sinai, Moses told the people of the divine command,

Exodus 25

[8] Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them,

–the response of the Israelites was accompanied by the appropriate gifts.

Exodus 35

[21] They came, everyone whose heart stirred him up, and everyone whom his spirit made willing,

–and brought offerings. For the building of the sanctuary, great and extensive preparations were necessary; a large amount of the most precious and costly material was required, but the Lord accepted only freewill offerings.

Exodus 25

[2] Of every man that gives it willingly with his heart you shall take my offering,

–was the command repeated by Moses to the congregation. Devotion to God and a spirit of sacrifice were the first requisites in preparing a dwelling place for the Most High.

A similar call to self-sacrifice was made when David turned over to Solomon the responsibility of building the temple. Of the assembled multitude David asked,

1 Chronicles 29

[5] Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?

This call to consecration and willing service should ever have been kept in mind by those who had to do with the erection of the temple.

For the construction of the wilderness tabernacle, chosen men were endowed by God with special skill and wisdom.

Exodus 35

[30] Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the Lord has called by name Bezaleel,...of the tribe of Judah;

[31] And He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship;

[34] And He has put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab,...of the tribe of Dan.

[35] Them has He filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer,...and of the weaver, even of them that do any work...

Exodus 36

[1] Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding.

Heavenly intelligences co-operated with the workmen whom God himself had chosen.

The descendants of these workmen inherited to a large degree the talents conferred on their forefathers. For a time these men of Judah and Dan remained humble and unselfish; but gradually, almost imperceptibly, they lost their hold upon God and their desire to serve Him unselfishly. They asked higher wages for their services, because of their superior skill as workmen in the finer arts. In some instances their request was granted...

We can see how this apostasy came into existence. They did not foster the spirit of self-sacrificing service.

Prophets and Kings, p. 62:

In some instances their request was granted, but more often they found employment in the surrounding nations. In place of the noble spirit of self-sacrifice that had filled the hearts of their illustrious ancestors, they indulged a spirit of covetousness, of grasping for more and more. That their selfish desires might be gratified, they used their God-given skill in the service of heathen kings, and lent their talent to the perfecting of works which were a dishonor to their Maker.

For example, they used their skills in building idols instead of the sanctuary.

Prophets and Kings, p. 63-64:

It was among these men that Solomon looked for a master workman to superintend the construction of the temple on Mount Moriah. Minute specifications, in writing, regarding every portion of the sacred structure, had been entrusted to the king; and he could have looked to God in faith for consecrated helpers, to whom would have been granted special skill for doing with exactness the work required. But Solomon lost sight of this opportunity to exercise faith in God. He sent to the king of Tyre for a man,

> **2 Chronicles 2**
>
> [7] ...cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men...in Judah and in Jerusalem.

The Phoenician king responded by sending Huram,

> [14] The son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre.

Huram was a descendant, on his mother's side, of Aholiab, to whom, hundreds of years before, God had given special wisdom for the construction of the tabernacle.

Thus at the head of Solomon's company of workmen there was placed a man whose efforts were not prompted by an unselfish desire to render service to God. He served the god of this world, mammon. The very fibers of his being were inwrought with the principles of selfishness.

Because of his unusual skill, Huram demanded large wages. Gradually the wrong principles that he cherished came to be accepted by his associates. As they labored with him day after day, they yielded to the inclination to compare his wages with their own, and they began to lose sight of the holy character of their work. The spirit of self-denial left them, and in its place came the spirit of covetousness. The result was a demand for higher wages, which was granted.

The demand for higher wages reminds us of things today, doesn't it?

Prophets and Kings, p. 64:

> The baleful influences thus set in operation permeated all branches of the Lord's service, and extended throughout the kingdom. The high wages demanded and received gave to many an opportunity to indulge in luxury and extravagance. The poor were oppressed by the rich; the spirit of self-sacrifice was well-nigh lost. In the far-reaching effects of these influences may be traced one of the principal causes of the terrible apostasy of him who once was numbered among the wisest of mortals.

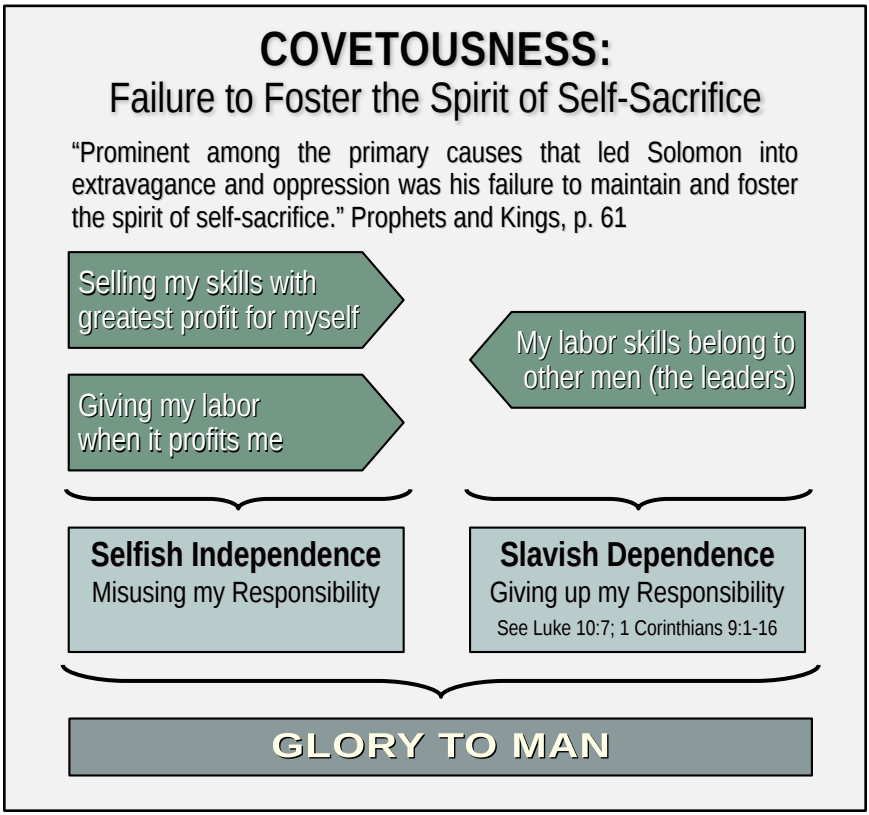
Let's give this some serious thought and assimilate it. This was one of the main causes of apostasy. How does this spirit express itself? By selling one's abilities for the highest price. This is the logical way to think in a world of capitalism.

Another point is that I will exercise my abilities only when I get something out of it. I would describe this as selfish independence. In other words when the people who were working in Tyre building idols heard that a temple was being built in Israel, they should have offered their help. They should have realized that their talents were given to them for that purpose. They should have done the work, not in order to receive money, but to serve. But they didn't think this way. Huram came to earn money.

Since this spirit is not good, some people have come to the conclusion that it is bad to receive money for work. It is only a means in the hands of the rich to oppress the poor. So they want to get rid of money. In the church it has often been said that there should be no paid workers. They should only receive something to eat, a roof over their heads, and that's it. And many have agreed with this. Others have said that their money belongs to others, to the leaders. Is this the right spirit? I would describe the second one as slavish dependence. This has occurred a number of times in history, even in Adventist history.

Some have said that money is dangerous in the hands of others; therefore, we must control it for them. This might be the case for someone who is very, very weak in dealing with money. It is possible in such cases that it would be good to temporarily control

the use of such a person's money as a means of helping him learn, but is this the way that God always wants things to be? He wants to make us responsible people who know how to handle money, or any power that is given to us. He does not want us to be slavishly dependent upon other people.



I would like to read two texts in this regard. One is from *Luke* 10:7. Jesus said this for the missionaries He had sent out who would be taken into someone's home. In these homes the people would gladly receive the gospel. Then Jesus said,

Luke 10

[7] And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.

With this Jesus makes it plain that a worker must receive wages. Paul says the same thing in:

1 Corinthians 9

[1] Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?
[2] If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.
[3] My defense to those to examine me is this.
[4] Do we have no right to eat and drink?
[5] Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?
[6] Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?
[7] Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?
[8] Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also?
[9] For it is written in the law of Moses, You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. Is it oxen God is concerned about?
[10] Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.
[11] If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?
[12] If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more?

Paul says plainly that a worker is worthy of his hire. Is this only an Old Testament principle? You should not muzzle the oxen?[104] Yet Paul applies it in the New Testament.

On one side we have the spirit of Huram, who came only to earn money. On the other side we have people who are dependent upon other people. This is not right. God wants to give everyone a certain amount of material things and money so that he can responsibly manage his household. In this way he can learn

[104] *Deuteronomy* 25:4.

and grow. God wants him to do good within the sphere of his influence. In this way the work will prosper.

If you take everything away from a worker so that there is nothing for him to manage, then the work will not prosper. In order for the work to prosper, everyone must have an area that he can manage. This is the thought actually being expressed in *1 Corinthians* 9.

What is the spirit of self-sacrificing service? This is nicely described in *Matthew* 20. This is the parable of the workers in the vineyard. I won't read this now because the time is short. You know the story.

- Certain workers came to the market place early in the morning seeking work.
- They made an agreement with the landlord to work the whole day for one denarius.
- The landlord noticed that all of the work would not get done, so he went back to the market place in search of more workers.
- He found a few and told them to come and that he would pay them whatever was right. He didn't tell them how much, but he assured them that everything would be all right. So they went, happy that they had something to do.
- At the end of the day when everyone was paid, they all received one denarius, both those with whom he had an agreement as well as those whom he told they would receive what was right.
- At this, those with whom he had an agreement became jealous.
- At the end of this parable Jesus said that the last would be first and the first would be last.

What was Jesus trying to say in this parable? He was trying to say that money is not the real issue. The point is that there is work to do and that it is a privilege to have a part in that work.

True, they needed money to buy things in order to survive until the next day, for there was work planned for the next day.

The thought in this parable is different than how the world perceives it. What is the principle in the world, the principle that rejects the spirit of self-sacrificing service? The principle in the world is:

I give in order to receive. I work only to receive money.

What is the Christian's principle, as portrayed in the parable?

I receive so that I can give.

That is the thought. This is the principle that Christ exemplified in His life.

The Desire of Ages, p. 21:
All things Christ received from God, but He took to give.

Jesus received to give, and that is the principle of Christianity. This is well stated in:

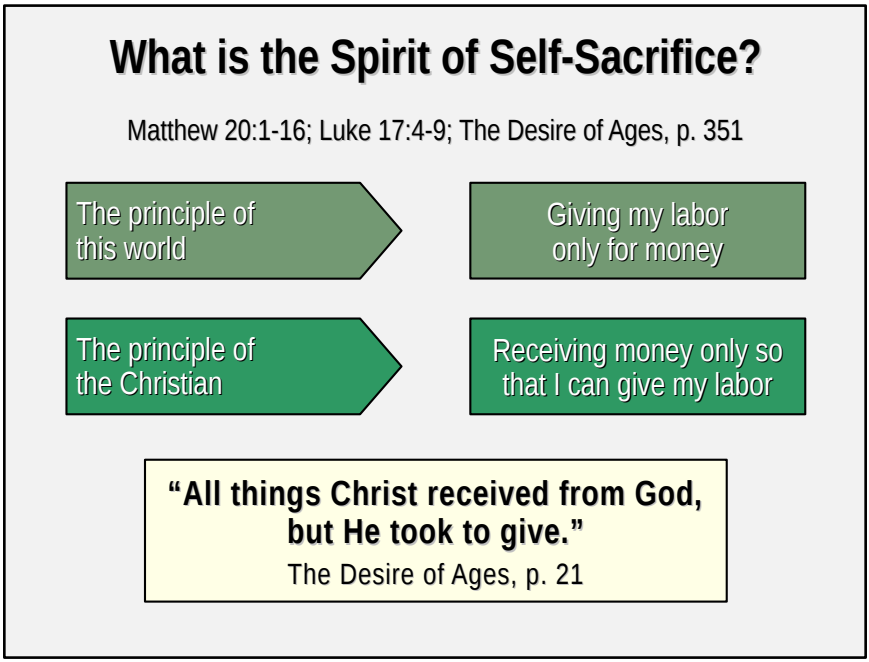
Luke 10
[4] Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road.

Not to greet anyone meant that they shouldn't allow themselves to be held up by long salutations.

[5] But whatever house you enter, first say, Peace to this house.
[6] And if a son of peace is there, your piece will rest on it; if not, it will return to you.
[7] And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.

Why did Jesus add that last sentence? Because he understood the spirit in man—the spirit of selfishness. When a person sees that he gets something to eat, then he wants to go from house to house to get something. Jesus was trying to tell them that this is

not the purpose of their missionary work. The purpose is to bring peace to others. Receiving something to eat and drink is for the purpose of continuing the work of bringing peace to other homes. That is the thought. I receive so that I can give. This is the spirit of self-sacrificing service.



No matter what we receive, we are to look upon it as increasing our ability to give. We are never to look upon our means in any other way. This is the spirit that we must foster.

3. TAKING GLORY TO OURSELVES

Now we come to another point which is closely associated with the other things of which we have spoken. It is when we take the glory to ourselves instead of ascribing it to God alone. This happens when a person no longer realizes his dependent condition.

Prophets and Kings, p. 65:

Another of the deviations from right principles that finally led to the downfall of Israel's king was his yielding to the temptation to take to himself the glory that belongs to God alone.

Then Ellen White writes something about the temple.

From the day that Solomon was entrusted with the work of building the temple, to the time of its completion, his avowed purpose was "to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel." *2 Chronicles* 6:7.

Then a little further down we read,

Prophets and Kings, p. 68:

Thus it was that the temple of Jehovah came to be known throughout the nations as "Solomon's temple."

What? *Solomon's* temple? What do we always say when we speak of the second temple, the one built after the wilderness sanctuary? We always call it *Solomon's* temple. Was it Solomon's temple? This is an honor taken by man which really belongs to God.

He finally permitted men to speak of him as the one most worthy of praise for the matchless splendor of the building planned and erected for the honor of "the name of the Lord God of Israel."

Thus it was that the temple of Jehovah came to be known throughout the nations as "Solomon's temple." The human agent had taken to himself the glory that belonged to the One "higher than the highest." *Ecclesiastes* 5:8.

If we build something today, what do we do? We write a song or an article or we give a sermon or something of the sort. How do we feel when people ascribe glory to us?

Thus it was that the temple of Jehovah came to be known throughout the nations as "Solomon's temple." The human agent had taken to himself the glory that belonged to the One "higher than the highest." *Ecclesiastes* 5:8. Even to this day the temple of which Solomon declared, "This house which I have built is called

by Your name" (*2 Chronicles* 6:33), is oftenest spoken of, not as the temple of Jehovah, but as "Solomon's temple."

Then it says,

Prophets and Kings, p. 68:
Man cannot show greater weakness than by allowing men to ascribe to him the honor for gifts that are Heaven-bestowed.

Let's read:

1 Corinthians 4
[7] For who makes you differ from another?

Or as in the German: "Who gives you precedence?"

1 Corinthians 4
[7] ...And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Let's say I have a certain talent, and I act as if it were mine; that is, as if I had made it myself. In reality I only received it. And that which I give, I give only because I received it.

[7] ...why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Self-exaltation begins when we look upon our abilities as if they came from us.

What do we find in the world? There this behavior is absolutely normal. Take patents for example. Why do people register patents? They want to say that this is my work. I made it, so no one else is allowed to make it. By the way, that is why there are so many standards. Everyone wants to be the greatest. Each person who registers a patent is trying to say,

"That is my possession. I registered it."

It is understandable that things in the world must be regulated to preserve order, but what is it like in God's kingdom? Should I patent my sermon and say that it is my possession? What would

that mean for God? There would be no better way to express my weakness.

Let's take some examples. Lucifer began to think this way. The early church brought about its fall in this way. Then there is Solomon's temple, as we have just read. It was the temple of the Lord, but in the end Solomon allowed it to be called his temple. Let's read this again.

Prophets and Kings, p. 68:

> But while the pen of inspiration records his virtues, it also bears faithful witness to his downfall. Raised to a pinnacle of greatness and surrounded with the gifts of fortune, Solomon became dizzy, lost his balance, and fell. Constantly extolled by men of the world, he was at length unable to withstand the flattery offered him. The wisdom entrusted to him that he might glorify the Giver, filled him with pride. He finally permitted men to speak of him as the one most worthy of praise for the matchless splendor of the building planned and erected for the honor of "the name of the Lord God of Israel."

God has also given us much truth, and how do we perceive this? How do we feel when we talk with other people? Don't we have the truth? Or are we channels for the truth?

What does it mean to give God the glory? Let's look at some examples. How did the Queen of Sheba react after visiting Israel?

Prophets and Kings, p. 66:

> Thus it was when the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon. Hearing of his wisdom and of the magnificent temple he had built, she determined "to prove him with hard questions" and to see for herself his famous works. Attended by a retinue of servants, and with camels bearing "spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones," she made the long journey to Jerusalem. "And when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart."

It then describes how amazed she was.

Prophets and Kings, p. 67:

By the time of the close of her visit the queen had been so fully taught by Solomon as to the source of his wisdom and prosperity that she was constrained, not to extol the human agent, but to exclaim,

1 Kings 10

[9] Blessed be the Lord your God, which delighted in you, to set you on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do judgment and justice.

This is the impression that God designed should be made upon all peoples. And when...

2 Chronicles 9

[23] All the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart,

–Solomon for a time honored God by reverently pointing them to the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Ruler of the universe, the All-wise.

Taking the Glory That Belongs to God

"Another of the deviations from right principles that finally led to the downfall of Israel's king was his yielding to the temptation to take to himself the glory that belongs to God alone." Prophets and Kings, p. 65

God's Gifts are taken as "our own"

- Self-exaltation begins when we look at things as though they were our own.
- "Patents"
- "Intellectual property"

Examples

- Lucifer
- Early Church
- "Solomon's" Temple (Prophets and Kings, p. 68)

This is how God always wants things to happen. When Jesus healed the sick, what did they say? They always praised God for healing them.

Matthew 9
[8] But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and *glorified God*, which had given such power unto men.

Matthew 15
[31] Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they *glorified the God of Israel.*

Luke 5
[26] And they were all amazed, and they *glorified God*, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.

Luke 7
[16] And there came a fear on all: and they *glorified God*, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God has visited His people.

Jesus understood that He was not to place himself between God and man; that He was not to take the glory to himself but give the glory to God. The Bible writers had this same attitude. Matthew didn't say,

> "This is my gospel. I own it. And you're not allowed to change it because it is mine. You have to ask me if you want to do anything with it."

Matthew did not act this way. The same is true of John. They were so modest and humble that they never named themselves as the writers of their books. Not once does Matthew name himself as the author. Nonetheless, we somehow know this. We know this because of contemporary witnesses, not because of Matthew. He wanted to stay in the background. The most important thing to him was the subject matter. He did not want to take any honor to himself.

There was one time when he wrote about himself, but it is interesting how he did this. Let's read this:

Matthew 9
[10] Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.

Matthew doesn't say that he was one of them, but Luke tells us.

Luke 5
[29] Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.

Matthew doesn't make himself the center of attention by saying,

"This is *my* gospel."

John was the same way. In his book he gives us no indication that he wrote it. But he describes himself in the following way:

John 21
[20] Then Peter, turning around, saw *the disciple whom Jesus loved* following…

John doesn't write,

"And he saw *me* who wrote this book."

He didn't say,

"He saw John, *the special disciple*."

He simply said,

[20] …the disciple whom Jesus loved…who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is the one who betrays You.
[21] Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, But Lord, what about this man?

[22] Jesus said to him, If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow me.
[23] Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?

This simply demonstrates John's modesty. In *Mark* there is also no direct statement that he wrote the book, but there is an indirect indication that he is the author. John Mark was not one of the twelve disciples. He came later. He was the one who accompanied Paul and Barnabas. You know the story. We suppose that he wrote the book of *Mark*, but we are not sure. There is a supposition that he wrote about himself in the following verses.

Mark 14
[50] Then they all forsook Him and fled.
[51] Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body.
[52] And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.

This happened when Jesus was taken prisoner. Then there is the "Revelation of John." Correct? The "Revelation of John." That's what it says. Let's have a look.[105] Is this correct? What title does John himself give to this book?

Revelation 1
[1] The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.

This tells us that John sees himself only as a channel. This book is not his revelation, but rather *the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him*. But the fact that man has called this book "The Revelation of John" shows how man thinks. They think in terms of possessions and patents. This belongs to him. Only he can change it. Certainly John says that anyone who adds anything to the book would suffer the plagues, and anyone who takes away

[105] It says this in one of the German Bibles.

from the book would have his name taken out of the book of life. But even John himself could not change the book. He too was only a channel. And that is the point.

Our life is hidden with Christ in God. We must understand this if we want to give God the glory.

Colossians 3

[2] Set your mind on things above, not on the things on the earth.
[3] For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Your life is not important. This was the thinking of the gospel writers.

[3] ...your life is hidden with Christ in God.
[4] When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

We have received everything, as we read in *1 Corinthians* 4:7 and in *2 Corinthians* 4:7 where it talks about treasure in earthen vessels. We are only channels. That is righteousness by faith and not works.

Giving the Glory to God

- The Queen of Sheba praised the Lord for what she saw in Israel. Prophets and Kings, p. 66-67
- When Jesus healed the sick, the people praised God. Mark 2:12, Luke 7:16
- The writers of the Bible did not think it important to mention their names. Matthew 9:10, Luke 5:29, John 21:20-24, Mark 14:41-42
- "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him." Revelation 1:1-2
- The life is hidden with Christ in God. Colossians 3:2-4
- We have received everything, we are only channels. 1 Corinthians 4:7
- Righteousness by faith and not by works.

4. THE SPIRIT OF COMMERCIALISM

Our time is just about gone. The last point is: The spirit of commercialism supplants the missionary spirit. This is closely tied to the spirit which takes the glory to itself. The missionary spirit that God gave to Solomon and all Israel was supplanted by the spirit of commercialism. That means that business was turned to selfish purposes. Then self-glory increased.

In contrast to this we have the example of Christ who made Capernaum the center of His missionary work. Capernaum was a center of traffic, and Christ had only one purpose in mind when He chose this place, and that was to spread the light into the entire world. He wanted everyone in the world to know and think about the sacrifice that was about to take place. That was why He chose Capernaum.

The Spirit of Commercialism

- "The missionary spirit that God had implanted in the heart of Solomon and in the hearts of all true Israelites was supplanted by a spirit of commercialism." Prophets and Kings, p. 71
- When merchandise becomes a purpose in itself.
- Self-aggrandizement (promoting oneself as being powerful or important).
- In contrast to this stands the life of Christ, who had Capernaum as the capital for His labors.
  The Desire of Ages, p. 252, 260, 261

8. Searching Our Heart

Sabbath, September 30, 2006

The Legacy of Christ

OUR subject today in the Sabbath School lesson is legacy. The most important legacy that Christ left behind is a certain kind of people. I want to emphasize that it is a certain kind of people He left behind; not just *some* people. To have followers and to leave these followers behind is one thing. They could keep the knowledge of the leader alive for some time. But Jesus had to leave behind more than just followers. The people He left behind were themselves leaders, and that means they were people of a certain kind.

Now we at the seminar must have the same purpose—to really become the kind of leaders that the disciples were. I think it is hardly possible to accomplish this in one and a half years. I think it requires much more than this, but the Holy Spirit can do this work much faster than we think. What we would like to think about today is how to become such people; the kind of people that Jesus left behind as a legacy. Does He leave us behind as His legacy? That is the question we need to ask ourselves.

> "Are we His legacy?"

I really want to stress the fact that this is precisely the purpose of the seminar.

Jesus would not have called just any people to be His followers. The twelve people He called were people who were especially chosen for the purpose of becoming His legacy. I really want to stress this. That was the special purpose of His calling. It's not just to give us an interesting theme of study in the Bible or Spirit of Prophecy. It's not just to give us nice fellowship among fellow believers. It is much, much more than this. Unless we are determined to really be that people then we shouldn't attend. Maybe we are not ready for other reasons, but we need to understand

that God has a purpose today and that is to finish His work. It is to bring the legacy of Christ to full fruition, to completion. Only when we are His legacy, the 144,000, can Christ really say,

> "Now my legacy is there in the world."

It's been a long time, but He is still waiting for it.

Of course, another thing He left behind that is also very important is the Holy Spirit. Before even one letter of the New Testament was written, before one gospel was written, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples.

Today we would like to think about searching our hearts. And we want to make this more efficient. Last week we studied the difference between holy and unholy.[106] We looked at the spirit of liberality and saw, in contrast to this, the spirit of indulgence. This indulgence has to do with not making a real difference between holy and unholy. Our thoughts can also be holy or unholy. Even if we search our hearts it can be quite unholy, because we do it in a selfish way. So what we would like to learn today is how to search our hearts so that we can become that legacy which Christ is waiting for.

The Deceitfulness of the Heart

First of all, before we even consider searching our hearts, we must realize our weakness. We have a dilemma, and this is that we really cannot search our heart, as the Bible clearly says.

> **Jeremiah 17**
> [9] The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:
> who can know it?

When we take the work of God seriously, when we really strive to work in harmony with Christ for the fulfillment of His legacy, then we will clearly say "Amen" to this. We see that…

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[106] This study, titled "Holy and Common," will be included in the next revision of the book, *From Bondage to Liberality*.

Jeremiah 17

[9] The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

I sometimes come in contact with people, to whom you tell the truth very plainly and yet it's turned around. The heart is really deceitful above all things. It's very difficult to find in the world today a person who is honest enough to even listen to the truth. Isn't this so?

[9] The heart is deceitful above all things…

Now, how is it with my heart? I must realize that it is…

[9] …deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The longer we are in the work of Christ the more we will understand how true that statement is. And we will begin to fear. How can we even search our heart? How can we differentiate between the holy and the unholy, between the selfish and the selfless?

EXCUSING OUR DEFECTS

One of the problems is that we are very aware of our defects but we justify ourselves too easily. We put them aside. We don't take our defects seriously. Most people are aware of their defects. If you ask them, they say,

"Yes, I know I have defects."

Often when it comes to a point where sin becomes so obvious that it cannot be denied anymore they say,

"Yes, I've been stubborn, [or something like this,] but…"

So it comes up again and again and again. What is our argument in this? First of all, we think that our motives are not so bad.

"You know, my motive in doing this was not so bad. I intended to do the right thing, and I always want to do the right thing. In reality my basic motives are okay."

BLAMING THE CIRCUMSTANCES

We also tend to think that there are extraordinary circumstances that led us to do this or that which brings out a defect in our character.

COMPARING OURSELVES TO OTHERS

Another thing we do is to think that others are not better.

"Look at him," we say.

Or,

"But you have done this."

As soon as a defect needs to be pointed out we say,

"But you…"

"But you" is the answer. And this is nothing but the deceitful heart that will not allow the Holy Spirit to search it.

"IT WAS ONLY A SMALL THING"

Then we also think that God will forgive smaller deviations from right.

"You know, my deviation from right was not as big as his or hers; therefore God will forgive me. It's a small thing anyway."

This is the deceitful heart.

"I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER"

Another deception that is often brought by the deceitful heart is to say,

"We did not really know. I didn't really know that this was so wrong. If I had known all the consequences and so forth, maybe I wouldn't have done this."

But what does the Word of God say about this? Let's read it:

Proverbs 24
[12] If you say, Surely we did not know this, Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?

You may say,

"I did not know this,"

–and perhaps you didn't know the full consequences of what you did, but didn't God know? Yes, of course He knew. And didn't He tell? Yes, of course He told. There is enough in the Word of God to condemn every sin that exists in this world. Since we have the Word of God freely among us there is no excuse. The only excuse we can bring forth is,

"I didn't read it,"

–or,

"I didn't study it,"

–or,

"I didn't really dwell on it carefully enough."

But then this is the sin. The sin is not that you did this with a good conscience. The sin is that you did not study the truth in order to learn the sinfulness of what you did. So this excuse cannot be used since God has so clearly given us His Word.

RESTING ON A THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE

The next deception is to say that we accept God's standard. Of course we accept it.

"I believe the truth. I believe the message."

But it's only theoretical. James writes about this:

James 1

[22] But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

When you are a hearer of the Word only, and not a doer, then you deceive yourself. In other words, the theoretical knowledge does not help.

Our Dilemma When We Search Our Own Hearts

"The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately wicked;
who can know it?"
Jeremiah 17:9

We are aware of our defects,
but we justify ourselves too easily:

- We think that our motives are not so bad
- We think that there are extraordinary circumstances
- We think that others are no better
- We think that God will forgive smaller deviations from the right
- Making excuses: "We did not really know." Proverbs 24:12
- Accepting God's standard theoretically. James 1:22
- Even when judging ourselves, we exalt our humility. Christ's Object Lessons, p. 159

SELF-EXALTED HUMILITY

Even when we judge ourselves, even if we condemn ourselves, it may be selfish, because we think too much of ourselves. Sister White describes it like this.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 159:

No man can of himself understand his errors.

Jeremiah 17

[9] The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

The lips may express a poverty of soul that the heart does not acknowledge. While speaking to God of poverty of spirit, the heart may be swelling with the conceit of its own superior humility and exalted righteousness.

Why We Cannot Know Ourselves

This is our dilemma. Seeing all this, how then can we search our hearts? Firstly, we need to understand the deceitfulness of our heart.

HUMAN PRIDE

Why can we not know ourselves? It is first of all because of human pride. The Bible says that everyone thinks his way is right.

Proverbs 21

[1] The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.
[2] Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts.
[3] To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.
[4] A haughty look, a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked are sin.

It speaks here of a king's heart, and normally a king is proud. So it was in the time when Solomon wrote this proverb. Every king was suffering under the disease of pride in one way or another. But he says,

"I understand. I know."

Proverbs 21

[1] The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.

In other words, God overrules the intents and the purposes of the kings.

Proverbs 21

[2] Every way of a man is right in his own eyes.

In other words, the haughty look and proud heart thinks that what he does is right in his own eyes.

[2] ...but the Lord weighs the heart.

Very often the Lord has a different outlook than what man sees. Because of his pride man cannot see himself.

THE INABILITY TO BE HONEST

Furthermore, it's very difficult to be honest. A parallel text says,

Proverbs 16

[2] All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits.

Let's read the context again:

[1] The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.

In other words, we think a certain thing. We work something out in order to justify ourselves. But in the end our language, that which we speak, will betray us. It will come out one way or another, and you can't prevent it. Think of Balaam as an example. Think of the High Priest who said exactly that which revealed him and also revealed the character of God. Caiaphas thought,

> "What I am saying now is really very just, very righteous. You know, it's better for one man to die than a whole nation. I am deciding here between one man and the whole nation."[107]

And that's what people today are doing, too, isn't it? They say,

> "Oh, a few dead people in Iraq or somewhere—what is that against a whole nation?"

[107] *John* 11:50.

Proverbs 16

[2] All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits.

He looks deeper than this. He doesn't look at the justifications we build up in order to do certain things. He looks more closely.

OUR CONSCIENCE CAN BE FAULTY

Then even our conscience can be faulty. There is another text from *Proverbs* that says,

Proverbs 16

[25] There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

So there is a way that seems to be right. It looks as if what we do is right. Now if it seems right, are we not then justified? Shouldn't we do what seems to be right to us? No, that's not good enough. We shouldn't do what seems to be right to us. We should do what is right, and we know what is right from the Word of God. In other words, that which seems to be right to a man is not good enough. We cannot justify ourselves and say,

> "We acted according to our conscience."

If we did not study the Word and sharpen our conscience by it, then we are guilty.

Let me use Pilate as an example. Pilate didn't even know the Bible, but he had the Word of God before him in Jesus Christ. He was speaking to him very clearly, and Pilate thought that he was justified in what he was doing. Let's read about this in the Bible. We won't read the whole text here. You know that Christ was before him when he said to the people,

> "I think He is innocent. I find nothing in Him,"[108]

–and he really tried to deliver Him. In the end, he couldn't prevail against the mob and so he said,

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[108] *John* 18:38; *John* 19:4, 6.

"I wash my hands of it. I am innocent."

Then the people said,

Matthew 27
[25] His blood be on us, and our children.

In other words,

"Don't bear the burden. We will bear it. We take responsibility for it."

So he really thought that he was innocent. That's what he said,

[24] I am innocent of the blood of this just Person.

Was he innocent? He was *not*, but that's what He thought.

Proverbs 16
[25] There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

The Desire of Ages, p. 738:
Pilate longed to deliver Jesus. But he saw that he could not do this, and yet retain his own position and honor. Rather than lose his worldly power, he chose to sacrifice an innocent life. How many, to escape loss or suffering, in like manner sacrifice principle. Conscience and duty point one way, and self-interest points another. The current sets strongly in the wrong direction, and he who compromises with evil is swept away into the thick darkness of guilt.

Pilate yielded to the demands of the mob. Rather than risk losing his position, he delivered Jesus up to be crucified. But in spite of his precautions, the very thing he dreaded afterward came upon him.

So a man thinks what he is doing is right, but it will bring death.

His honors were stripped from him, he was cast down from his high office, and, stung by remorse and wounded pride, not long after the crucifixion he ended his own life. So all who compromise with sin will gain only sorrow and ruin.

Proverbs 14
[12] There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

This was literally fulfilled in the life of Pilate. He could not know himself. The only safety for him would have been to rely on the Word of God as it came through Jesus. Again, human pride is that what really prevents us from properly knowing ourselves.

WE LACK SELF-DISTRUST

We will now go to another page and read about the disciples who were chosen by Christ—the first part of His legacy; we are the last part of His legacy.

The Desire of Ages, p. 249:

They were humble and unlearned men, those fishers of Galilee; but Christ, the light of the world, was abundantly able to qualify them for the position for which He had chosen them. The Saviour did not despise education; for when controlled by the love of God, and devoted to His service, intellectual culture is a blessing. But He passed by the wise men of His time, because they were so self-confident that they could not sympathize with suffering humanity, and become colaborers with the Man of Nazareth. In their bigotry they scorned to be taught by Christ. The Lord Jesus seeks the co-operation of those who will become unobstructed channels for the communication of His grace. The first thing to be learned by all who would become workers together with God is the lesson of self-distrust; then they are prepared to have imparted to them the character of Christ. This is not to be gained through education in the most scientific schools. It is the fruit of wisdom that is obtained from the divine Teacher alone.

I really pray that we will understand this, especially the young people as they look for a profession, for a job. It doesn't matter so much in the end which profession you do temporarily. What is most important is to get into this school of Christ, to learn this lesson of self-distrust; to learn the lesson of searching your heart.

But first of all we need to know that we cannot search it ourselves.

We have a few examples to look at. The rich young ruler is one. He was educated. He had a position. He had wealth. He had everything he wanted in this world. And he approached Christ and said,

"What do I lack?"

But overall he said,

Matthew 19
[20] *All these things I have kept from my youth.* What do I still lack?

That might have almost been a rhetorical question. If he had done all this from his youth there was nothing that he was lacked, was there? It's a rhetorical question which has only one answer:

"You lack nothing, my friend. You have everything."

Matthew 19
[20] All these things I have kept from my youth.

What a statement! If he made that statement and he was honest in approaching Christ, how deceitful is the heart of man! How desperately wicked that it cannot see its own sinfulness! Yet he was not willing to give himself for Christ. If he had done all this then he would have had no difficulties in putting away all his wealth and following Christ.

The Pharisee is another example.

Luke 18
[11] The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not like other men…

He did not know himself.

[11] …I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

"I am not so desperately wicked, am I?"

Luke 18

[12] I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.

"So I do the things that are right. I thank you that I am not like the other men."

Yet he was more sinful than the publican who was there, because the publican looked for healing, whereas the Pharisee did not. He rejected Christ, cherished murder against Him in his heart, and even crucified Him. So he did not know himself. He could not know himself.

Look at King Saul. When he was rejecting the express command of God that only certain people could bring a sacrifice, he thought that as a king he could do everything, and so he brought the sacrifice. And when Samuel came, how did he greet him? With the words,

1 Samuel 15

[13] ...blessed are you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord.

This reminds me a little bit of a situation I experienced recently. I wrote to somebody and admonished him to consider a certain principle of our message, and he wrote back almost the same thing.

"Oh yes, I did everything. I performed the commandment of the Lord."

And he did exactly the opposite, even in this letter. He wrote what he did, and it was exactly the opposite of what we learned. It's funny, isn't it? What do you with people who come and say, "I did everything," and yet what they did was the opposite. What does God do with it? He tells us our heart is desperately wicked and deceitful. It does not admit the problem. This was the problem with Saul. Now we look at these stories and we think,

"Oh we have nothing to do with that. We are not like Saul. We certainly don't bring a sacrifice; we wouldn't do this. No. We just wouldn't do this."

Maybe we do other things.

1 Samuel 15
[13] ...blessed are you of the Lord [he said], I have performed the commandment of the Lord.

We expect the people who transgress the commandment to be dark looking, loud, noisy, discourteous, unfriendly; we expect this of them, don't we? When they come so happy and friendly like Saul came, we think,

"Oh, what's going on now?"

Why We Cannot Know Ourselves

"The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately wicked;
who can know it?"
Jeremiah 17:9

1. Human pride. Proverbs 21:1-4
2. The inability to be honest. Proverbs 16:1-3
3. Even conscience can be faulty. Proverbs 16:25
   - Pilate thought that he was innocent. Matthew 27:11-25
   - The current of our wishes is very strong. The Desire of Ages, p. 738
4. We lack self-distrust. The Desire of Ages, p. 249
   - The rich young ruler. Matthew 19:20
   - The Pharisee. Luke 18:11
   - Saul. 1 Samuel 15:13

When God Cannot Do Anything for Us

The heart is desperately wicked and deceitful. Who can know it? I tell you, this is so true.

THINKING TOO MUCH OF OURSELVES

When we think too much of ourselves God cannot do anything for us.

Galatians 6

[3] For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
[4] But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.
[5] For each one shall bear his own load.

Now this talks about the judgment. In fact, everything that we study is concerning the judgment. God wants to prepare us for that.

[3] For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

If anybody thinks he is too high, that is one of the points.

NEGLECT OF GOSPEL ORDER

Another very important aspect is if we follow Gospel Order or not. If we don't, then God cannot do anything for us. We read about the judgment:

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 437:

So it will be found in the judgment. God's reproof has been plainly uttered against men and women who have sinned by corrupting their bodies and defiling their souls by licentiousness. They have the warnings to others placed in similar circumstances, who have been overcome by the tempter, and they know that the displeasure of God rested upon them. They have the example of Joseph and Daniel, who feared God. Joseph, when tempted, looked up to Heaven, and realized that God's eye was upon him, and he exclaimed,

Genesis 39

[9] How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

He also urged his duty to his master, who trusted him so fully, as a reason against it.

God has flashed light upon the pathway of all. Reproofs and warnings and cautions are given to individuals in similar circumstances, and God has expressed condemnation of sin in all its forms. The sin of licentiousness is plainly rebuked and condemned. Men and women will be judged according to the light given them of God. Lessons that have been neglected, become awful judgments. The warnings of God, neglected, from which men turn to a course of their own choosing, will afford no practical lessons of instruction. These warnings will prove their condemnation in the judgment. The only safety for anyone is to turn to a practical account for himself every lesson that is given to another.

In other words, there is enough truth that God has given to His people from age to age. There is enough truth in the Bible. There are enough stories that show each situation of our daily life. But these warnings are neglected, and instead we turn to our own course of study. We study that what we like. We look at this or at that. This is a problem because by this we neglect the word that God is giving to His people. That is going against Gospel Order. It's like we have a seminar. We will have a study on a certain chapter in *The Desire of Ages*, and somebody says,

"Oh, I am so busy with reading *Prophets and Kings* that I have no time for this chapter in *The Desire of Ages*."

That's fine. You can read *Prophets and Kings* as such. It's not a bad book. But when by this you neglect to study the chapter in *The Desire of Ages*, you won't pass when we have a test on it. So it is in daily life as well. When, instead of following the truth as God gives it and really dwelling on it, we begin to choose our own subject, then we will certainly not get the lesson that God wants to give us. Our mind is too occupied, and very soon we will become confused, especially when we study subject matters from authors who seem to be very near the truth but don't have the full truth. Then we certainly will become confused.

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 437:

These warnings will prove their condemnation in the judgment. The only safety for anyone is to turn to a practical account for himself every lesson that is given to another. When the message is given, then his individual duty begins.

NOT SEEING OUR POVERTY; FAILING TO MOURN

So this is the problem. We do not see the poverty of our own soul and mourn because of our sin. Also, God cannot do much for us when we do not continue to mourn about the sins which we once saw. You know this text:

Matthew 5

[3] Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[4] Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

If a person has sinned and he cannot mourn because of it, that means he does not see the poverty of his spirit.

NOT YIELDING TO GOD'S CONTROL

When we are not stripped of all self-sufficiency and yield ourselves to His control, God cannot do much either.

The Desire of Ages, p. 300:

The proud heart strives to earn salvation; but both our title to heaven and our fitness for it are found in the righteousness of Christ. The Lord can do nothing toward the recovery of man until, convinced of his own weakness, and stripped of all self-sufficiency, he yields himself to the control of God.

When can the Lord do nothing towards the recovery of men? When he is not convinced of his own weakness and stripped of all self-sufficiency. So when we come to somebody and he says,

"Well, I admit that I did wrong but now I am doing everything right so please don't criticize me for this anymore,"

–then we know he is not stripped of all self-sufficiency. He has not yielded himself to the control of God. That is the problem.

When God Cannot Do Anything for Us

1. When we think too much of ourselves. Galatians 6:3
2. When we do not follow gospel order.
   Testimonies to Ministers, p. 437
3. When we do not see the poverty of our soul and mourn because of our sin. Matthew 5:3-4
4. When we are not stripped of all self-sufficiency and yield ourselves to His control. The Desire of Ages, p. 300

How to Search the Heart

Now, how to search our hearts—this is the main point.

RECOGNIZE WE CANNOT KNOW OURSELVES

We need to realize that we cannot know ourselves. That's the reason why we have dwelt so long on it. We need to see that we cannot know ourselves. That's the first step.

BE WILLING TO CHANGE

Secondly, we must be willing to change our opinion, and that is something that human pride does not want to do. Sister White says the following about this, in connection with *Proverbs* 21:2:

> **The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 1161:**
>
> When a man takes the position that when he has once made a decision he must stand by it, and never to alter his decision, he is on the same ground as was Lucifer when he rebelled against God. He held his plans regarding the government of heaven as an exalted, unchangeable theory.
>
> No man should think that human opinions are to be immortalized. Any man taking the stand that he will never change his views places himself on dangerous ground.

If a person says,

> "I will never change my views,"

–he places himself on dangerous ground.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 1161:
Those who hold the position that their views are unchangeable can not be helped; for they place themselves where they are not willing to receive counsel and admonition from their brethren.

This is narrow-mindedness. Can you see? When a person says,

"I never change my mind,"

–that is really narrow-mindedness. We must be open to be corrected even by our brethren. That is a very important point in searching our hearts.

ALLOW THE LORD TO TEST OUR HEART

Then the next point is that we must allow the Lord to test our heart. For example, Jeremiah writes,

Jeremiah 17
9 The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked;
Who can know it?

Then the answer is given to this question, "Who can know it?"

10 I, the Lord [can know it, I] search the heart, I test the mind,
even to give every man according to his ways, according to the
fruit of his doings.

And as we read in *Proverbs* 16 and 21, you remember, a man thinks that his own thoughts are pure but the Lord tests him. He searches the heart. Let us look briefly at this again.

Proverbs 16
2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord
weighs the spirits.

He weighs the spirits.

Proverbs 21
2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord
weighs the hearts.

So if we only have our own self as a reference, we won't get very far.

HUMBLE OURSELVES UNDER GOSPEL ORDER

The next point is that we must humble ourselves under gospel order. And when I say humble, I really mean humble. That means that we have to submit at times. We have to submit our opinion to the truth as it is revealed through God's channel.

Now, that is very difficult to do when human pride comes in. Human pride comes in when something touches our cherished ideas. It also comes in when we think that we see a mistake, a fault, or some imperfection or failure in the one who brings the message to us. When a person listens to the truth for the first time, he never has these difficulties. But when he listens again and again to the same channel, there comes a time when he tends to think,

> "Perhaps he is mistaken."

That is where almost everyone has difficulties at some point. And it is the reason why God has given us gospel order. Submit to this. We must humble ourselves under gospel order. That is very important. That means that when present truth is preached, I need to understand its full meaning. It's not just a general truth that is important for a generation, but it is personally for me. It touches my problems very specifically. It touches my situation very specifically. Very often the human heart rises up against it and says,

> "Oh, he has put together this message to attack me."

When you think and talk like this, you reveal that you don't believe the Word of God anymore. For you it's just the word of a man, who perhaps wants to revenge himself through these words, or whatever. And then you might as well stop believing in gospel order at all.

The present truth is *for me. I* need it, and if I see that it touches my situation, then I should be most grateful. That is a very important part in searching the heart. I cannot search the heart properly unless I accept the present truth as being given for me, personally.

Then I must see that the Lord has spoken to me. I have to realize this very clearly.

STUDY PRESENT TRUTH EARNESTLY

The next point, a step that naturally follows when I humble myself under gospel order, is that I will really study the present truth. I will make this my part. I want to use an example here from the New Testament. Jesus said,

John 16
[8] And when He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

Now that is a very general statement. That could be said at all times; at the times of Moses, at the time of Nehemiah, in the time of Christ. It could be said of today. It's a general truth. But Jesus makes it very specific. He says,

"What I tell you here is present truth. Listen to this."

John 16
[9] Of sin, because they do not believe in me.

That is,

"I am here among them, and they don't believe in me."

That is present truth. It was present truth in His time. And the next,

[10] Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and you see me no more.

That was very specific at that time. And finally,

John 16
[11] Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

At the cross the ruler of this world was judged.

Luke 10
[18] I saw Satan like lightning coming down from heaven,

–He said. In *Revelation* 12 we also see that Satan was cast down at that time. He was cast down because he had exposed himself in killing the Son of God. Now this was very present truth at that time. And when He comes He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment. That is present truth now, and we must see how it applies today.

John 16
[8] And when He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin,

Of what sin? The sin of not believing in gospel order, for example; of not accepting the truth when it comes from God's channel.

[8] He will convict the world…of righteousness.

That means He will show them how to overcome sin. That is the message in *From Bondage to Freedom*.

[8] He will [also] convict the world…of judgment.

And that is the message that we are preaching—the hour of His judgment has come, as we know from the first angel. So this is very much present truth today, as it was back then, even though the principle is general, since the Holy Spirit always has worked this way. But to convict the world of sin, we must ask,

"Which sin especially?"

Today, I believe the great sin that the Holy Spirit convicts us of is the sin of indulgence. As we have studied this year[109] that is the sin we need to be convicted of; the sin of indulgence. Indulging

[109] See *From Bondage to Liberality*.

ourselves, indulging our children, indulging others in sin. That is the sin we need to be convicted of.

In being convicted of righteousness we need to learn the liberality of Christ and how to gain that liberality.

And of judgment, we need to know that our actions and our thoughts are always seen by God today. These are the principles.

BEHOLD CHRIST

There is one more statement I would like to read with you. We read from *Christ's Object Lessons* and I would like to read a little bit more because it says,

> **Christ's Object Lessons, p. 159:**
> In one way only can a true knowledge of self be obtained.

Now we see the solution to this. He will convict the world of righteousness.

> We must behold Christ. It is ignorance of Him that makes men so uplifted in their own righteousness. When we contemplate His purity and excellence, we shall see our own weakness and poverty and defects as they really are. We shall see ourselves lost and hopeless, clad in garments of self-righteousness, like every other sinner. We shall see that if we are ever saved, it will not be through our own goodness, but through God's infinite grace.

In other words, we will see the liberality of Christ, and that will change us. That will help us to really search our heart as God wants it.

In closing, I want to remind you how the promise of Christ in *John* 16:8 was fulfilled for the disciples. When they were praying in the upper chamber before the Day of Pentecost, during the ten days after Jesus' ascension and before He actually poured the Holy Spirit on them in full power, they searched their hearts in the right way. As a result they came very close in true Christian fellowship and were really prepared to receive the Holy Spirit.

How to Search the Heart

1. We need to recognize that we do cannot know ourselves.
2. We must be willing to change our opinion.
   The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 1161
3. We must allow the Lord to test our heart.
   a. He knows the heart. Jeremiah 17:10
   b. He searches the heart. Proverbs 16:2; 21:2
4. We must humble ourselves under gospel order.
   a. The present truth is for me. Proverbs 24:12
   b. The Lord has spoken to me.
5. Study the present truth earnestly.
   a. The Holy Spirit will do the work of conviction.
      John 16:8-10; The Acts of the Apostles, p. 36
   b. Behold the liberality of Christ.

I certainly believe that if we can do the same thing—and we can when we allow the Lord to do it—the same results will follow, and the message can go to the world. The obstructions can be removed so that God's work can go forward. This is my prayer for us. Amen.

9. Gospel Order and the Spirit of Liberality

Sabbath, December 9, 2006

ONE of the obstacles that must be removed, in order for the latter rain to fall, in order for the Holy Spirit to come in full power, is our unwillingness and unreadiness to go and preach the gospel to all the world. This obstacle needs to be removed. We want to preach the gospel to the whole world.

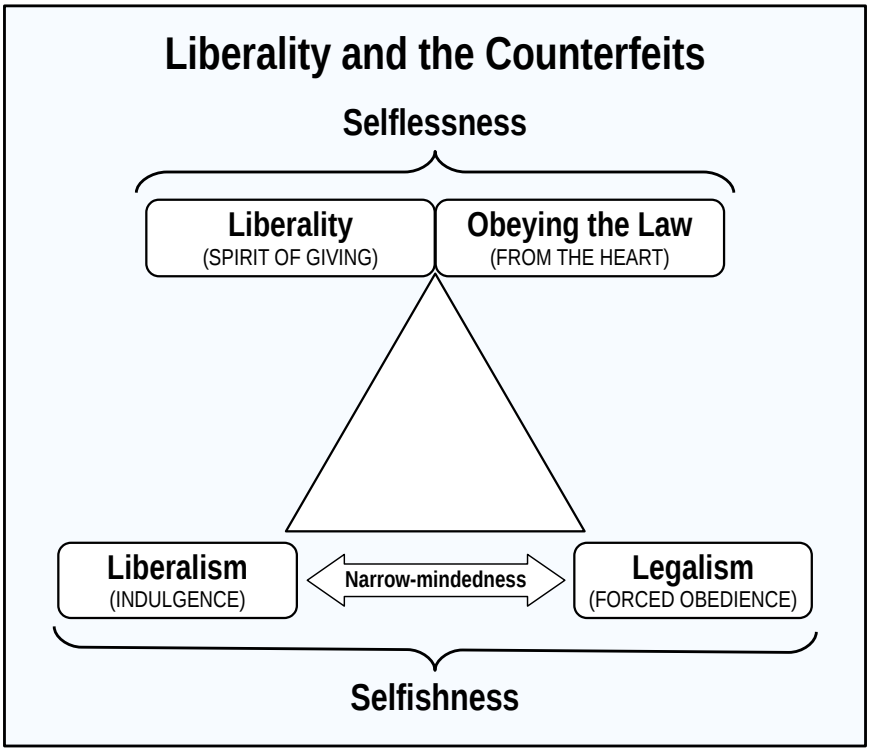
In this context we would like to study gospel order again, and to draw a connection between gospel order and the spirit of liberality. Many people do not understand what gospel order really means. Those who have left us and turned against the message are especially hostile toward this particular theme. Why? Because it has been misrepresented, perhaps by themselves or by others. For this reason we need to connect that message with the spirit of liberality which we have studied this year. It's very important.

We also want to understand how God is liberal and yet law-abiding at the same time. God uses the laws as His instruments, or servants, as He uses the angels and the messengers as His servants. We will see in our study that these servants are His instruments whom He can use as He pleases. And He uses these things for our blessing. They are not arbitrary rules inflicted upon us which limit our freedom; they are given for our service. It is in this way that God wants us to see gospel order. When we really understand it we see that Gospel order is the spirit of liberality.

Let us think again of the diagram that we had at during camp meeting: The spirit of liberality and its counterfeits.[110] What is the counterfeit, or perversion of the spirit of liberality that people fall into? It is indulgence. The spirit of liberality is selflessness. Indulgence, which we also called liberalism, is the spirit of selfishness. Liberality means obedience to the law, being in harmony with the law, having the law written in our hearts. The perversion of this

[110] The studies on Liberality can be obtained from the book, *From Bondage to Liberality*. The diagram is on the next page.

is the spirit of legalism. It is when the spirit of the law is not written in the heart. We see the law as rules that we have to obey but it is not in our heart to do so. Perhaps we obey it because it brings us some advantages, fellowship in the church, or the promise of an eternal reward, but this legalism is not real liberality. It's opposed to real liberality. It is selfishness, just as indulgence is.



The Spirit of Liberality

This was just a brief repetition of the principles that we considered together. Now we want to apply these principles, looking first at the spirit of liberality. We want to read some texts that describe the spirit of liberality. Some of them we know very well. We have considered them together at our camp meetings.

Luke 6

[38] Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

What kind of measure? A full measure, running over, pressed down, shaken together; making sure that more fits into the vessel. This is the Spirit of God. He does not give with measure but without measure, as John says,

John 3

[34] For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.

In other words, God does not carefully measure it out and say,

> "You may only get this amount because I only want to give you this much, [or,] because I don't have more."

God gives the Spirit not by measure. He gives it liberally, pressed down, shaken together, running over. That is the way in which He wants to give the Holy Spirit. What Jesus said to the Samaritan woman also describes the liberality of God.

John 4

[13] Jesus answered and said to her, Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.

So God does not just give a little bit of water. He gives so much that the receiver himself becomes a well. A well is basically a fountain of water without limits. Water comes out constantly—running, and running, and running. Have you ever observed a well and seen how the water comes out day and night all year round? It's just amazing. This is what all those who drink of the Water of God will become. This shows how liberal the fountain of

water is that God gives without measure. That is the spirit of liberality—giving, giving, and giving again.

The Spirit of Indulgence

In contrast to the spirit of liberality stands the spirit of indulgence, which means not to give but to receive. It means to keep; to hold something to myself, to cling to it. It means that I won't let go for the sake of others. I want it for myself. This spirit of indulgence is basically what destroys life.

SHUNNING INCONVENIENCE AND REPROACH

For example, in the area of gospel order, we do not necessarily want to bring the message to the people. We do not want to listen to the message and accept it fully because it means accepting the consequences as well. We do not want to take up the cross because it involves inconvenience and reproach. This is the deeper reason for the rejection of gospel order. You may bring up whatever reason you want. You may demonize gospel order, presenting it as something that it isn't, but the real reason a person rejects gospel order is the fear of inconvenience and reproach. The truth brings inconvenience and reproach. Let us read this together.

> **The Great Controversy, p. 460:**
> The great obstacle both to the acceptance and to the promulgation of truth is the fact that it involves inconvenience and reproach.

Inconvenience and reproach. Inconvenience means it goes against my plans. It goes against what I would like to do, the things I feel drawn to, the things that I cherish. And it brings reproach. It does not bring me recognition from other people, but reproach. Reform seemed to bring reproach upon us in many respects, didn't it? And this is one reason to go against gospel order.

The Great Controversy, p. 460:

This is the only argument against the truth which its advocates have never been able to refute. But this does not deter the true followers of Christ. These do not wait for truth to become popular. Being convinced of their duty, they deliberately accept the cross, with the apostle Paul counting that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" with one of old, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." *2 Corinthians* 4:17; *Hebrews* 11:26.

So the question is, do we really love the truth? If we love the truth, we will not mind the inconvenience and the reproach it brings. We will have no aversion to gospel order. But if we prefer to cling to the things that we like then we will not accept gospel order. It brings inconvenience and reproach.

MORE PLEASING TO PERSONAL DESIRES

Another Bible text that clearly shows this principle is found in *2 Timothy*. It says that people will choose the teaching which is most pleasing to their own desires. That has always been so.

2 Timothy 4

[3] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

The phrase "itching ears" means that their ears like to hear a certain thing. It reminds me a little bit of when we have a wound. It itches and we like to scratch it, don't we? The doctor tells us not to scratch because it's not good. It doesn't heal if we scratch it all the time. We scratch it open and it bleeds again and so forth. So we shouldn't scratch it, even if it itches. But our tendency is to use our hands to do something about it. We like to please ourselves and do the things that we like—the things that are convenient. But our Divine Doctor says,

"Don't do it."

There are many who disregard this loving appeal of gospel order. Instead, they hear something they like and say,

"Oh, that's pleasant to hear. That must be the truth."

So they turn away from sound doctrine. They turn away from what they once believed was truth to go after the things they like and want to hear. Then as they go forward in their newfound so-called freedom, they choose teachers for themselves which they would not have chosen before.

In the Old Testament we have frequent examples of people who turned away from gospel order. We want to quote just one text. God said through Jeremiah,

Jeremiah 2

[13] For my people have committed two evils: They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns —broken cisterns that can hold no water.

So first of all they turned away from God because they felt that He restricted their liberty. They felt that He was not liberal enough for them, but that was not all. They also chose other teachers to satisfy their itching ears. They did not realize that they were broken cisterns that could not hold water.

THE WAY OF DEATH

This is the spirit of indulgence in the area of gospel order. But what at first seems good to the people who indulge in these so-called freedoms will eventually lead to death. I would like to read one statement about this.

The Desire of Ages, p. 148:

As men set forth the best wine first, then afterward that which is worse, so does the world with its gifts. That which it offers may please the eye and fascinate the senses, but it proves to be unsatisfying. The wine turns to bitterness, the gaiety to gloom. That which was begun with songs and mirth ends in weariness

and disgust. But the gifts of Jesus are ever fresh and new. The feast that He provides for the soul never fails to give satisfaction and joy. Each new gift increases the capacity of the receiver to appreciate and enjoy the blessings of the Lord. He gives grace for grace. There can be no failure of supply. If you abide in Him, the fact that you receive a rich gift today insures the reception of a richer gift tomorrow. The words of Jesus to Nathanael express the law of God's dealing with the children of faith. With every fresh revelation of His love, He declares to the receptive heart,

John 1

[50] Do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.

This is basically the point. The world sets before men the wine which they like at first. It's very nice in the beginning, but after awhile it becomes unsatisfying. It turns to bitterness. It turns to gloom. It ends in weariness and disgust, and finally in death. This is what the world offers. This is the result of indulging in the things that God has forbidden. In His love God says to us,

"If you take what I give you, you will get more and more and more. There is an abundance of liberality in this. But if you deviate from it, if you choose to go after the things that your ears are itching for, you will end up with nothing but death."

The Spirit of Narrow-Mindedness

This is one extreme, one aspect of deviating from the gospel order which God gives us.

SPIRITUAL PRIDE

There is another side and it is the spirit of narrow-mindedness. This spirit is basically spiritual pride. It is expressed in the language of Laodicea, which says,

"I am rich, I have everything, I need nothing."[111]

"I am rich, I have become wealthy, and I have need of nothing"—that is the spirit of narrow-mindedness. It says,

[111] *Revelation* 3:17.

"I have the truth, and I will always have the truth; the truth can only be where I am."

CONTROLLING THE WORK

It will lead us to look down upon everything else around us, and even to forbid others to preach if they do not follow our ways exactly. They may preach things very similar to us, but because they are not part of our group we are not happy about it. We want to forbid it. This happened with the disciples when they saw someone preaching in the name of Christ. John said to Jesus,

Mark 9

[38] Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.

Then Jesus had to correct them. He told them that this was narrow-minded.

[39] But Jesus said, Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in my name can soon afterward speak evil of me.
[40] For he who is not against us is on our side.
[41] For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

In other words, Jesus said,

"Let him. Come away from your narrow-mindedness. Come away from your wrong understanding of gospel order and let me care for this little one who preaches in my name."

JUDGING OTHERS

This leads us to another thought; the spirit of narrow-mindedness is the spirit of judging. Jesus has very clearly said that we should not judge. Let us now look at this in the following context. Jesus says,

Matthew 7

[1] Judge not, that you be not judged.

[2] For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.
[3] And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?
[4] Or how can you say to your brother, Let me remove the speck from your eye; and look, a plank is in your own eye?
[5] Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Another verse about judging is found in *Luke*, just before our text about liberality. Let us read this together.

Luke 6
[37] Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.
[38] Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

The spirit of liberality is opposed to the spirit of judging. These two things are altogether different. The spirit of judging is the spirit of narrow-mindedness. It's a spirit that makes itself the standard for others, that puts men in the place of God, and makes human opinion the measuring rod. This also leads to death, just like indulgence.

HINDERS THE SPREAD OF LIGHT

It is this spirit that is an obstacle. It hinders the spread of light to the world. In this context I would like to turn to the example of the Jews; in this case a negative example.

The Desire of Ages, p. 33:
For hundreds of years the Scriptures had been translated into the Greek language, then widely spoken throughout the Roman Empire. The Jews were scattered everywhere, and their expectation of the Messiah's coming was to some extent shared by the Gentiles. Among those whom the Jews styled heathen were men who had a better understanding of the Scripture prophecies concerning the Messiah than had the teachers in Israel. There were

some who hoped for His coming as a deliverer from sin. Philosophers endeavored to study into the mystery of the Hebrew economy. But the bigotry of the Jews hindered the spread of the light.

What a statement!

But the bigotry of the Jews hindered the spread of the light.

So today, a wrong understanding of gospel order may hinder the spread of light because it's nothing but narrow-mindedness, or bigotry. The bigotry of the Jews hindered the spirit of light. They said,

"Only we can have the truth, no one else."

This bigotry effectively hindered the spread of light.

The Desire of Ages, p. 33-34:

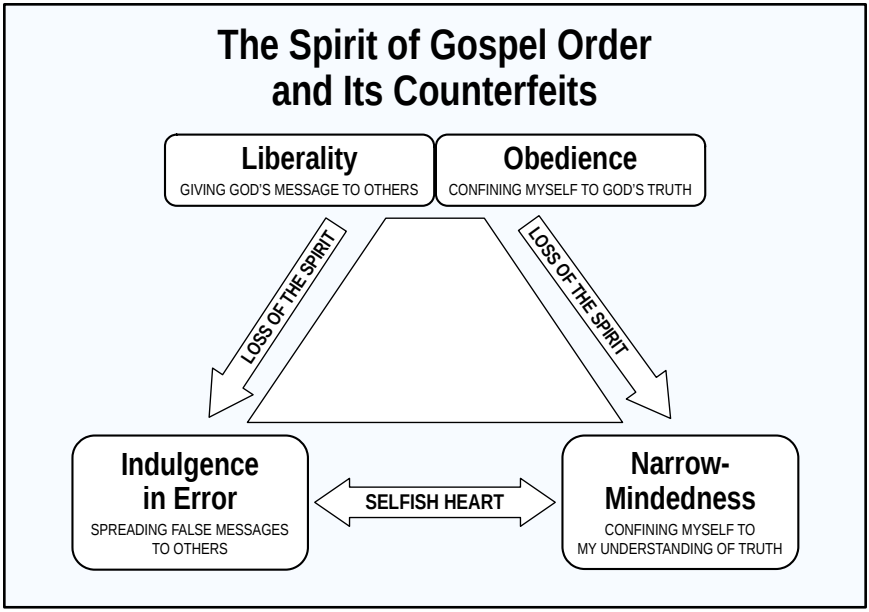
Intent on maintaining the separation between themselves and other nations, they were unwilling to impart the knowledge they still possessed concerning the symbolic service.

That doesn't mean that they were unwilling to make converts, by the way. The Jews would travel far to make a convert, or proselyte, as they were called.[112] And they liked to make proselytes. There is no question about it. In this sense they were missionaries, but they still maintained that it was impossible for God to bless others as He blessed them.

Intent on maintaining the separation between themselves and other nations, they were unwilling to impart the knowledge they still possessed concerning the symbolic service. The true Interpreter must come. The One whom all these types prefigured must explain their significance.

So this is the spirit of narrow-mindedness as pertaining to gospel order. We can look at what we have considered so far in this diagram.

[112] *Matthew* 23:15.



The spirit of gospel order is liberality, and liberality has a perversion, a deviation from it. This perversion is indulging in errors because the ears are itching for these things. Obedience to gospel order, which is the other side of the spirit of liberality, also has a perversion and it is narrow-mindedness. Both narrow-mindedness and indulgence in error spring from the selfish heart.

Connection Between Gospel Order and Liberality

What we would like to do for the rest of our study is to look at the positive side. We want to understand how gospel order can be liberality. How can these two things be connected? How can they be the same thing? We have studied the negative part so far. It was necessary. But now we would like to understand better the liberality that is in gospel order.

So what is the connection between the spirit of liberality and gospel order? Let us first read a text about this.

John 12

[23] But Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

[24] Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

Jesus said this when He was in the temple, shortly before his death. Some Greeks came to the temple and asked for Him. He said to them,

[24] Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

He thereby showed that He himself would fall into the ground and die. Now, isn't dying a limitation of freedom? It's taking away that liberty that I want for myself. Jesus said to Peter one time,

John 21

[18] When you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.

Thus He indicated that Peter would also die on the cross. And through this Jesus showed that when we are placed on the scaffold or the cross, in the guillotine, or the electric chair today, we do not go there because we choose to. It's not our choice. Yet we go there willingly. Willingly, because we submit to whatever God allows to happen to us. And this is a freedom that is much deeper. It's a liberality that brings fruit. It produces much grain.

Now, we can't give ourselves just for nothing, without purpose. We give ourselves because we love Jesus, because we belong to Him, because we love the purchase of His blood, and because we know that our death brings a rich harvest. He who dies produces much grain. This is the fruit of liberality. It's the combination of both; of being taken, of being limited so to speak, and at the same time producing a tremendously rich harvest.

The same point is also made clear in other object lessons, like the oak and the acorn. Actually, every seed that is put into the ground is put out of sight. Self must die. When self really dies, when we are willing to be nothing more than an instrument for the promulgation of the truth and love of God to the world, when we are willing not to be honored but to be simply an instrument, only then can God produce fruit.

Every promise that God gives is the word by which we live, and this word is what produces the fruit. This means that we live not by our words or our thoughts, but by the Word of God.

Education, p. 253:

How to exercise faith should be made very plain. To every promise of God there are conditions. If we are willing to do His will, all His strength is ours. Whatever gift He promises, is in the promise itself.

Luke 8

[11] The seed is the word of God.

As surely as the oak is in the acorn, so surely is the gift of God in His promise. If we receive the promise, we have the gift.

When we let this spirit rule in our lives, then this spirit will be given without measure.

There is a very interesting statement concerning the Holy Spirit which we have read in the past. Let's read this again.

The Desire of Ages, p. 672:

Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on conditions. There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord's promise; they talk *about* Christ and *about* the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies. We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us.

Is this liberality, that we cannot use the Holy Spirit? Yes, it is liberality. It is liberality when we fully submit to God and allow

ourselves to be used by the Holy Spirit. Many people don't think this is liberality. They want to govern and direct themselves. Because of this they cannot receive of the Holy Spirit and it is impossible for them to bear fruit. And they remain alone. Again let us think of what John said about Christ.

> "To Him is given the Spirit because God gives the Spirit not with measure."[113]

Christ could be as successful as He was because He was fully submissive to gospel order. He said,

> **John 5**
> [19] I cannot do anything of myself, but only the things I see my Father do.

The Selfless Spirit of Jesus

We want to contemplate this selfless spirit of Jesus. Let us turn to *Revelation*.

> **Revelation 22**
> [17] And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

That is liberal—let him take the water of life freely. If someone really hears and accepts that invitation—"Come!"—what will be his natural desire? To say the same thing, "Come." The word "come" will be echoed and re-echoed to all the world when it's really heard.

> [17] The Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

He will, like the woman of Samaria, say,

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[113] Paraphrase of *John* 3:34.

"Lord, give me of that water. I want more of this water, please!"[114]

And the people will come looking for this water again and again. He who drinks will long for more. There is this idea that in order to be free we must be able to drink from all the different wells. In order to be free we must be able to drink from the right well without limit.

The Desire of Ages, p. 187:

Jesus did not convey the idea that merely one draft of the water of life would suffice the receiver. He who tastes of the love of Christ will continually long for more; but he seeks for nothing else. The riches, honors, and pleasures of the world do not attract him. The constant cry of his heart is, "More of You." And He who reveals to the soul its necessity is waiting to satisfy its hunger and thirst. Every human resource and dependence will fail. The cisterns will be emptied, the pools become dry; but our Redeemer is an inexhaustible fountain. We may drink, and drink again, and ever find a fresh supply. He in whom Christ dwells has within himself the fountain of blessing,—"a well of water springing up into everlasting life." From this source he may draw strength and grace sufficient for all his needs.

He will desire nothing else. So if there is the desire for something else, what does it mean? It means we haven't tasted the water. It is like tasting something very, very good. You have no desire for something else because you are satisfied with that thing.

If you have once eaten fruit in its native country, ripened in the sun, and naturally grown, and then taste it after it has been transported thousands of miles and gassed and treated and is green when you get it, you will taste a difference. You won't want this fruit anymore. You only want the original. But you can never have enough of the original. You can have more and more and more. It's good. It's satisfying. Provided you know the real thing, you don't like or desire the other.

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[114] *John* 4:15.

But as long as you don't know the real thing you naturally look for other things. This is why the tastes become more and more perverted today. It is why people like to add sugar to their food in greater and greater quantities. The artificial things are not satisfying anymore. That is the reason. Let us taste the good things, the real things, and it will be different. We will "seek for nothing else."

The Desire of Ages, p. 187:

He who tastes of the love of Christ will continually long for more; but he seeks for nothing else.

This is confirmed by the statement we read earlier.

The Desire of Ages, p. 148:

But the gifts of Jesus are ever fresh and new. The feast that He provides for the soul never fails to give satisfaction and joy. Each new gift increases the capacity of the receiver to appreciate and enjoy the blessings of the Lord.

That is liberality. It increases our capacity to both appreciate and enjoy the blessings of the Lord.

He gives grace for grace. There can be no failure of supply. If you abide in Him, the fact that you receive a rich gift today insures the reception of a richer gift tomorrow.

It is a desire of the heart to observe gospel order. That is the right spirit. That is the spirit of liberality. And that is the spirit of the angel messengers. The angel messengers are spirits, as it says in *Hebrews*.

Hebrews 1

[14] Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

We can read about these ministers:

The Desire of Ages, p. 21:

The angels of glory find their joy in giving,—giving love and tireless watchcare to souls that are fallen and unholy. Heavenly beings woo the hearts of men; they bring to this dark world light

from the courts above; by gentle and patient ministry they move upon the human spirit, to bring the lost into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know.

Do they do this because they have to? Do they do this with a sad face, or with a face that shows their great diligence or weariness? No. There is joy in their faces when they do it. And why? Because they love to do it. They have the spirit of giving. There is no other thought in their hearts. They don't mind that human beings get even closer to Christ than they can, because they are totally selfless. Then it says,

The Desire of Ages, p. 21:

But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give.

John 8

[28] I do nothing of myself, [said Christ;]

John 6

[57] The living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father.

John 8

[50] I seek not my own glory,

–but the glory of Him that sent me. *John* 7:18.

Here we have the real culmination of gospel order and liberality.

John 8

[28] I can do nothing of myself.

That is the spirit of liberality.

The Desire of Ages, p. 21:

But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give.

John 6

[57] The living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father.

This liberality comes from the heart. It means that we really have a living experience with God; that we are so close to Him that our foundation is in Him and in His promises.

Illustrated in the Sabbath

Finally, I would like to direct our thoughts to the Sabbath.

> **Mark 2**
> [27] And He said to them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.
> [28] Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is a very good object lesson of liberality and gospel order, and the combination of the two. The question is often asked,

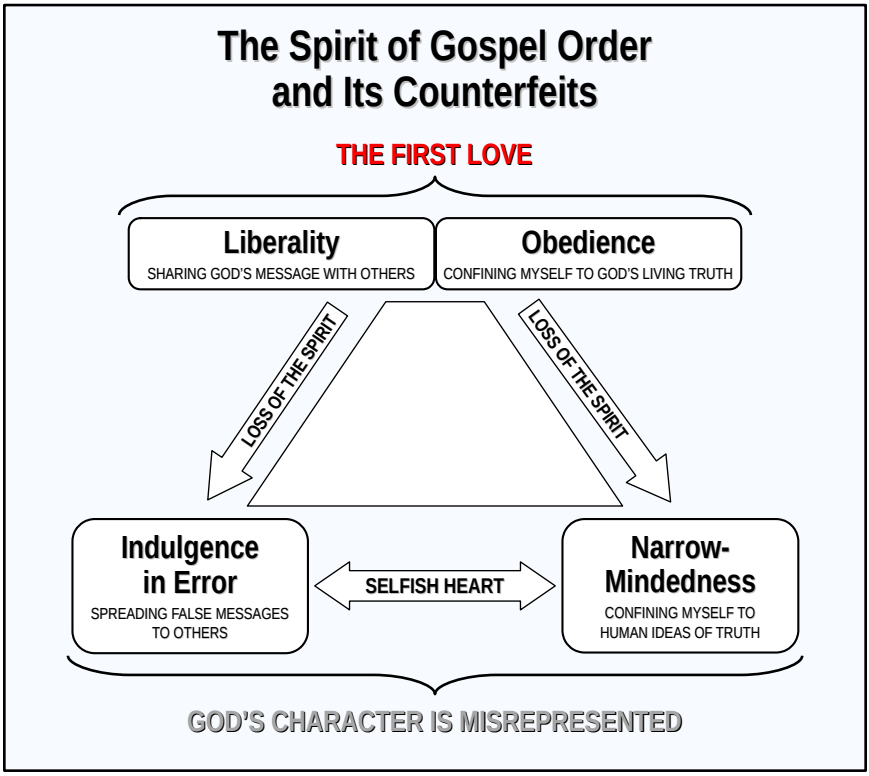
> "Why does God require the seventh day to be kept?"

Is there anything in nature that reminds of this? I mean, it's natural that we shouldn't kill each other, it's natural that we shouldn't steal from each other, but is there anything that tells us of the seventh day? Isn't it almost arbitrary that God picked one day out of seven? No, God has good reasons for this. He gave this day not in order to limit our possibilities, but to give us the necessary rest to increase our possibilities. This is not a self-indulgent rest. We do not rest simply for ourselves. It is a rest of service, a rest of love.

But how often has the Sabbath been perverted and made a day of burdensome rites by men who see God as a God of suppression and stern justice! Even the Christian church in the first and second centuries already began to deviate from the love of God. They made the Sabbath day a day of actual fasting. After a while the people didn't like the Sabbath day so much anymore because it was a day where you couldn't eat. Sunday was much better. That was a day of joy. That was a day of real fellowship. Through this Satan prepared the way to change what God had given.

Let us think about this. The Sabbath is an instrument in God's hand to bring us His liberal gifts. When it is seen as a selfish command by which God only wants to please himself, then we will not understand the real meaning of gospel order. It is not the day or the instrument that is to be exalted. It is not the messenger that is to be exalted, but God, who works through that messenger —through the Sabbath. We are to exalt God, who uses that messenger to bring us fellowship with Him, and real joy in giving, like the angels.

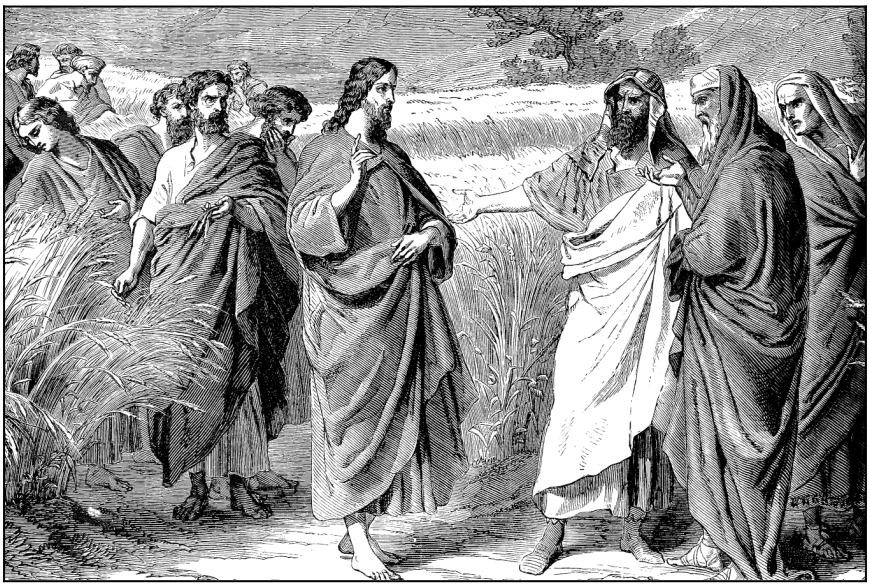
In closing, let's look at this diagram again so that we really understand this point.



The liberality and obedience to gospel order that God gives, which are one and the same, are totally different from indulgence in errors and from narrow-mindedness. True liberality and obedi-

ence to gospel order means to abide by the truth that God has given in His Word because we love it, because we live in it; because the Holy Spirit has convicted us that it is the truth. When we experience this we want to pass it on to others with the same liberality in which it was given to us. It's also called "the first love."[115]

Let us pray that we will hear the voice saying, "Come." And whoever hears it, let him say, "Come, and take the water of life freely."[116] Amen.



"The Sabbath was made for man."

[115] *Revelation* 2:4.
[116] *Revelation* 21:17.

10. Gospel Order: God Speaks to Us

Sabbath, April 19, 2008

TODAY we want to study how God speaks to us. Then we will look at why He speaks to us, as well as the counterfeit Satan has devised.

Examples from Daily Life

To begin, three people will each act out a part in order to depict our theme. They will portray realistic situations from daily life. We want to compare our communication with God to situations when citizens of a country try to communicate with a very high-ranking government official such as the president.

Eric, you were at the White House once weren't you?



[Eric]: Yes. I had the privilege of being there for one hour. Not long ago I was kidnapped while traveling. I spent the next four weeks as a prisoner. The president found out about this and ordered a detachment of soldiers to rescue me. They succeeded in their mission; otherwise, I wouldn't be standing here now. The event made headlines, and the president wanted to speak with me about my experience. So, I spent an hour with him.

Thank you. Again, we are portraying things that can come from real life, which doesn't mean that the speakers have had the experience personally. They are illustrating our theme today. Angelika will tell us something now.

[Angelika]: My son is in war-torn Afghanistan. He could be killed at any moment, and he is afraid. His fear is killing him and taking his life just as a bomb would. I remembered that my uncle is the personal secretary of the president. I decided to use this opportunity to obtain a personal interview with the president, and



relate to him a mother's feelings for her endangered son. It took a long time to receive an answer, but a letter finally came. It said, "Dear Mrs. Nelle, We thank you for your confidence in the president, as exhibited by your request. However, his political responsibilities demand his undivided attention. Therefore, he cannot receive a personal visit from you. Concerning your son, we have learned that he is a real patriot who fights wholeheartedly for his country. In the event that he loses his life, he will be given the highest honors, and you will receive an official document signed by the president. Our warmest regards."

Thank you. This is something that could realistically happen. Now we will hear Gerhard.

[Gerhard]: I am an enthusiastic bicycle rider. A year ago I wrote to the president asking him to allocate more money for bike paths and lanes. There are highways everywhere, and it is difficult for bikers to deal with the traffic. However, I still have not received an answer from him.

Thank you. Out of these three, who had the best results? Or who had the worst results? One of them could speak with the president for an hour. Another wanted to speak with him about someone else, but was unsuccessful. And the third person got no response. Certainly a president has much to do and little time. We understand this. And people naturally ask the question,

"Is God in the same situation?"

How Does God Speak to Us?

How does God speak to us? Does He speak directly to us? Does He speak through His secretary? Or do we receive a letter from His secretary? How does it happen? *Hebrews* 1 tells us how God speaks:

> **Hebrews 1**
> [1] God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
> [2] Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.

This text brings to view two ways God communicates:

1. Through the prophets, and
2. Through His Son.

How does God speak through the prophets, and how does He speak through His Son? Is there a difference? Or do the prophets receive only what Christ says to them? Let's read:

> **1 Peter 1**
> [10] Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you,
> [11] Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets and inspired them. That is why they spoke. Another text that shows this is:

> **Revelation 1**
> [1] The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.

Christ spoke to John the prophet. This was the means of bringing the book of *Revelation* to us. The prophet says that Christ is the Source. When Paul said that God speaks in various ways, he did not mean that He speaks through the prophets on one hand or Christ on the other. Christ is always involved in every revelation. *John* 1 makes this plain.

John 1

[1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
[2] He was in the beginning with God.
[3] All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing
was made that was made.
[4] In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
[5] And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not
comprehend it.

Christ is being spoken of here, though in the first verse it simply says "the Word." The Word is a person who was with God, and God was the Word. This means that Christ was the Word of God. Everything that God says, He says through Christ. Therefore, when God speaks through the prophets and Christ, He is not using two different ways.

The Line of Revelation

We would like to look at the line of revelation. God is the One who speaks. He speaks through Christ, who in turn speaks to the prophets who have the Spirit of Christ. Then they speak to us. In short, that is the line of revelation.

Let's consider the text in *Hebrews*, which says that God has spoken to our fathers in various ways through the prophets, but now speaks to us through His Son. There is no contradiction. He spoke through the prophets who had the spirit of Christ, and now He speaks through His Son. This means that something particular is happening; otherwise, Paul would not have emphasized the point. Something particular has occurred in that God speaks through His Son.

Another point is that we can see the prophets. What stands behind the prophets is not so clear to us. But we see the prophets. We know their weaknesses and strengths; we know their ability to speak, etc. Perhaps some were more powerful speakers than others. We think of Paul as a very powerful speaker. We can say

that he was very intelligent and convincing in his presentations. But we don't know what his voice sounded like.

The particular aspect Paul noted in *Hebrews* is that Christ steps to the end of the line. This is what Paul is revealing when he says that in the last days God speaks to us through His Son. Concerning this point we would like to read another text in *Hebrews*.

Hebrews 5 [NIV]
[7] During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission.
[8] Although He was a son, He learned obedience from what He suffered.

Christ prayed to God with loud cries and tears. He wanted to speak with God, and God did speak with Him. The procedure by which we are to pray is not different.

Let's look at the line of revelation again. God speaks through the angels. Angels are mentioned in *Revelation* 1:1. The angels pass on what they hear to the prophets. Jesus read the prophets just as we are to do. That is how He received the Word of God, and this is the same procedure we are to follow. Jesus went to the end of the line of revelation in order to experience this line of communication.

But there is more to this. Christ himself is the One who speaks to us. That means that when He was here, He could be seen and touched. He could be understood because He was like everyone around Him. He could be taken hold of just as the prophets could. This is described in:

John 1
[14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

This Word became flesh. That means that it revealed itself in our nature. Now we can better understand what Christ thinks and how He perceives things.



And there is still more. This Son not only became like us, but He had in himself the glory of His Father. Let's read this.

Hebrews 1

[1] God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

[2] Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,...

Why first through the prophets and then through the Son? The Son is specifically described next.

Hebrews 1
[2] ...whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;
[3] Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
[4] Having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

What is said of Christ here cannot be said of the prophets. He was the express image of the Father's person and upholds all things by the word of His power. He purged our sins. These things can only be said of God. It is amazing that this Son, who became like us, is also like God. Because of this He could completely restore communication between us and the Father. Now we can hear God and talk to Him. We can receive answers to our requests.

Why Does God Use Channels?

Why does God use channels? The reason I used the acted depictions in the beginning is because people think that they can obtain more from the president when they can speak with him personally than when they communicate with him through someone else.

> "Why must we talk to God through someone else? Why can't we speak to Him directly?"

These questions are often asked. It is thought that it would be better if God would appear and speak to us personally. Does God use a channel because He doesn't have time? Is God too busy? You could say this about a president, but not about God. God owns time.

Psalm 31
[15] My times are in your hand...

God never suffers from lack of time. Is it because He is so much above us? The president would not talk with just anyone, not only because of time, but because in some cases it would be beneath him. But we are told,

Acts 17
[27] ...He is not far from each one of us.

He is near. He doesn't feel superior to us. Is it because of fear? Many presidents won't speak with their people because they are afraid. They feel that they must protect themselves. But that cannot be the case with God because there is no fear in love.[117] God loves us. There is no fear in Him.

Is it because He is uncommitted? A president often has a spokesman. And if the spokesman says something wrong, the president can simply say that his spokesman made a mistake. This does not happen to God. What He says is completely dependable.

2 Corinthians 1
[20] For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

We have to represent all of this in such a human way because we automatically think this way about God. We see in Him that which we know of human behavior. It is important for us to realize that His ways are higher than our ways. He does not suffer from lack of time. He does not feel superior to us. He is not afraid of us. He is not uncommitted in His dealings with us.

We know the story of Philip, who wanted to have personal contact with God.

John 14
[8] Philip said to Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.

[117] See *1 John* 4:18.

[9] Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, Show us the Father?
[10] Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does the works.
[11] Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.

This should be enough. Yet we still pose the question,

"Why does God use a channel?"

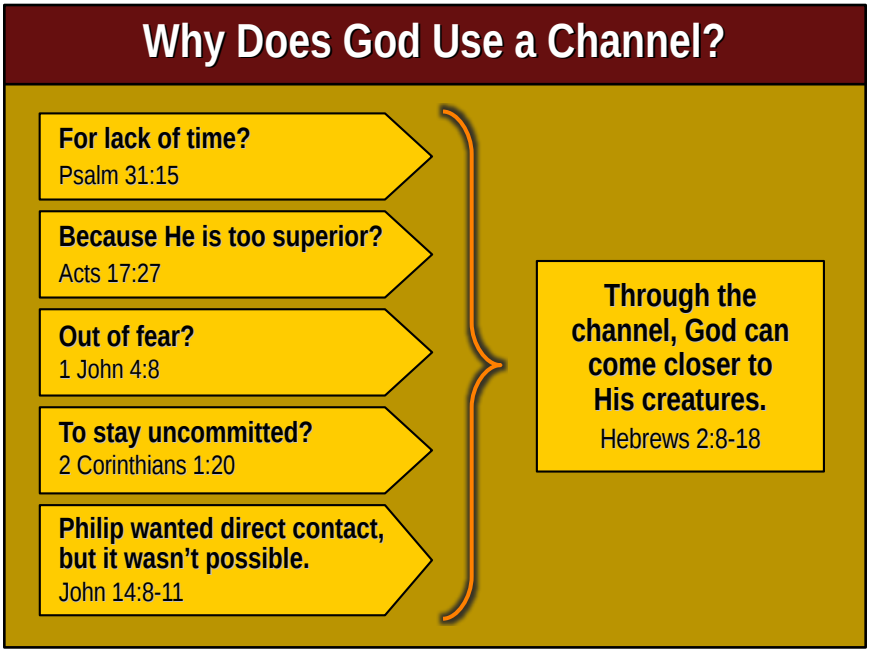
The answer is quite simple. Through a channel God can come closer to His creatures. He wants to come closer to us. He wants to speak personally with us. Therefore, He uses a channel. This is nicely described:

Hebrews 2
[11] For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,
[12] Saying: I will declare your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.
[13] And again: I will put my trust in Him. And again: Here am I and the children whom God has given me.
[14] Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,
[15] And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.
[16] For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.
[17] Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
[18] For in that He himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

That is the reason. God wants to come closer to us. That is why He uses this way. Without a channel He couldn't come as close to us. God speaks to us through His Son. He is the channel enabling God to come close to us. Through His Son we understand Him. And the Son is equal to God. He is God. This is what Jesus said to Philip.

John 14
[9] Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me?

Christ is the express image of God. He is the same as God in every respect. He is God in the flesh. Can we understand that? That is the mystery of God. That is the way of communication that God has established between himself and every individual.



We can also read a text from *Matthew:*

Matthew 1
[23] Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us.

That is the name of Christ: "God with us." It is God's normal way of doing things, to come as near to us as possible.

A Counterfeit

However, there is a counterfeit of this which outwardly looks very similar. But it produces much different results. I would like to look at an example of this from the Old Testament. It is when Miriam and Aaron said to Moses,

> **Numbers 12**
> [2] Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?

They wanted recognition that God spoke through them also. They were unhappy because they had not been consulted concerning the choice of Moses' wife and the choosing of the seventy elders. Their argument was,

> "God speaks through us too; therefore, we should be consulted."

The story goes on to say that God rebuked them. They pretended to be God's spokesmen, when in fact they were speaking for themselves. *Isaiah* portrays this counterfeit very well:

> **Isaiah 14**
> [13] For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north.

Lucifer wanted to be the channel of everything between God and His creation. He wanted everyone to come to him. Paul writes of the same spirit:

> **2 Thessalonians 2**
> [3] Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,
> [4] Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

He exalts himself and pretends to be what Christ is.

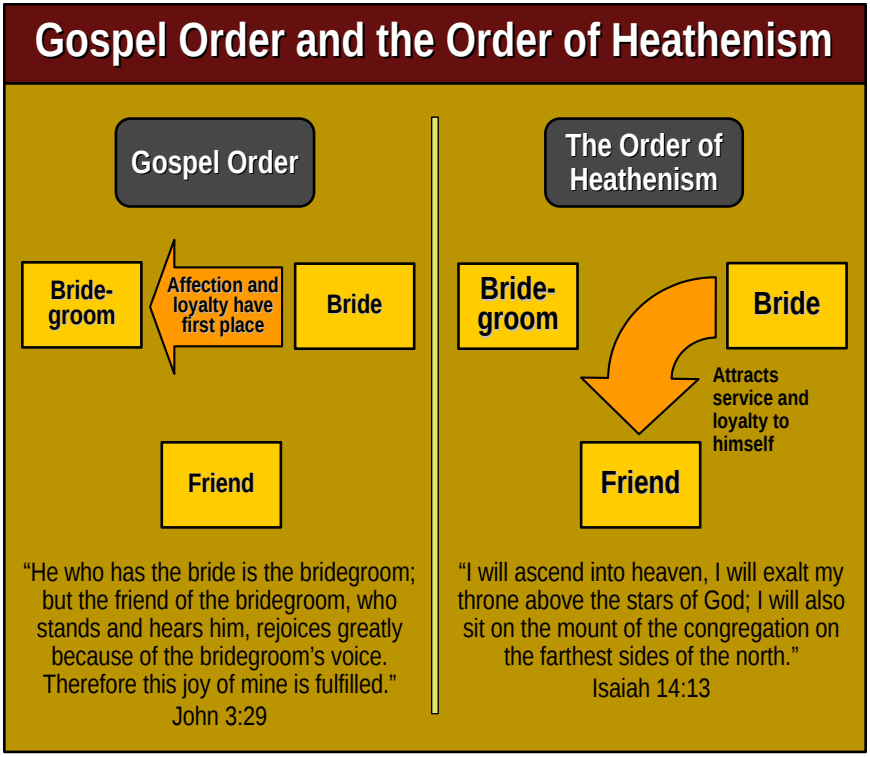
A Comparison

We want to compare these two orders. We will call the counterfeit, the order of heathenism. The following is Gospel Order:

John the Baptist was one of the prophets God spoke through, as Paul said in *Hebrews* 1. John directed the people to Christ. Then Christ appeared at the same time that John was preaching. He preached and His disciples baptized. More and more people went to Christ, and John's audience decreased daily. This disturbed John's disciples, and they complained to him. But John, free from jealousy, said that it was good. He said,

John 3

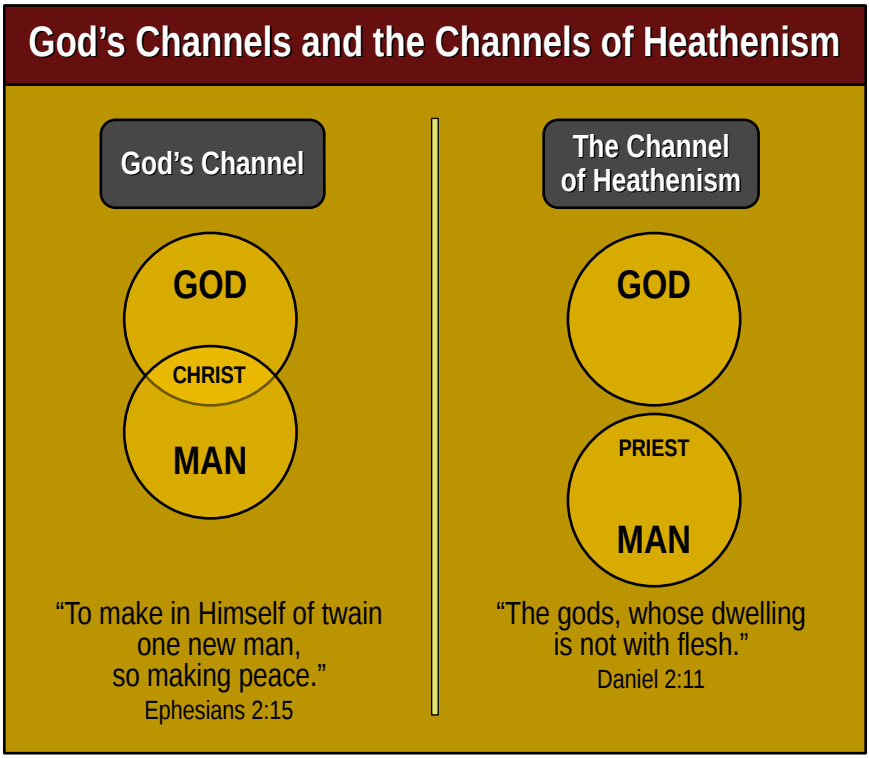
[30] He must increase, and I must decrease.



He also related a parable about the bride, the bridegroom, and the friend. Every bridegroom has a friend. The friend leads the bride to the bridegroom. John said that he was this friend. The friend does not want to marry the bride, but wants to lead her to the bridegroom. John told his disciples that that was his role. He wanted to set the people's affection on Christ—the bridegroom. John knew what his task was. He was a channel. That is Gospel Order. The order of heathenism says,

> **Isaiah 14**
> [13] I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north.

When Lucifer plays the part of the friend, where will he lead the bride? Not to the bridegroom, but rather to himself. This is the order of heathenism. It is self-exaltation—attracting people to



yourself. These two systems stand in opposition to each other in this world.

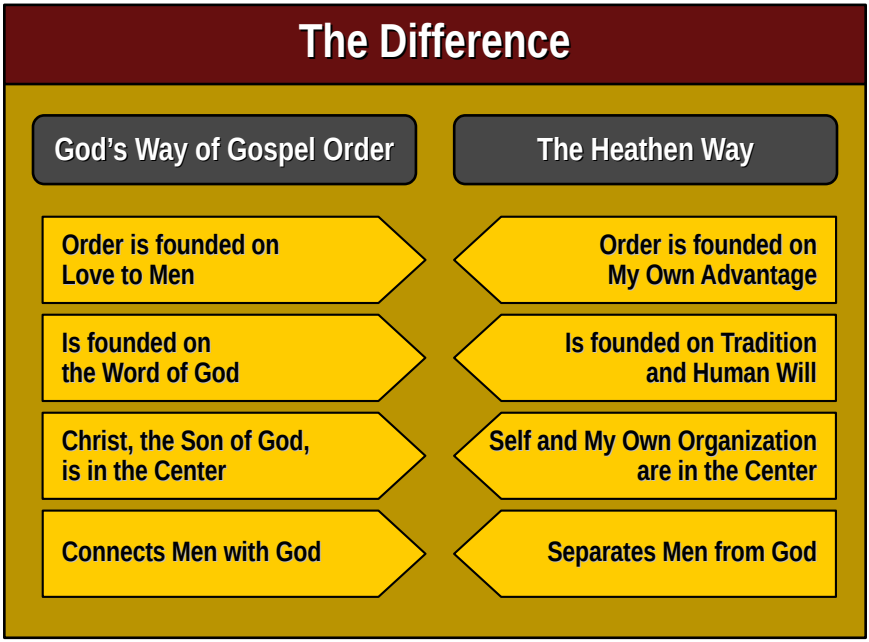
THE CHANNELS OF GOD AND OF HEATHENISM

Again, let's look at the channels of God and the channels of heathenism. What is the difference?

In God's system, God and man are connected through the channel. But in heathenism, God and man are separated. The one who claims to be a channel is not a channel. He is only a person who exalts himself. We can read this in *2 Thessalonians*. He claims to be God. That is the order of heathenism.

THE DIFFERENCES

We can express the differences in the following manner. God's way of gospel order is founded on love to men. God gave this order because He loves man. Heathen order is established to give an advantage to self. God is accused of trying to gain advantage through His order, but that is not true. We will see that.



God's order is founded on the Word of God. Heathen order is founded on tradition and human will. In God's order, Christ—the Son of God—is in the center. In the heathen order, self and our own organization are in the center. In God's order, men are connected with God. Heathen order separates men from God. By these characteristics we can know whether a given way is God's way or the heathen way.

In summary, God speaks to us through channels—through prophets, but particularly through Christ. He does this to come closer to us. In contrast, the heathen order separates us from God. I want to add another thought: Our salvation depends upon our reception of God's channels.

Our study today is an introduction to our study of Gospel Order. Next time we will go deeper into this theme. Amen.

11. How God Speaks With Us—1

Sabbath, April 26, 2008

TODAY we will have a study about the question of how God speaks with us—*with us*, not only *to us*. You see a bird here in this picture:



Let us ask the question,

"What does this have to do with the fact that God speaks with us?"

Hearing God

First of all we want to hear an experience. Will you tell us, Shannon?

[Shannon]: This week in one of our missionary seminar classes, we met very early in the morning and went out into nature. We were studying the chapter "With Nature and With God" in *The*

Ministry of Healing. We all went for a walk together, and Jens and Manuel, who were presenting the chapter, said that we shouldn't talk, but rather be still so that we could listen to nature. As we were walking, I tried to listen to the birds, but I had so many voices in my head that I couldn't be still and I couldn't hear. Then we separated, and I went into the forest. I went right into the middle of the forest where there were no other sounds apart from the birds. Then I was able to hear them. And God said to me through the birds, "I will take care of you. You can just have peace. You don't have to have all the answers now. I want to show you what you should do." Then I was really filled with peace. In that moment I knew that God was speaking to me and that I could trust Him. It was very nice.

Thank you. This reminds me of an experience I had. Some years ago I was in the city of Heidelberg. It happened to be on Sabbath morning, just like right now. However, I had to go into the city; I don't know why exactly anymore, but somehow I had to go on the street, and it was a main road. There was so much noise from the cars, and I thought,

"Do I have to be here today—here, of all places?"

I was a bit unhappy with my circumstances. Then suddenly I heard the very loud trill of a blackbird. It was spring, too–about the same time of year as now. The bird was sitting in a yard and singing. I thought,

"Look at that. The bird is happy, too. And God has given me this bird now."

And the day was saved. Things were completely different after that. Yes, God speaks with us through nature. But first of all we have to understand that God speaks to nature—or, better said, that nature hears God. Some writers of old expressed this.

Jeremiah 8

[7] Even the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times; and the turtledove, the swift, and the swallow observe the time of their coming.

They know this because God gave it to them. And Isaiah says,

Isaiah 1
[3] The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib.

They understand the order in which God has placed them. They hear God. But it is not only that nature hears God; we can also hear God through nature, as we have just heard from Shannon's experience. Jesus talks about this. He says,

Matthew 6
[26] Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Look at the birds. Are you not of more value than they? And in the Old Testament, a psalm writer said the following:

Psalm 84
[3] Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young—even your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

By looking at the birds' nests, he was reminded of the altar that was there in Jerusalem. And he said,

> "Every nest is an altar."

There was only one altar in Israel—one single altar. It stood in Jerusalem, in the temple, in the center. There were no other altars allowed. All other altars would have been a transgression of God's commandment. But here we see many altars.

When God Does and Doesn't Speak

The question is,

> "When does God speak with us?"

We want to hear about this in an experience.

> [Rahel]: One evening I was lying in bed and wanted to sleep. I was sharing the room with someone else, and this person

couldn't sleep because of heavy thoughts and worrying about how things would continue. All of a sudden God gave me the thought, "Pray together." So we got up and prayed, and in the prayer God clearly pointed us to a song. Certainly you all know it. It was "The Lord Will Provide." We sang this song together, and God spoke so clearly. It didn't just assure the person that God would take care of her. It also really encouraged me.

Thank you. What is the underlying principle here? Through the fact that you helped someone else, you heard God speak. That is precisely what God says:

Isaiah 58
[7] Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?
[9] Then [if you do that] you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, Here I am.

That also shows us why it is so often the case that we don't hear God. Does God speak with us? We can ask ourselves this question. Many a person might say,

"God doesn't talk with me. I never heard Him speak with me, and I don't really know how to speak with God."

He clearly says that it isn't always possible to speak with Him; there are conditions under which it isn't possible. Take Israel, for example. When Israel had other gods—and this means nothing other than loving something else more than God—then He no longer spoke to Israel. Otherwise God did speak with Israel. We know the stories from the Old Testament, when He appeared on Mount Sinai, when He was in the light that was in the sanctuary, and so on. But when the people of Israel had other gods, they no longer heard God's voice—neither through the light in the sanctuary, nor through prophets, nor in any other way.

There was another means through which God spoke to the people of Israel, and that was through the High Priest, who had two

stones. Light and Justice, they were called. The Bible calls them Urim and Thummim, literally the Lights and the Perfections. The people could ask God, and most of the time He answered in the form of a glow either on the one stone or the other. But whenever they followed other gods, God no longer spoke through Light and Justice.

Likewise we have the example of Israel's first king, Saul, who made a promising beginning and really worked zealously for God, but then began to follow his own way. And God no longer spoke to him. He no longer heard God, and so he finally went somewhere else, namely to a fortune teller, and got information there.

There is another story in the Old Testament that very clearly shows when God does not speak, and that is the story of Cain and Abel. Both offered a sacrifice to God, and it says that God respected Abel's offering, but He did not respected Cain's offering. Why did God not speak with Cain, but with Abel instead? The answer is clearly given. It was because sin dwelt in Cain's heart. This was why God could not speak with him. So there are reasons why God does not speak with us.

God Speaks Through People

Next we want to hear another experience. But I see that someone has a question first.

> [Reinhard]: My question is, Does God speak through people?
>
> [Tirza]: I can tell you something about that. Two weeks ago, I somehow sensed that something wasn't right, but I didn't know exactly what it was. I asked God, "What is it? Somehow I'm not 100% in harmony with You anymore." The answer then came through a brother who, without knowing the back story, addressed precisely the point that wasn't quite right in my life. Then I knew exactly what I had to change.

Interesting. So God spoke to you. I would like to tell an experience of my own about this as well. I was in a situation where I

was quite down. I needed some comfort from God, and again and again I prayed,

> "Lord, comfort me. Please—show me what your will is. Speak to me just once."

I didn't know how God would speak to me, but a thought repeatedly came into my head—a specific thought, a Bible verse. I thought,

> "Well, those are my thoughts. That isn't God speaking to me now. Those are just my thoughts."

I also wanted to get rid of those thoughts, so I prayed. I hoped that God would speak to me in prayer, but the quieter I became, the stronger those thoughts grew. I simply couldn't get rid of them. Even though it was a Bible verse, I thought it wasn't at all appropriate for the situation. At last, I thought,

> "There is only one way to get rid of these thoughts so that I can finally hear God's voice, and that is to open the Bible."

But I didn't know where I should open it to; I thought,

> "God has to speak to me,"

–so I simply opened it. And immediately my eyes fell upon the verse that was continuously going around in my head. Then I knew that God had spoken to me through the person who wrote this psalm. He wrote it so many thousands of years ago, and he had no idea that he would speak to me. I was deeply impressed with how God can use people in order to speak.

God speaks through people, and this we call God's Word. Even though it is people through whom He is speaking, it is God's Word.

Hebrews 1

[1] God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
[2] Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.

God Speaks Through His Messenger

God spoke through people; and His Son, Jesus, was a Person, too. Paul says about this,

> **2 Corinthians 5** [NLT]
> [20] So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, Come back to God!

Here he says very clearly,

> "We speak for God."

God speaks through us. We are the channels He uses.

> [Jens]: I have a question. Through whom does God speak to us today?

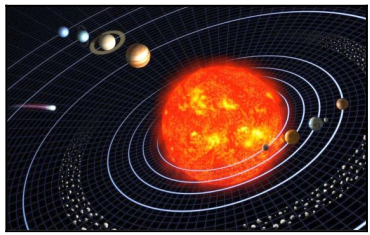
In other words, are there still channels today?

> [Jens]: Yes. What are the channels today?

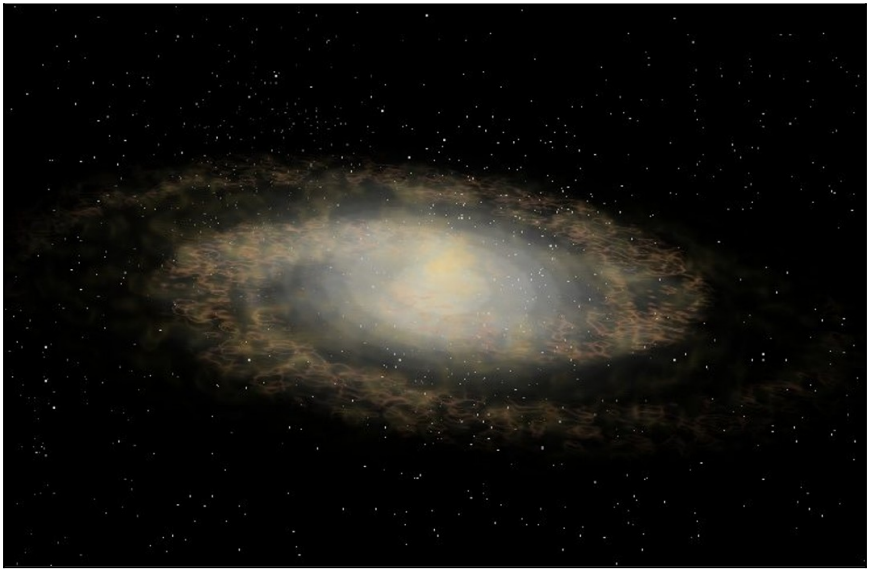
I described how I read the Bible verse from a few thousand years ago. But today? Let's look at a picture of a tree. A tree has many branches and twigs, and there are leaves on it, etc. But it has one trunk, and through this one trunk all the sap and all the nutrients flow to every twig. If we were to destroy this one trunk, the branches would receive nothing more. Obviously God made things in nature so that something is always flowing through a channel.



We can observe this not only with a tree, but also in other things, like the solar system, for example. A solar system centers around a sun, and every planet around it has an exact orbit. Everything is dependent upon the sun's power. If the sun were to increase or decrease in size, we would all be



lost, because we would move in some random direction. That means that God provided a center for our solar system; but not only for our solar system.



Who knows what this picture shows? Those of you who often look at pictures like these know immediately. That is a galaxy. That means it is comprised of many, many solar systems. This small nebula here could be a solar system, and so on. There are many, many solar systems here. And just like a solar system, every galaxy has a center, around which all other systems orbit. That's what nature is like. Something speaks through something.



It's the same in the animal kingdom. Every bird has its bird parents, through whom it receives nourishment. This is an order that God first created in the beginning, and which is upheld again and again. God could feed every individual bird himself; He

could hold the solar system together himself; but no, He does it through the sun. And He feeds the birds through their bird parents.



We also see this order in the birds' migration. We see that they follow an exact order, which God has given them.



We see it with humans, too. Every human being has parents, and God has given these parents the task of taking care of their children. From our parents we receive food, clothing, and education, as well as the knowledge of God. That is how it should be, at least. And that is the order that God has created. Let us hear an experience about this.

[Joachim]: I would like to tell an experience about this. It was quite a long time ago; I was about sixteen years old, and due to circumstances in my life, the following question was on my mind: If God is a God of love, then why will so many people be killed in the final judgment? That was how I saw the question. God is all-powerful, and He is a God of love. I kept this question partly to myself, and partly I posed it, but I did not receive an answer. Then later, when I was about eighteen, I had a girlfriend. The question came up, How is it with marriage? What is the right way to behave with my girlfriend before marriage, or later on, in marriage? How is it with sexuality?

I grew up in a Christian home. We kept Saturday as Sabbath, the holy day. That Saturday is the day presented in the Bible was clear to me; but why? What difference does it make if I keep Wednesday, Sunday, or Saturday as Sabbath? These questions agitated me. Both on my own and together with others, I asked various people about them, among these religious people of whom it

was expected and also known that they had a religious experience. But the answers didn't really get me very far.

A whole lot later—in the meantime I had studied medicine—I had other questions. Through the medical profession, I had learned a lot about how to handle disease. But in the Bible, it was very simple. Jesus went to the people and said, "Be well." Of course there are also somewhat different examples, such as when he put clay on their eyes.

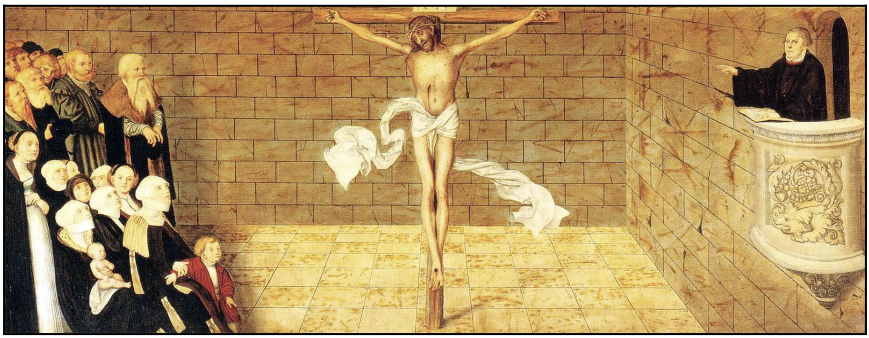
One day, when I wasn't thinking about the question, I met a friend. I was about twenty-six years old. We spoke about various things, and then he opened a book, and in it was a picture of an angel of God stabbing an evil angel—Satan—with a spear. He wanted to rip this page out of the book. And in that moment, all of my questions came flooding back. I said, "Why? That's what we've been learning the whole time." And then, in rather brief fashion, this friend presented to me the way God is. God is the same way that Jesus Christ was. In no way does He kill. He gives himself up completely in order to save. That is His entire character.

That same afternoon, we studied the Bible, and without this friend knowing what to study with me, he gave me the answer to my question about marriage. We studied about the fact that the most important thing is the new heart. Adultery is something that is in the heart. And if I am free of it in my heart, I will behave in a totally different way towards the opposite sex. The question was answered. Both of the questions I had carried around with me for years were answered in one evening.

A short time later I was in the midst of a serious problem and pretty much stuck between a rock and a hard place. This friend came around again. He knew nothing of my problem. He visited me maybe once every six to eight weeks. We studied about Sabbath rest. Again, this wasn't about keeping Sunday, Sabbath, or Wednesday. It was about something else. It was about God being the Creator, the Planner—that God is the one who has me completely in His hand and who has a way out of every problem. And the Sabbath is only a reminder of it, a school, a memento so that I continuously have God in mind. The real meaning of the Sabbath was suddenly clear to me.

> Not much later, in the same way and also unexpectedly, I was able to find out how God really deals with sickness. All of this came through this one friend. I somehow understood that there had to be a trunk there somewhere. The one thing didn't come from here, the other from there, and the third from over there. There has to be a source; there has to be a channel in this time through which God imparts His message.

Thank you. What God has provided in nature, He has also provided in spiritual things. That means that he uses a channel, through which He speaks to us; not only in the past, but also in the present. That means God speaks through a messenger. One good example of this is found when we look back to the time of Martin Luther. This picture was drawn by Luther's court painter, Lucas Cranach.



It is actually only part of a bigger picture; but this detail is very important. Every picture told a story. They were not just artistic portrayals, but rather real history books. What Lucas Cranach wanted to say here was that when Luther preached, it was not he who was in the center, but rather Christ and His Word. We see how all of the listeners are not looking at Luther, but at Christ. That means that God used a channel, a messenger, but this channel led to Christ.

God's Word is present-day. It is valid today.

2 Peter 1

[19] And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

We want to understand this verse and contemplate its meaning a little.

> "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed."

The Prophetic Word is the word that Christ spoke; it is also the Word that Christ inspired the prophets to say. It shines in a dark place until a morning star rises in our hearts. This morning star is faith. Let us read this in another verse:

Romans 10

[17] So then faith comes by hearing, [the rising of the morning star in our hearts comes by hearing] and hearing by the word of God [or through the prophetic Word, since Christ inspired the prophets].

> "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

And another verse:

[14] How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

Here God says very clearly,

> "I have a channel."

He calls it a preacher here. The Word of Christ, or the prophetic Word, is the foundation. The current sermon communicates this foundation, and the result is that faith grows in us, and a morning star rises in our hearts.

That is just what happened when Luther preached in Wittenberg. He was gone for some time in the Wartburg, and then he came back, and when he came, the churches were overcrowded.

People were really moved. Their faith, which had become somewhat weak, was revived again. When they heard the Word in the sermon, their faith grew; a morning star rose in their hearts. This didn't only happen in Wittenberg, but all over Germany and even all Europe. The influence of the reformation spread like wildfire.

This effect occurred in history prior to that event, too. When Jesus had risen, He sent His disciples into the world, and within one generation—that means still during Paul's time—the Jews said the following:

> **Acts 24**
> [5] For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

You hear it everywhere; throughout all the world he creates dissension. The Word of God was so powerful that you heard about it everywhere. One man could not create this. But the Word was that powerful. During Luther's time, Luther himself wrote,

> **The Great Controversy, p 190:**
> "I will preach, discuss, and write…I stood up against the pope, indulgences, and papists, but without violence or tumult. I put forward God's word; I preached and wrote—this was all I did. And yet while I was asleep,…the word that I had preached overthrew popery, so that neither prince nor emperor has done it so much harm. And yet I did nothing; the word alone did all."

Luther himself said,

> "Look at what God's Word has done. No one has done that before."

This Word has an effect. That is the Word that God has given.

God Speaks to Us Personally

> [Martin M.]: I have one more question. Does God only speak to me through a channel, or can I also hear Him directly?

You can certainly also hear Him personally.

> [Johannes]: I would like to say something about that. I once had an experience where I read a Bible verse in Isaiah that says, "He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens my ear to hear as the learned." *Isaiah* 50:4. So God speaks to me and says, "Get up." I thought, that's interesting. I'll have to try it out. So I said to God, "Wake me up tomorrow morning." I agreed on a time with Him, and then I woke up and looked at the clock, and it was exactly that time. In that I saw that God speaks to me. It was no coincidence, because I tried it again, and then again. And it works. God speaks to us, up close and personal. That was a huge experience for me.

So there was no one who woke you up?

> [Johannes]: No, I was alone.

So not through a channel.

> [Johannes]: Completely personally.

In fact, God does speak with us personally. In *Psalm* 32, He says,

> **Psalm 32**
> [8] I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with my eye.

I want to guide you personally.

> **Galatians 4**
> [6] And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father!

The word "Abba" is written in the language that Jesus spoke, Aramaic. I would like to ask the children, what do you call your father? How do you address him?

> [Christian]: Papa or Papi.

And what do you say, Jesse?

[Jesse]: I just call him Dad.

"Dad." Do you know that this is the exact meaning of "Abba"? That means it is a very confiding way to address someone. "Father." The word "father" is written behind it for those who do not understand Aramaic, because this letter was written in Greek.

"Dear Father! Dad! Daddy!"

Can we address God that way? Only if we can personally speak with Him. That is the privilege He wants to give us—the privilege of speaking with Him personally.

[Samuel]: Now we have seen that God sometimes speaks to us through a channel, but He also speaks to us very personally. So when does He speak to us through a channel, and when does He speak personally?

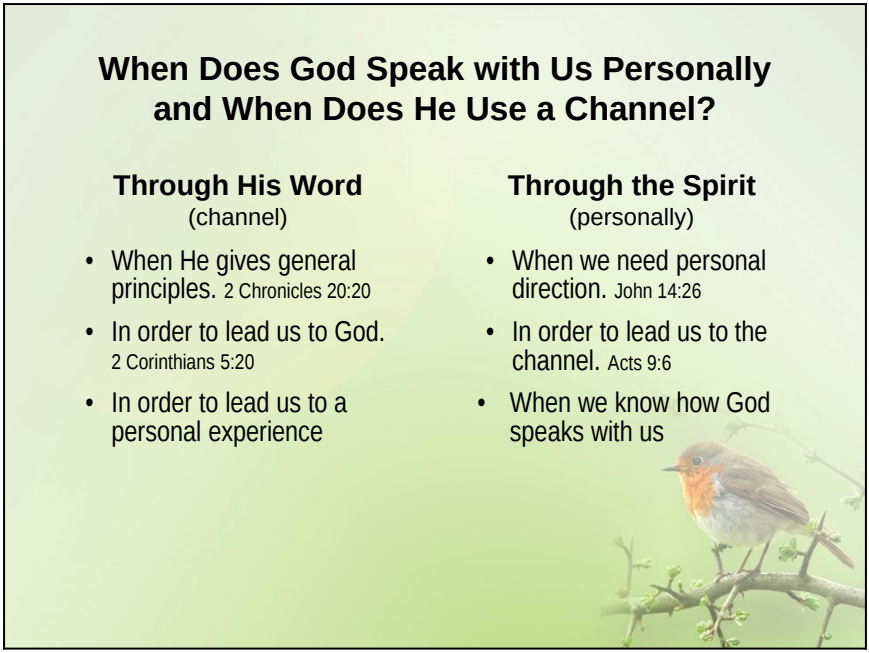
It's confusing, isn't it? First we said that He speaks to us through a channel, and now we said He speaks to us personally. Let's examine this briefly.

When does God speak with us personally and when does He speak through His channel? God speaks with us through His channel when He gives general principles. This is important for me to understand. So if we are talking, for example, about the question of what Christ means for us as a church, then it's a general principle. Or if it's about the organization of the church, for example, then it's a general principle. God speaks through His channel about these things.

He speaks to us personally when we need personal instructions. Jesus said,

John 14
[26] The Spirit will… bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

"I am a channel, but the Spirit will come to each of you personally and will remind you of what I, as a channel, have said to you."



The channel will lead us to God. That is the channel's task: to lead us to God. And the personal work of the Spirit is to lead us to the channel. That means that again and again, the Spirit will lead us to the messenger so that we hear the message through him. And the messenger leads us to God.

Another point is that the channel, the messenger, leads us to a personal experience. The whole idea is for us to gain a personal experience ourselves. That is why we hear the message. But when we know how to speak with God, then we are able to speak with Him personally. With these thoughts I would like to close. Amen.

12. How God Speaks With Us—2

Recognizing God's Voice
Sabbath, May 3, 2008

LET US continue looking at the subject of how God speaks with us.

The Loudest Animal

First I want to ask a question. Different animals in nature make different sounds. Some are loud, and others not so loud. Which animal is the loudest?

A woodpecker? Sometimes we hear the woodpecker, and other birds in the morning. They are very loud.

A parrot?

An elephant? That is a big animal with a lot of volume.

Dogs?

A lion? They strike terror when they roar.

Roosters? Particularly in the morning.

A bear also strikes terror.



A bat? We do not know for sure, but the bat is probably the animal with the loudest cry. Its volume can reach 140 decibels. That is louder than a jet and exceeds our pain threshold. We could not

bear it. Have you ever heard a bat? They are loud. Scientists have recently measured the loudness of their cry. However, the frequency of their cry is too high to be audible to the human ear. There are sounds that we cannot hear. The upper limit of a good human ear is around 20,000 Hz. My limit might be even 16,000 Hz or less. There is a lower limit as well, beyond which we cannot hear. The sound of a bat is beyond the limits of our hearing.

Incidentally, they make other sounds as well. It is absolutely necessary to the bat's survival that it makes these sounds. The sounds the bat makes bounce off of the objects around it and come back to it. The returning sounds give it a picture of everything around it, just as our eyes do for us. The picture of their world is very clear to them. They can detect things up to 17 meters (56 feet) away. The bat is one of the loudest animals, but we can't hear it.

Wisdom Calls

Can we hear God's voice? The Bible says that wisdom calls loudly in the streets.

> **Proverbs 1**
> [20] Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares.
> [21] She cries out in the chief concourses, at the openings of the gates in the city.



Have you ever heard wisdom's voice? It is loud! As loud as a bat's cry. But somehow we don't hear it.

We also have a picture of a long-eared owl. If you were a long-eared owl, when would you hunt mice? That's what they like to eat the most. What time of the day would you

hunt? We would usually think that during the day would be best, because we can see the best then. But this owl hunts at night. That is when it sees the best. In the very time when humans cannot see, it can see. If I go into the woods at night when there is no moon, I can hardly see anything. I can't even see the path. But an owl can see everything perfectly. It also sees the mice. It catches the mice at night. How can they see something we can't see? Animals hear things that we don't hear.

We want to ask the question,

"How can we hear God's voice?"

Speaking Through a Messenger

I would like to repeat a few things we considered last Sabbath. There are two ways God uses to speak with us. One way is through a messenger. The other is through His Spirit. His messenger can be nature, for example.

Psalm 84
[3] Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young—even your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

In other words,

"As I observe nature, I see and hear You."

God also uses people. He calls them prophets.

Numbers 12
[6] Then He said, Hear now my words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.

God speaks through messengers. We certainly can hear them.

Hebrews 1
[1] God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

[2] Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.

He speaks in various ways through the prophets. Prophets are also messengers.

Speaking Through His Spirit

God also speaks through His Spirit. This happens personally. We read about this in *Galatians*.

Galatians 4
[6] And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father!

Perhaps you remember that the word *Abba* means *daddy*. This is a word that expresses affection and confidence. The fact that we may address God in this way means that a very close relationship exists between Him and us—the same as between us and our earthly father. That is the privilege that we have. God is personally there. This means that He speaks to our hearts. Let's read a parallel text to *Galatians* 4:6:

Romans 8
[16] The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

God speaks personally to each one of us. God speaks through His spirit in the form of a quiet voice. Elijah was once in a very difficult situation. He longed to hear God speak to him. He longed for comfort. We read,

1 Kings 19
[11] Then He said, Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake;
[12] And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

[13] So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, What are you doing here, Elijah?

Now he heard the voice of God, in this case, a still small voice. Someone else might not have heard it. They might have thought it was just the sound of a wind. But Elijah heard the voice of God.

Again, God speaks to us in two ways—through a messenger, and personally. When He speaks to us through a messenger, it is called the Word of God. When He speaks to us personally, we often call this the conscience. Sometimes we have other names for it, but we do call it the conscience.



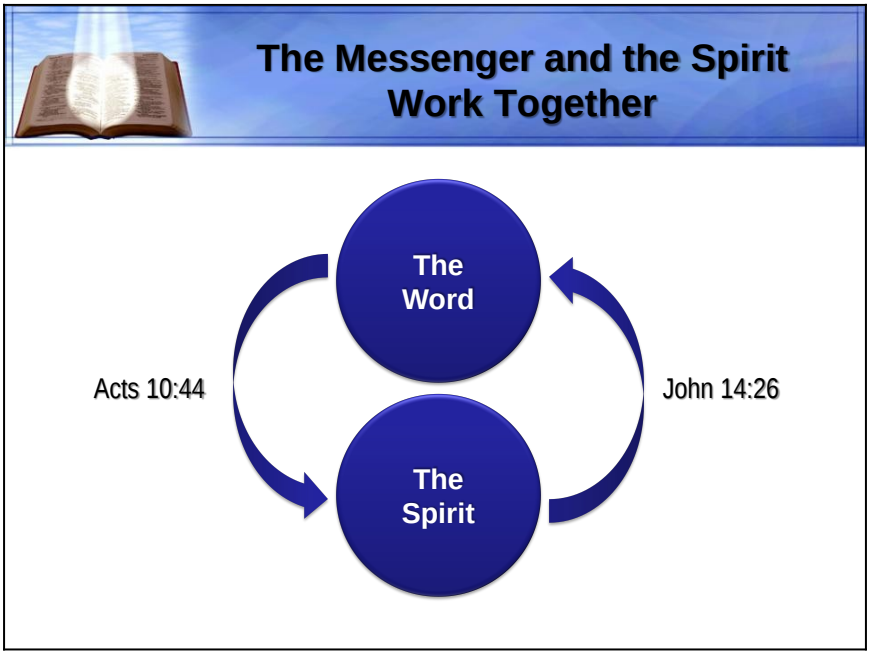
Working Together

These two ways of speaking—through a messenger and personally, or through the Word and the Spirit—work together. They do not contradict each other. God does not only speak *either* through a messenger or through the Spirit; He always speaks through

both. And these two complement each other: the Spirit leads us to the Word. Jesus said,

> **John 14**
> [26] But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I [the Messenger] said to you.

Jesus is the Messenger. He gave the disciples the Word of God. And the Spirit reminded the disciples of everything the messenger said. This is the co-working of the Spirit and the Word.



But it also works the other way around. Not only does the Spirit lead us to the Word, the Word leads us to the Spirit. God wants us to be led to Him through the reading of His word. But the Word is not only written; it is also spoken. Peter explained the gospel at one time to Cornelius and others who were coming out of heathenism.

Acts 10

[44] While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

While Peter was speaking the Word of God, the Holy Spirit came upon each person in the group personally. So God did not only speak through His messenger, Peter. He also spoke through His Spirit to each one personally. In this way everyone had a confirmation that the things Peter was saying were really from God. The Word and the Spirit work together. They don't contradict each other, but rather lead to each other.

When We Don't Recognize God's Voice

Why is it that we don't recognize God's voice? There are so many voices in this world, and with reasonable certainty we are able to say that they are not the voice of God. That must be the case because they contradict each other. They are not like the voices of the birds, which are still in harmony even with different voices. The same is true in a choir. There are four parts, but there is a harmony. What we hear in the world, though, is not harmonious. One cries one thing, another cries something else. One says that he has the solution to the problem, the other calls for a different solution. Why is there so much confusion?

God speaks to us through His messengers and personally through His Spirit. If we choose not to accept His Word through His messengers, then we make our own messenger. That means we put a person in the place of God. Or a person puts himself in this place and wants everyone to pay attention to him and follow him. Paul says something about this.

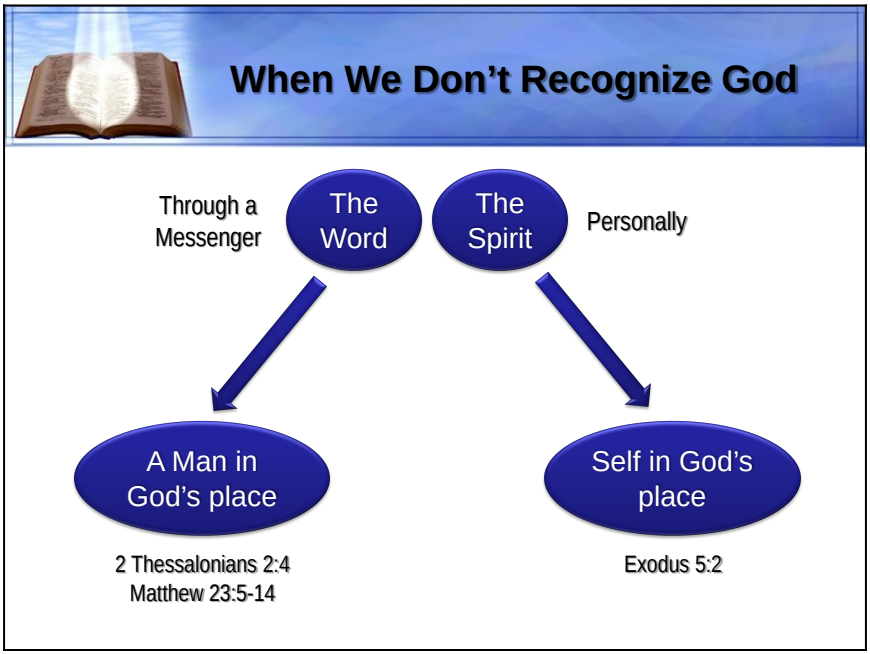
2 Thessalonians 2

[4] Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Jesus also says something about this type of person.

Matthew 23

[5] But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.
[6] They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,
[7] Greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, Rabbi, Rabbi.
[8] But you, do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.
[9] Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.
[10] And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.
[11] But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.
[12] And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.
[13] But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.



[14] Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

This happens when man puts himself in the place of God. We will not hear God's voice. We will not have the right idea about how things should be. If we do not want to hear the Spirit of God when He wants to personally speak to us, then we make ourselves God. Self is put in the place of God. A good example of this is Pharaoh. He said,

Exodus 5
[2] Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.

He did not believe that God was speaking to him. He would do everything himself. This is the attitude of many people today.

Man in God's Place

These are the two types of problems:

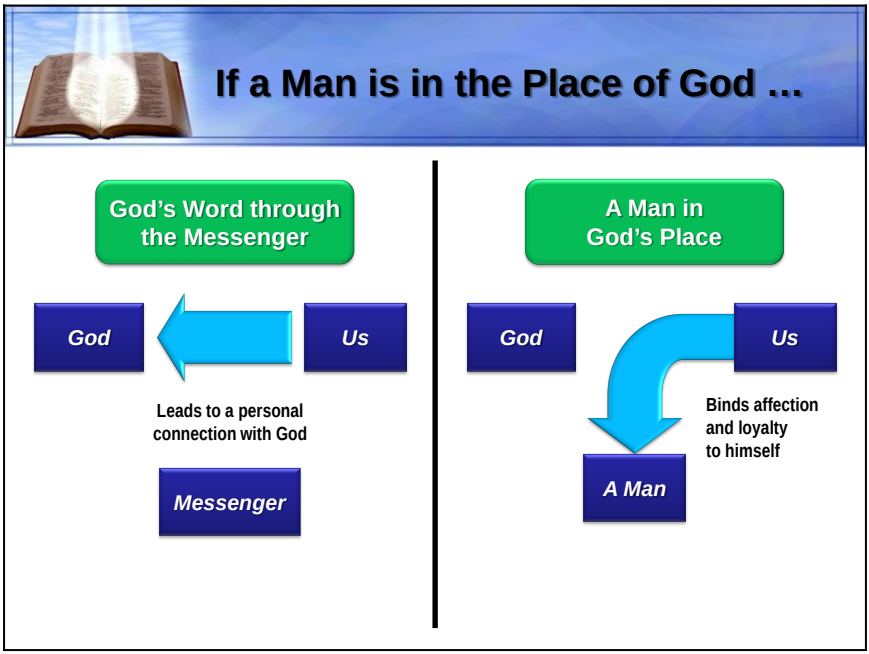
1. Someone is put in the place of God, or
2. We put ourselves in the place of God.

What will happen when man is in the place of God? Again, the Word comes through the messenger. On our diagram[118] we have God, the messenger, and us. What is the relationship of these three? We and God must be brought together. And the messenger is the instrument to make this happen. He leads us to a personal connection with God.

What happens when man is in the place of God? We have God, a man, and us. But this person does not lead us to a personal connection with God. Instead, he wants the affections and loyalty of the people for himself. He binds the people to himself. He wants to make them dependent upon himself. They always have to come to him in order to receive something. This is what it means when

[118] See next page.

man is in God's place. Another way of saying this is that people become dependent upon man.



Dependence on One Man

We want to look at some examples in daily life to show how people have this tendency in them to become dependent upon man.

First we will look at the economy. In the economy we know that there are the so-called "killer products." In computers it is called a killer application. This is a product that is produced in such huge quantities that no one needs any other products but this one. Sometimes the marketing name becomes the common name we use to refer to these products. For example, if I pull a tissue out of my pocket, we call it a Kleenex. Kleenex is a brand name, not a tissue. There is also a vacuum cleaner called Hoover. In England, if you want to know where the vacuum cleaner is, you ask,

"Where's the Hoover?"

People like being dependent upon a particular product. They like to come back to the same man in order to buy the same product again and again. That is the aim. This is why monopolies happen. They want people to always come to them only, not to others. This is why cartels are developed. A few companies will unite and try to capture the market. This is what happens in economics.

This also happens in agriculture. Hybrid seeds are developed, offering certain advantages. But those plants will produce seeds next year which will not bear any fruit. That means if I want to grow that plant again next year, I have to go to the person who has the seeds. I can't obtain my own seeds through the plants I grow. I could buy other seeds that would produce usable seeds, but that requires more effort on my part. It is easier to just buy more seeds from the dealer, and there are only a few dealers to choose from.

It is even worse when the seeds are genetically altered. They can only be made in a laboratory. The plants that grow from these produce useless seeds, and you are tied to the scientists to obtain more seeds next year. Also, the scientists patent these seeds so no one else is allowed to develop them. Thus, the success of every farmer's business is completely dependent upon a few people. That is the way things are in this world. The tendency is to become dependent upon one person or one group of people or companies.

The same is true in politics. A dictator, for example, becomes the problem solver for everything. The people are constantly dependent upon this leadership figure.

Information becomes monopolized. In order to obtain information, we must go to one source. In the case of newspapers, this becomes one newspaper publisher. It is often just a few people who determine what information is published.

Generally, power is monopolized. When someone has the power, everything is dependent upon him.

When we look at society, we can see a continual striving to become dependent upon man. It is simpler and easier to live this way.

Religion is no different from economics, agriculture, and politics. In *Genesis* 10 we read of Nimrod.

Genesis 10

[8] Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth.
[9] He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said,
Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.
[10] And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad,
and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

The German translation says in verse 8:

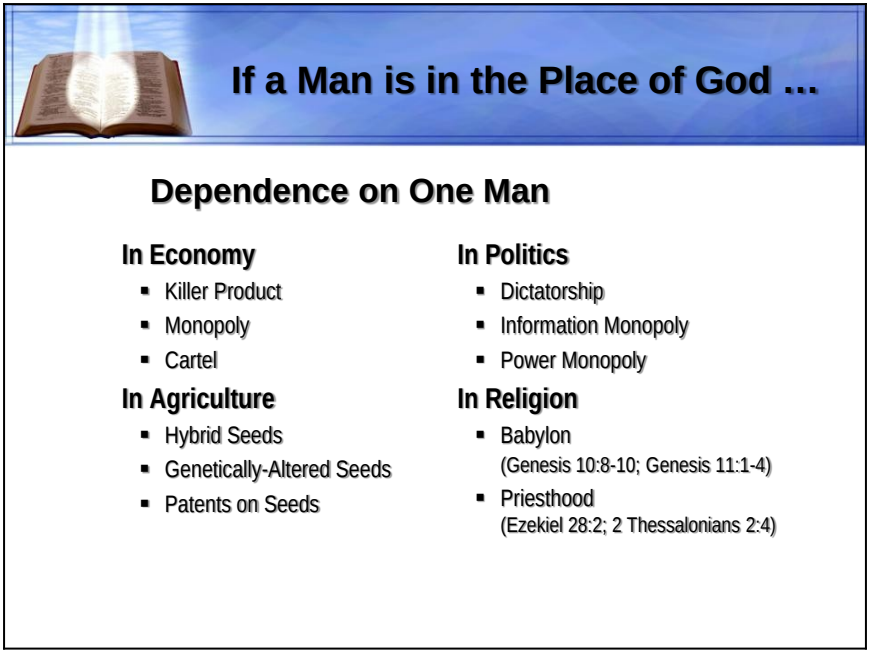
> "He was the first to gain power on the earth."

This man was the first to gain power, or a monopoly. People became dependent upon him. He was the first dictator. He was the first upon whom others were dependent. The first city he founded was Babel, and what did the people of that city do?

Genesis 11

[1] Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.
[2] And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they
found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.
[3] Then they said to one another, Come, let us make bricks and
bake them thoroughly. They had brick for stone, and they had
asphalt for mortar.
[4] And they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower
whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves,
lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.

They were expressing their belief that they needed to be dependent upon one person in order to prevent their being scattered. They felt they needed to stick together. That's why they built a tower and a city. A city and a tower are symbols of dependence upon one person.



This same tendency reveals itself in the priesthood. Earlier, the heathen had a priesthood in which each individual was dependent upon a priest for everything. The people had to go to the priest again and again in order to receive something. This is described in:

Ezekiel 28

[2] Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre [he acted like a priest], Thus says the Lord God: Because your heart is lifted up, and you say, I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, in the midst of the seas, Yet you are a man, and not a god, though you set your heart as the heart of a god.

This is an example of a person in the place of God.

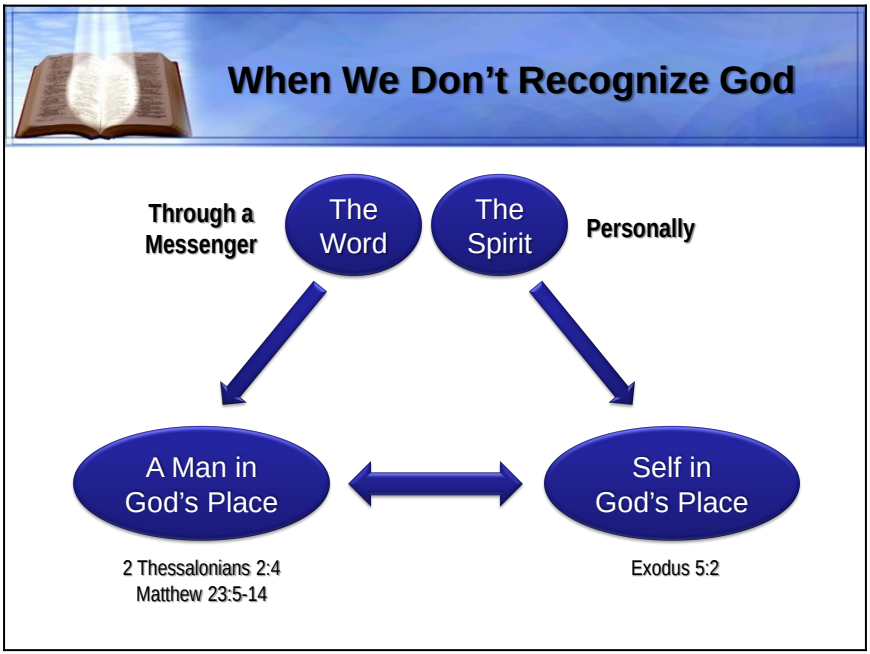
2 Thessalonians 2

[4] …who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

This is the problem when man puts himself in the place of God. He makes others dependent upon himself. The worst place this can happen is in religion.

When we look at this diagram again, on the one side man is in the place of God. On the other side self is in the place of God. In both cases man is in God's place. In one case I am dependent upon another person. In the other case, I am dependent upon myself and independent from God.

When a person sees his dependence upon another person, it displeases him after a while. He doesn't want to be dependent upon another. So he tries to free himself. And the way he accomplishes this is to be independent. He puts himself in the place the other person used to make him dependent.



In the reverse case, what does a person do when he sees he is failing and cannot depend upon himself? Instead of going to God, he seeks another person to be his problem solver. This is not the true solution. The solution is really to return to God who speaks

to us and gives us His solutions through His messengers and His Spirit.

The Character of God's Messenger

Now we want to consider the character of a messenger. We see again in the diagram: God, us, and the messenger. The task of the messenger is to lead us to a personal connection with God. To do that, he needs a certain character.

As an example we want to look at John the Baptist. There was an incident where John's disciples became jealous of Christ. Why? Let's read it.

John 3
[22] After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.
[23] Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.
[24] For John had not yet been thrown into prison.
[25] Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.
[26] And they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!

Everyone was flocking to Jesus. John's disciples didn't think he should allow that. That was plain jealousy. If you would have told them that they were jealous, they would have denied it. They would have said that the issue was an issue of ceremony; that is, how to carry out baptism. But that was only a surface issue. In reality, they were jealous that Jesus was more successful than they were. And John could have been jealous too, but he was not. He had the character of a true messenger. Let's read a little further:

John 3
[27] John answered and said, A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

So he was saying,

"Don't worry. God has done all of this, not Jesus."

John 3

[28] You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but, I have been sent before Him.

"I am only the messenger."

[29] He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

In other words,

"I see how His work is growing, and it makes me glad!"

Not only was John not jealous, but he rejoiced that Christ's work was increasing more than his own. That is the character of God's messenger. He also said,

[30] He must increase, but I must decrease.

If we don't have this character, then we won't lead people to God. If a messenger does not have this character, he won't lead people to God but rather to himself.

[30] He must increase, but I must decrease.

Then John said a little more about Jesus.

[31] He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.
[32] And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.
[33] He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.
[34] For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.
[35] The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

John said this about Jesus.

John 3

[36] He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

Later Jesus said almost the exact same thing, which shows how much in harmony the two of them were. They were both messengers of God. This attitude of John's showed that he did not draw the people to himself but rather to God. This shows that God can use only those who are truly humble.

Psalm 25

[9] The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way.

First comes humility. Then comes God's guidance. He who is led by God is willing to learn.



John 7

[16] Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not mine, but His who sent me.

[17] If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on my own authority.

In other words, he who really wants to know, will know. He who wants to hear the voice of God will hear it. And the messenger must hear it first. The messenger will have an inquiring spirit.

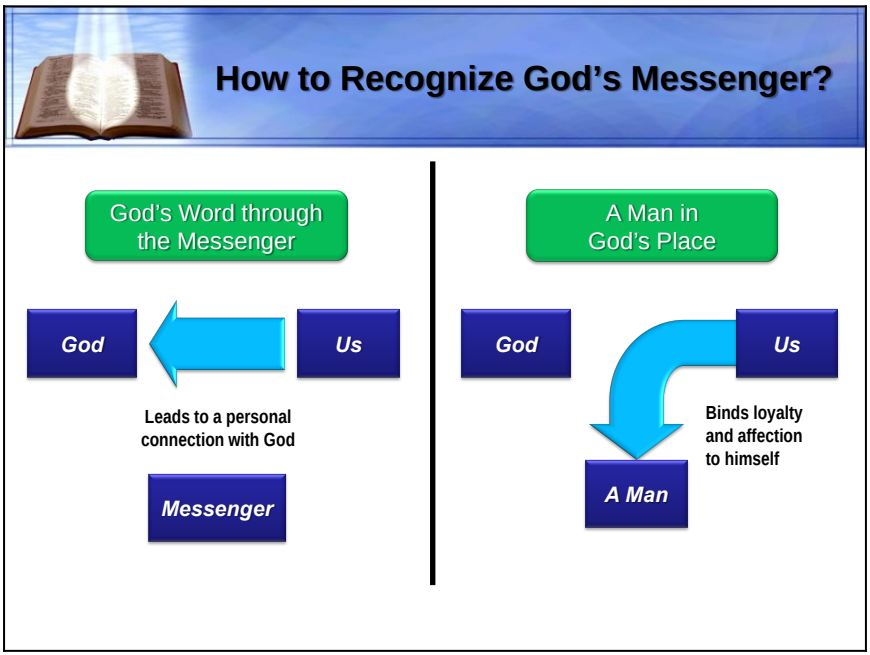
James 1

[5] If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

If you don't ask, you won't receive. In summary then, this is the character the messenger of God will have. Now we would like to consider a couple of more things together.

How to Recognize God's Messenger

God's messenger does not attract attention to himself, but rather connects the people with God. He who puts himself in the place of God, might claim to speak in God's name, but will always bind



the loyalty and affection of others to himself. This is the difference in character between the two. We would like to summarize this in a list.

God's Messenger	A Man in the Place of God
Humble and teachable	Proud and self-confident
Leads others to a personal connection with God	Wants to make others dependent upon him
Is happy if we have a closer connection with God than he does	Is jealous if he no longer has all the attention
Steps back when his task is done	Fearfully clings to his power and position
Speaks the Word of God	Speaks his own words
Imparts Faith	Sows seeds of doubt
Leads people to God	Separates people from God

Here we have a list of characteristics which shows whether someone is a messenger of God or not. This should help us.

Spiritual Hearing

But this alone is not sufficient to enable us to hear God's voice. Why do we not hear the bat even though it is one of the loudest animals? It is not because we don't know what kind of tone it makes. Perhaps we could even duplicate the tone ourselves. But I don't think so. Why? We don't have the ability. We need a certain spiritual ability in order to recognize the voice of God.

Matthew 5
[8] Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

That is the promise which Jesus gave us.

> "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall hear God's voice."

That means that they are humble. God leads the humble, as we read in:

Psalm 25
[9] The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

They are willing to learn.

Isaiah 50
[4] The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens my ear to hear as the learned.

The learned are willing to learn. They are ready to hear God's voice.

John 7
[17] If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

Whoever wants to, will recognize whether or not the teaching is from God.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will hear."

Only like can understand and appreciate like. In order to recognize God's voice, we need the character of a true messenger, which is the character of Christ. We need the character of a messenger, and Christ was a messenger. Jesus said,

Matthew 5
[48] Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

And when we have the character of Christ, we will hear God's voice whether it comes through a messenger or through His Spirit personally. And just as the bat needs to hear the echo of its own voice in order to survive, so must we hear God's voice in order to be secure and survive. That is my wish for everyone. Amen.

13. How God Speaks With Us—3

Can We Understand God?
Sabbath, May 10, 2008

Need for Translation

GOOD morning and welcome to our study today.

[Bonolo]: (comes up to the front and says something in an African language)

What's that?

[Bonolo]: (repeats)

I don't understand her. Can someone translate? (To Bonolo) Say it again. Maybe I just didn't hear it.

[Bonolo]: (repeats)

Pardon me?

[Bonolo]: (keeps talking)

Excuse me, can someone translate here? Can someone translate? I'm sorry, I don't understand you.

[Gilda]: (says something in Spanish)

I'm sorry? Again, please.

[Gilda]: (starts talking again)

Can someone translate? Say it again.

[Gilda]: (repeats)

I'm sure one of you can translate that, can't you? Tobi, can you help us? Thank you.

[Tobi]: A very good morning to all. Welcome to the Lord's house on this beautiful morning.

Thank you. It's a good thing we have you, Tobi!



Attempts to Communicate with the Universe

Here we have a picture of various antennas. There are very many of them on earth. These antennas are all aimed at space. People are trying to capture signals from space, because they suspect that there could be intelligent life outside of our world. This has been going on for a long time now. They listen and listen, hoping to one day find that those intelligent beings are trying to connect and talk with us. But nothing has been heard yet. That is, there have been signals; but we don't know for sure whether they came from aliens or not.

Of course, people want to know whether they exist and what they look like. There are various ideas about that. Some imagine they look one way; others imagine it a little differently.

Another important question is, what do they want when they connect with us—when they send out their signals? Do they just want to tell us that they exist? Or do they want to take advantage of us? Are the resources on their planet getting scarce, too? Do

they want to come here and take our last resources, when we hardly have any left ourselves? Or do they want to make slaves of us, just like we did with other nations? Who knows? What do they want? We have to find out. That's why we have to listen.

People also ask, "What do they think?" Some people imagine that aliens have very big heads with lots of intelligence. What are they thinking? Can we perhaps profit from their thinking? Could it be possible for us to get the solution to our problems on this earth from those intelligent beings?

What can they do? Can they help us? If they really have good intentions, perhaps they can help us, because we have real problems in this world. We see that our resources are getting scarce, the climate is changing, the population keeps increasing and oil is running out. Maybe they can help us. Maybe they have the solution to help us survive!

But, do they even want to do that? Are they friend or foe? That is why people listen into space. Friend or foe? That is the crucial question.

An Unbridgeable Gap?

Our current topic is, *How does God speak with us?* The third part, which we will look at today is,

> "Can we understand God?"

This is a very important question. Can we understand God? Does He speak in such a manner that we can understand Him? Is there an unbridgeable gap between God and us because we simply can't understand Him? The Bible says,

> **Isaiah 55**
> [8] For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
> [9] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

These verses sound quite discouraging at first. How can we understand God's thoughts if His thoughts are so much higher than our thoughts, and His ways so much higher than our ways? Many years ago in the Babylonian empire, there were very wise people there who could explain virtually anything. They observed the stars and were well versed in mathematics and many natural sciences. Once, they were faced with a problem that even they could not solve. They said to their king,

> **Daniel 2**
> [11] It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.

That is to say,

> "There are intelligent beings that could solve our problem. But they don't live with us, so that won't help us any. That is why there is no one who could solve the king's problem for him."

That is a very depressing disclosure these wise men had to make. The king was so angry because of it that he wanted to kill them.

How can this gap be bridged? We have here a picture of Niagara Falls. If you stand on one side of the falls and try to figure out how to get to the other side, you realize it is impossible. Even if you tried to build a bridge, where would you anchor it? How can I get to the other side? It is a gulf that seems to separate us from the other side forever. Can this gulf be bridged? Is it even possible?



First of all, why is it even that important to understand God's language? Of course, we want to understand what He thinks

about us. We also want to understand what His intentions in regard to us are. Are they good intentions or not? It would be good to know. In reality, we will see later that to know Him means to love Him, and to speak with Him means to receive His life.

Conditions for Communication

Now we want to speak fundamentally about communication. What do you need in order to be able to talk to somebody? We saw this in the beginning of our study. We were just barely able to talk to Gilda, but we could not talk to Bonolo at all.

What do we need in order to be able to speak to someone? We can see this in our diagram. It is a picture of someone who is whispering something into another person's ear. For communication, we need an ear, a mouth, and a tongue. We hear with the ear, we understand with the ear, and we speak with the tongue.



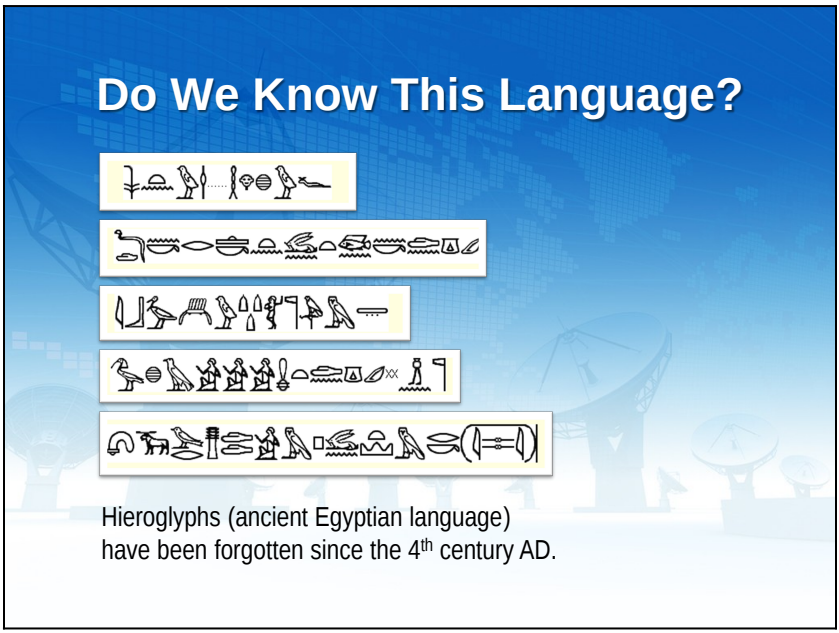
The first thing is that we have to understand what the other person is saying. We have to understand the same language. Since

no one here understood Bonolo's language, we couldn't understand her. Fortunately, Bonolo knows English and some German. In this way we can still converse with her. But there are people in her country who don't know these other languages. They only know the one language. If these people came here, they could not speak with anybody. That would be a real problem.

We have to speak the same language. That is crucial. The first thing is that we understand the same language, and the second is that we speak it. The same thing also applies when we speak with God. In order for us to be able to speak with Him, we have to understand and speak the same language. Without that, we wouldn't be able to communicate.

Hieroglyphs

We will now change subjects. In our next diagram, we have pictures of a language. How many of us can read it? Not even a single person? I can't read it, either. If it were Hebrew, Greek, Latin or German, I could read it. But I can't read this.



It comes from Egypt. It is the ancient Egyptian language in written form. This language is no longer spoken today. It has been lost for a very long time. The characters in which this language was written are called hieroglyphs. The word "hieroglyph" means roughly "holy writing hewn in stone." The Egyptians called it the divine writing because they believed that God had given them these characters by which they could communicate to one another.

These hieroglyphs ceased to be used soon after Christ, and in the 4th century AD, the knowledge of their meaning was lost. No one was interested in them anymore. The characters themselves still existed on rocks, on papyrus parchments, and so on, but no one cared about them because the language wasn't spoken anymore. No one was interested, and soon there was no one on earth who could speak the language or read the writing.

During the later Middle Ages, when the scientists came from East Rome to West Rome, a Renaissance took place in West Rome. This was a revival of the knowledge of the ancient world. People were once again interested in the Greek language and the philosophy of the Greeks, etc. They suddenly got curious and wanted to know everything. They were interested in many things. They saw that there were so many hieroglyphs in Egypt, and they also wanted to understand those. They took pains to decipher them using all the means at their disposal, but they couldn't. The language was lost. The knowledge of these characters was gone.

Even today, a certain number of languages are lost each year. No one can speak or understand them anymore. An estimated total of 6,500 languages are spoken on this earth, many of which are lost every year. Hieroglyphics was one such language. They tried during the time of the Renaissance to interpret them, but always came up with wrong results. But today we can read the characters again. How do you think that came about? Why can some scientists understand these characters today?

The Rosetta Stone

When Napoleon came to Egypt, he saw all the pyramids there, as well as the tombs of the pharaohs, and was interested. He had an archaeologist with him named Bouchard. Bouchard found a stone near Rosetta. This stone was called the Rosetta Stone. He discovered it in 1799 and began at once to study it with interest. This stone is something special. It contains the key to understanding the hieroglyphs. On one side, there are hieroglyphs, on the other Greek, and also a third language. It is the same text in three different languages. The Greek seems to be the original, and the ancient Egyptian was a translation of what was written in Greek. This was made during a time when hieroglyphics were still understood. Someone chiseled it into stone.

Greek was understood during Napoleon's time, and Bouchard was an educated archaeologist. He understood it, and he also understood the significance of this stone. But the French lost the stone, because the English won the war, and finally it landed in a museum in England. Since then, scientists have been occupied with this Rosetta Stone because it was the key to understanding the hieroglyphs.

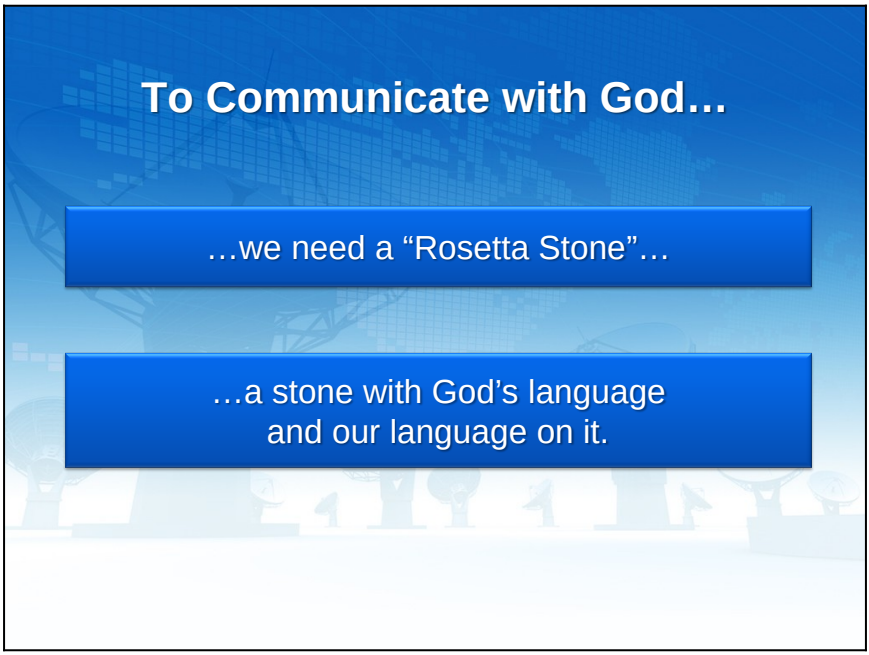
Christ is the Stone

Let us come back now. What do we need in order to communicate with God? We need a Rosetta Stone. We need a stone upon which God's language and our language are readable, so that we understand it. That's what is necessary. That is the key so that we can talk with God. Is there such a stone? There must be. There has to be, so that there can be communication between God and man—so that we understand His intentions and His thoughts.

This Stone exists, and it is Christ. It is a Stone that was rejected by many. If a random person, who did not understand its significance, had discovered the Rosetta Stone—someone who didn't know what hieroglyphics were or that people were actually trying to understand them—he would have said,

> "What would I need that for?"

–and dumped it into the ocean. Then it would have been gone. But Bourchard understood its significance and kept it. That is fortunate for us today, because now we understand the hieroglyphs through it. There were many documents in ancient Egypt which were not valued, and which were actually lost.



This Stone is Christ. Peter writes about it.

1 Peter 2
[1] Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,
[2] As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,
[3] If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.
[4] Coming to Him as to a living stone, [the stone, like the Rosetta Stone] rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,
[5] You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[6] Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.
[7] Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,
[8] And a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

In a later speech Peter says more about this Stone. This took place after a sick man was healed, when he was asked,

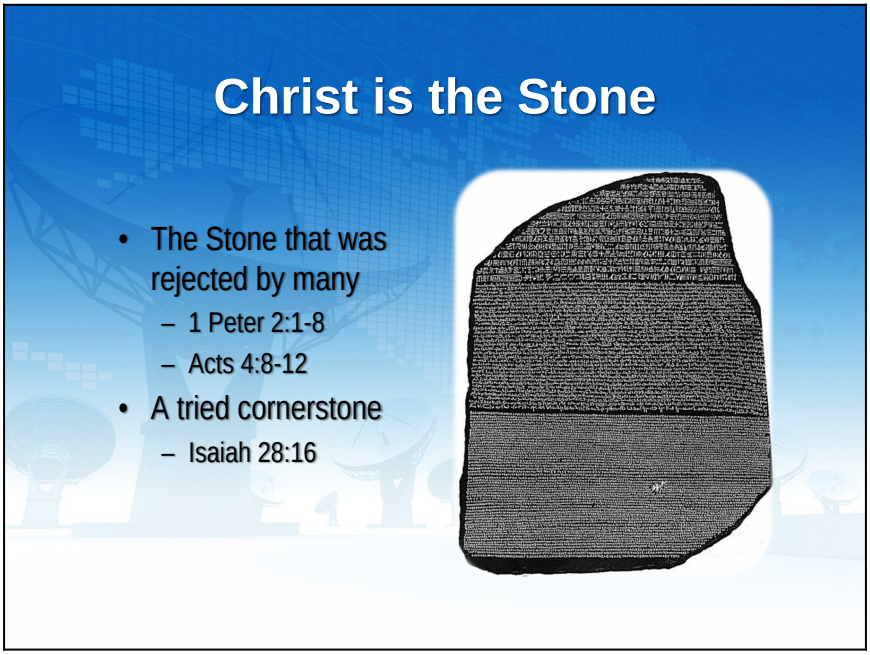
Acts 4
[7] By what authority or power have you done this?
[8] Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:
[9] If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,
[10] Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.
[11] This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.
[12] Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

That is the stone. A tried and tested cornerstone, as it also says in the Old Testament,

Isaiah 28
[16] Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.

This Stone is Christ, through whom we hear God speaking to us. Why is that the stone through which we hear the language of God? This Stone has two languages written on it; on one side we find God's language, and on the other we find the language of

man. We see God's language on Him because He is the image of God.



Hebrews 1

[1] God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
[2] Has in these last days spoken to us [God speaks to us] by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;
[3] Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

He is the "image of His person." On Him the language of God is engraved. But we also find our language on this Stone. We read this in:

Hebrews 2

[11] For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,
[12] Saying: I will declare your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.
[13] And again: I will put my trust in Him. And again: Here am I and the children whom God has given me.
[14] Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,
[15] And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.
[16] For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.
[17] Therefore, in all things [in everything!] He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
[18] For in that He himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

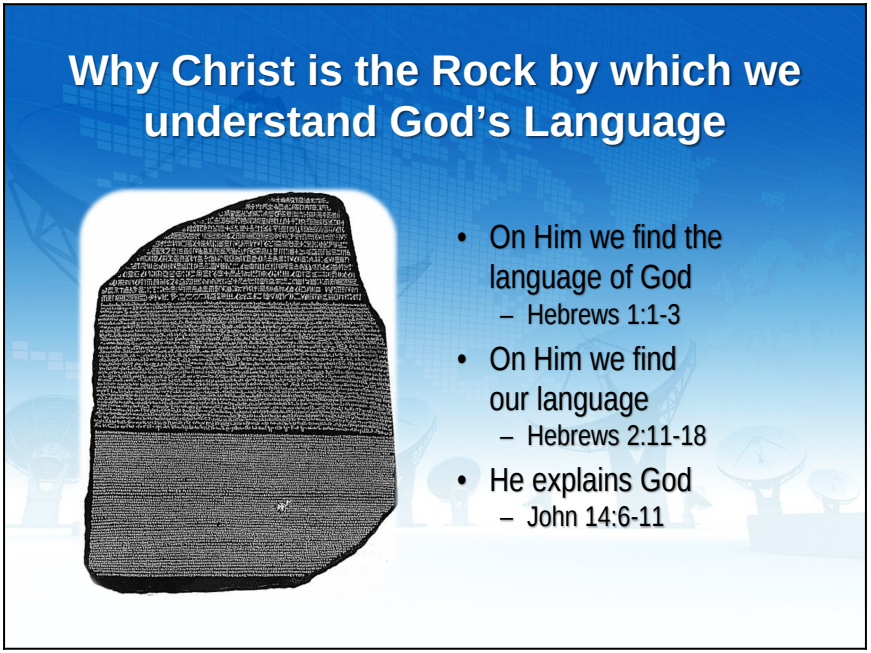
Both languages—God's language and our language—are on this Stone. That is the key through which we can understand God. Christ explains God. He said this himself, in the following words:

John 14

[6] Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
[7] If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.
[8] Philip said to Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.
[9] Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, Show us the Father?

[10] Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does the works.
[11] Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me. Believe me that this is the translation of the hieroglyphs. Believe me, and then you will be able to understand it. Then you will have the key.



The Church Built on Christ

But many did not want to believe. Because of that, they could not hear God. Even Philip, of whom it is talking here, had difficulties. He said,

"Show us the Father."

We want that. I've got my antenna out. I want to hear something. And Jesus said,

"Here. This is the key."

That means that even if God spoke to us, we would not understand it unless we had the corresponding key. That is why Christ is the Stone upon which the Church builds. That is the foundation, the rock, because He is the one who connects us with God. Jesus once asked His disciples a very interesting question:

Matthew 16
[13] When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?

Jesus described himself as the Son of Man. With that, He described His descent from humans, and showed that our language is chiseled into Him. He asked, "What do the people say?"

[14] So they said, Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.
[15] He said to them, But who do you say that I am?
[16] Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

What was Peter saying by this? He was saying,

"You are the Rosetta Stone. You are the one on which God's writing is written, but You are also the Son of Man. Through You we understand God."

[16] ...You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
[17] Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.
[18] And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

"On this rock, on this Rosetta Stone, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Hades is Greek. The god Hades was god of the realm of the dead. The gates of Hades was another way of saying,

> "Death cannot overcome you."

Death is really the most powerful thing there is. No one can escape it. The most certain thing in life is death. Everyone has to die at some point. But Jesus says,

> "Whoever is founded on this rock cannot be overcome by the gates of Hades. Death cannot overcome him."

Shortly thereafter, Jesus spoke of His own death. He told the disciples that He would be betrayed and then die. That was the first time that He spoke of His own death, which the disciples did not really want to acknowledge. This statement that the gates of Hades would not prevail against them was to encourage the disciples. It was to give them faith that death would not be able to hold Jesus. And it couldn't hold Jesus. Why not? Because He has a connection with God, and God is the giver of all life. That is the key.

To show very clearly once more that Christ is this Rock, or this Foundation, we want to read some verses. They are all from *1 Corinthians*.

> **1 Corinthians 3**
> [11] For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

There is no other rock on which the church could build, which the gates of Hades cannot overcome.

Peter, of course, is also called a rock. Some people supposed that because Peter is called a rock, Jesus means to build the church on Peter. But that is wrong, simply because Peter was not a rock that could be built upon. Paul confirms this when he writes:

1 Corinthians 1

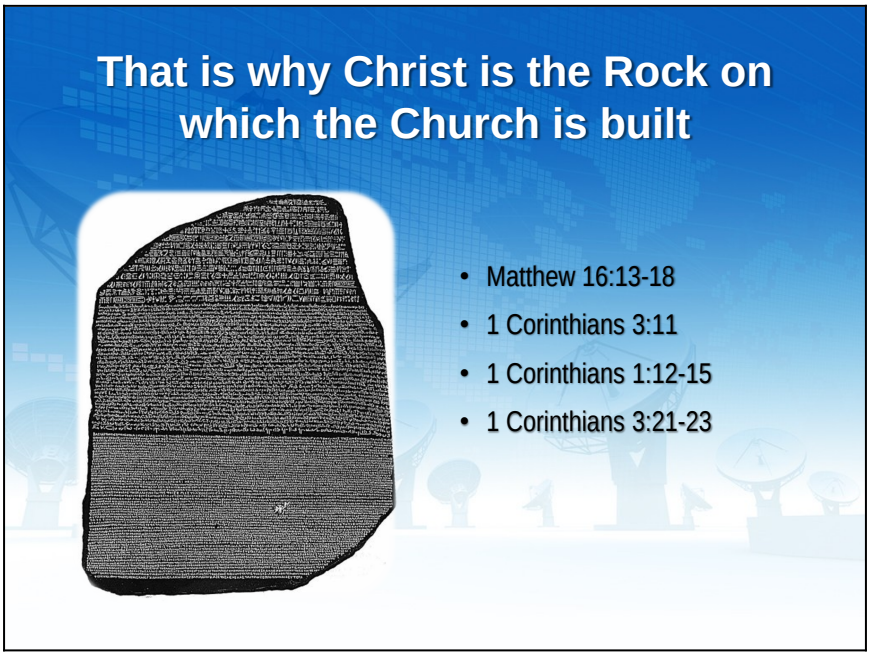
[12] Now I say this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas,...

Cephas is the Hebrew word for *rock*, and that is also the name that Jesus gave to Peter.

[12] ...or I am of Christ.

So the one wanted to build on Paul, the other on Cephas, the other on Apollos.

[13] Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?
[14] I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,
[15] Lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.



In other words,

"Forget people. They are not the Rosetta Stone. You cannot build on them. There is only one Stone, and that is Christ."

This is further confirmed in:

1 Corinthians 3
[21] Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours:
[22] Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours.
[23] And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

That is the Rock on which we should build.

The Importance of Understanding God's Language

Once again: why is it so important to understand God's language? Why is it so important to have this Rosetta Stone? It is so we understand what God thinks about us, so we understand His intentions in regard to us. When we understand that, we will love God, because to know God means to love Him.

To speak with Him means to receive His life. The disciple John expressed this very nicely:

1 John 1
[1] That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—
[2] The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—
[3] That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
[4] And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

"Look, we have experienced it. We have touched it; we have spoken. We have fellowship."

That is a privilege that God wants to give to every one of us. My desire is that we will be able to understand these things and that what God wants to tell us will no longer be unknown hieroglyphics, but that we can read it openly in nature and in His Word. Amen.

Why is it important to speak God's language?



- We understand what He thinks about us
- We understand what His intentions are with us
- **To know Him is to love Him**
- **To speak with Him means to receive His life** (1 John 1:1-4)

14. How God Speaks With Us—4

The Treasure in a Very Ordinary Vessel
Sabbath, May 17, 2008

WE WANT to look again at the topic of how God speaks with us. The subtitle is, "The Treasure in a Very Ordinary Vessel." I would like to repeat what we have considered in the last few studies.

The Ways That God Speaks to Us

God speaks to us in two ways:

1. Through a messenger.
2. Through His Spirit.

An important aspect of God's communication is that these two ways are not alternatives. He doesn't use either one or the other. Rather, the two complement each other. He always uses them together.

A messenger can be nature. It can also be a prophet, as we know from the Bible. Or it can simply be a messenger.[119] I would like to read one text in *Hebrews* concerning this.

> **Hebrews 1**
> [1] God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
> [2] Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.

This tells us that God speaks through messengers. When He speaks through His Spirit, He speaks to us personally, not through a messenger. In this way He speaks to our hearts. He often speaks through a still, small voice, for which we have to listen well. Again, these two ways are not alternatives to each other. It would be *incorrect* to say that:

[119] A human teacher.

"God only speaks to me personally and doesn't use a messenger in my case."

I also *cannot* say that:

"God speaks to me only through a messenger, and I have never heard Him speak to me personally."

God always uses the two ways together. It is important for us to see that the two ways complement each other. What God says to me through His messenger, He also says to my heart through His Spirit. And, what He says to my heart will be confirmed through a messenger that God will use to speak to me.

We also call the Word of God the messenger, for it was written by messengers whom God used to speak with us. We sometimes call the Spirit the conscience through which God speaks to us.



The Rosetta Stone

In our last study we saw that God's messenger is like the Rosetta stone. I would like to repeat this briefly. A long time ago there was a language which we now call ancient Egyptian. It fell into disuse and was forgotten. Understanding of the written language was also lost. Today we call the written form hieroglyphics. During the Renaissance, attempts were made to understand this language because there were many stones with hieroglyphics chiseled into them. People wanted to understand this ancient culture, but no one had the key.

In 1799 a Frenchman found the Rosetta stone, which has hieroglyphics, as well Greek, chiseled on it. The parallel texts on the stone made it possible to understand hieroglyphics. This created an interest in understanding hieroglyphics, and more and more people learned this ancient language.

The same is true of the messenger of God. On him is written two languages, which enables us to communicate with God. Otherwise, God's language would be like hieroglyphics to us. We wouldn't be able to understand it. On the messenger we find God's language. I would like to go back to *Hebrews:*

> **Hebrews 1**
> [1] God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
> [2] Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;
> [3] Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

God has spoken to us in these last days through His Son. He is this stone. He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. That means that the language of God is chiseled in Him, the Stone. But our language is also there, so that we can understand the language of God.



We can read this in *Hebrews* 2.

Hebrews 2

[11] For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

[12] Saying: I will declare your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.

[14] Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.

[16] For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.

[17] Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

[18] For in that He himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

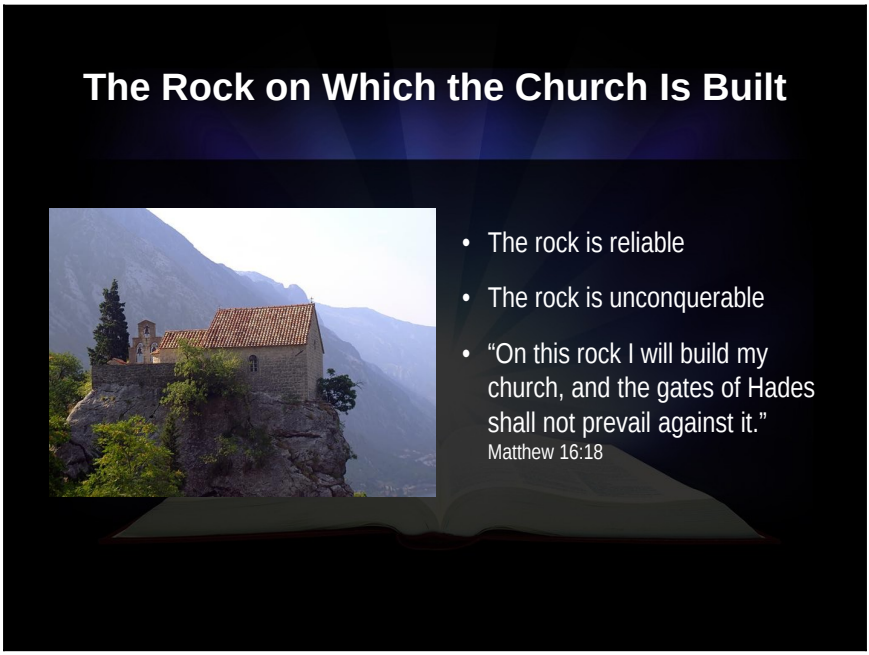
This means that we find our language written on Him. This is why Jesus is the Rosetta stone which explains God. If we study Christ as the linguists studied the Rosetta stone, we will understand God and be able to hear His voice speaking to us.

The Rock of the Church

This Stone is the Rock on which the Church is built. This rock is reliable. It is also unconquerable. Jesus said,

> **Matthew 16**
> [18] On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

That is the stone.

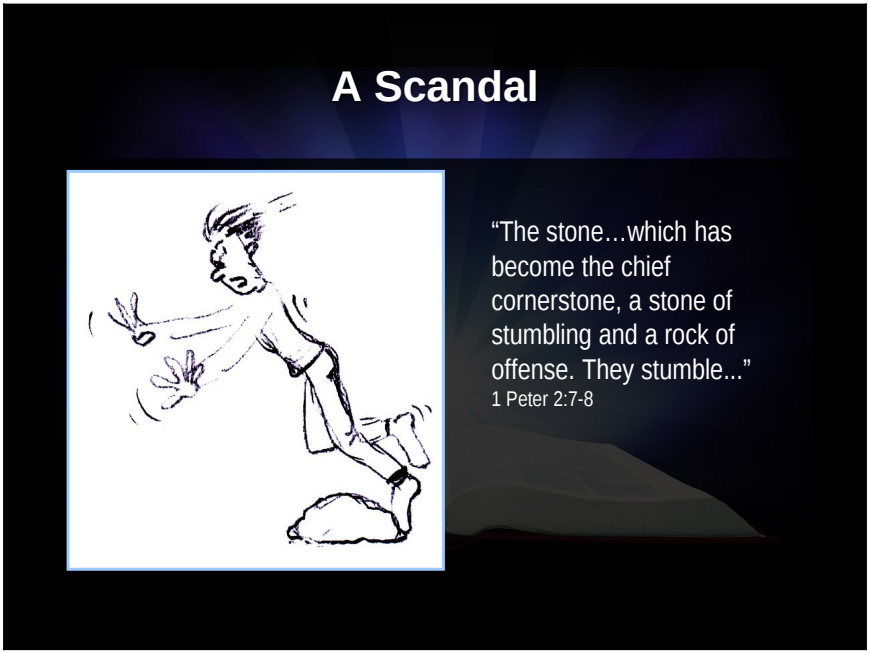


A Stone of Stumbling

However, this stone is also a stone of stumbling. It is a scandal. It is the cause of people falling. In this study we want to begin considering the question,

"Why is this stone—the messenger through which God speaks to us—a scandal? Why is it a stone of stumbling by which so many fall?"

1 Peter 2
[7] The stone…which has become the chief cornerstone,
[8] A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble…



The Greek word for stone of stumbling is *scandalon*. What do we expect from the messenger? In ancient times messengers were portrayed as strong, good looking, and well proportioned. They always looked ideal. In our diagram,[120] we have a picture of the goddess Athena who, along with the god Nika, always stood by the side of the victorious soldiers. When you look at these figures, you think,

"Now *they* are messengers! We want *them*. They are strong. They'll give us the victory."

[120] Diagram on the next page.

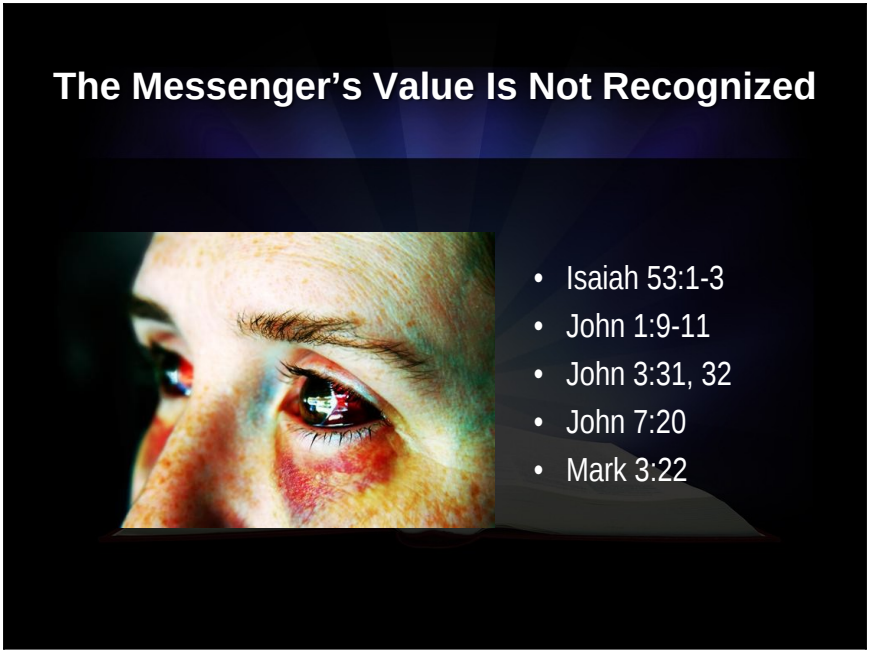


Is that what we expect from messengers? If we have the option of choosing a nicely wrapped gift, or a package wrapped in plain, dirty paper, then we choose the nicely wrapped package. However, the messenger's value is not recognized because he looks completely different.

The person in our next picture does not look so good. Let's read:

Isaiah 53

[1] Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
[2] For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.
[3] He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.



This picture is an illustration of this. Would we want such a messenger? Or would we prefer the image of the gods as the Romans and the Greeks did? The messenger God gives us is like a not-so-nicely wrapped package. It doesn't look so good. Would we choose that one? Indeed, this messenger was rejected. In *John* chapter 1 it says this:

> **John 1**
> [9] That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.
> [10] He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.
> [11] He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

The Hidden Treasure

The world did not recognize Him. They didn't see the value in Him.

John 3

[31] He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.

[32] And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.

Here is the messenger of God, and no one accepts His witness! How can we hear the voice of God when we don't accept the witness of His messenger?



I would like to read two examples of the treatment Christ received.

John 7

[20] The people answered and said, You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?

The people told Christ that He was possessed of a devil. They said this of God's messenger. The same is said in:

Mark 3

[22] And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, He has Beelzebub, and, By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.

The word *Beelzebub* means the same as Satan or devil. This is how they judged the messenger of God when He came to this world. It was because He was not so good looking or attractive. He was a Man of sorrows. He was despised. The worth of the messenger is hidden. It is not seen.

Colossians 2

[2] ...Christ,

[3] In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The image of a clay pot in our next diagram doesn't look like much. It is not particularly attractive. It has cracks. It's made of clay, etc. We want to consider this in the light of an example from the New Testament.

There was a woman who came to a well in Samaria while Jesus was also there. Jesus was thirsty and asked for a drink of water. The woman was surprised at this request because she was a Samaritan, and it was obvious from Jesus' clothing and speech that He was a Jew. Normally the Jews and the Samaritans did not speak with each other, especially not a Jewish man with a Samaritan woman. Such an interchange was unheard of. But Jesus not only spoke with her, He even asked her for a favor!

When we ask a favor of someone, we put ourselves beneath him in a certain sense. We recognize the fact that he has something that we do not, and we ask him for it. We show by doing this that we see the other person as standing over us in a certain sense. The woman hardly knew what to do when Jesus behaved towards her in this way. She said,

> "You, a Jew, ask a favor of me, a Samaritan woman?! You're asking me for something to drink?"

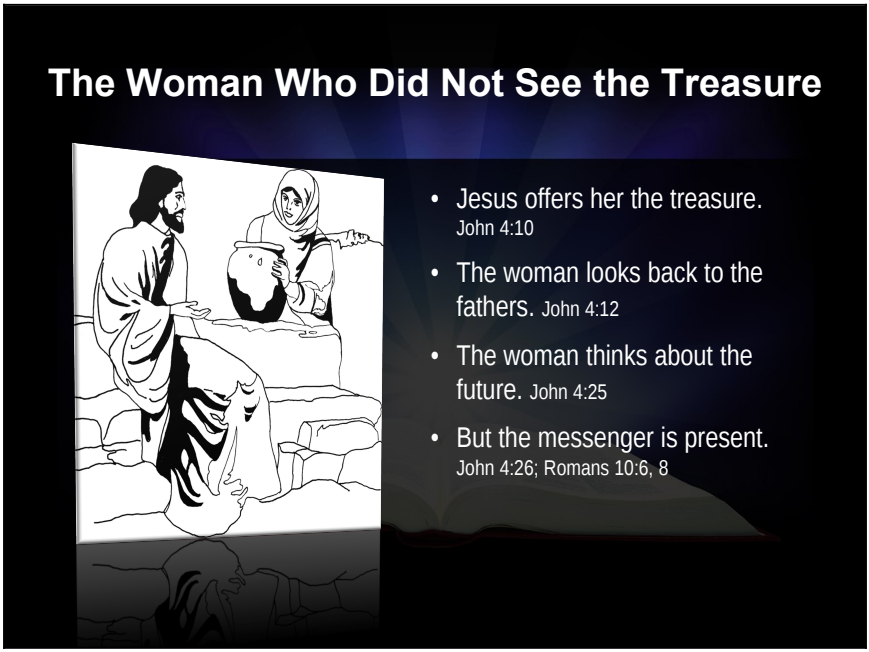
Jesus replied,

"If you had asked me, I would have given you living water."

The woman found this a strange situation to be in. Let's read what Jesus said.

John 4
[10] If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you,
Give me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have
given you living water.

Here was the messenger of God. God wanted to speak with this woman through His messenger. But the woman saw in Him only a common, Jewish man. On the one hand she was completely taken back by this experience, but just the same, to her He was just another man.



After this the woman said,

John 4
[11] Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.
Where then do You get that living water?

[12] Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well,
and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?

This woman was a nationalist. She was proud of her people. Jacob was her father—as well as being the father of the Jews. She considered this well to be holy because it had been dug by Jacob many years before. That made it something special.

"Are you greater than our father Jacob?"

She was looking back into the past, to the glory of her people and to the fathers. But she also looked forward into the future.

John 4
[25] I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ).

This woman had the first five books of Moses as her Bible, where it says that the Lord would raise up a prophet like unto Moses. Thus, this woman was looking for the Messiah to come just as the Jews were.

"I know that Messiah is coming," she said.

She knew it and was sure. She looked back to Jacob. She looked forward into the future. But she didn't see that the messenger was right there with her.

Sometimes we look back into the past and think,

"Wow! That was a great time!"

Or we look into the future and say,

"Those are going to be some great times!"

But we don't understand that the messenger of God is among us right now. So Jesus answered her and said,

John 4
[26] I who speak to you am He.

"Here I am." In *Romans* 10 Paul says the same thing.

Romans 10

[6] But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above)

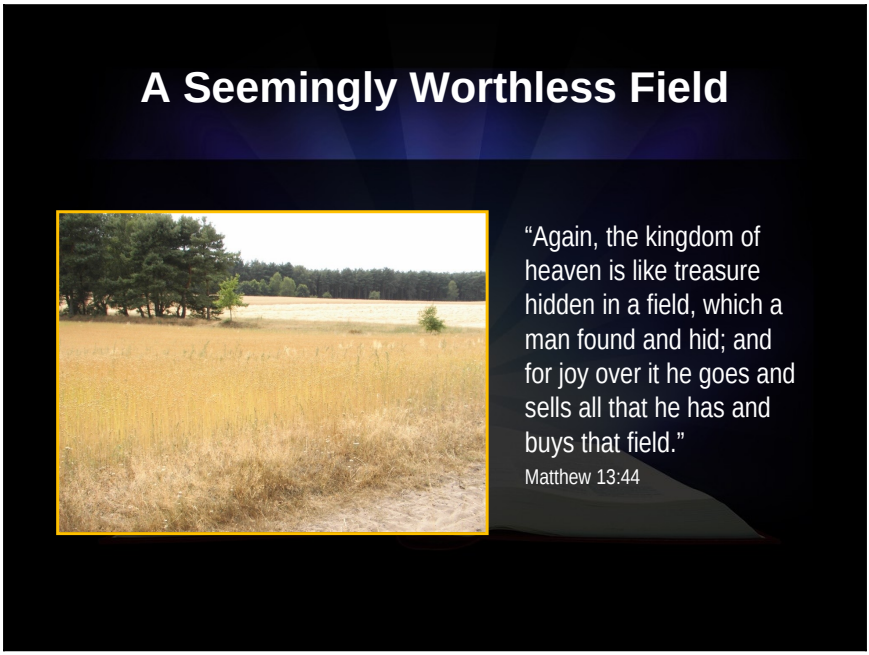
[7] Or, Who will descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

[8] But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach.

We prefer to have a complicated solution to the problem of speaking with God and how He does it. No! He is near! He is right here! Jesus expressed this once in a parable. This parable only appears in one verse.

Matthew 13

[44] Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.



Here we have a man who was a day worker in a field that didn't belong to him. As he was digging, he found treasure. He

saw that the value of this treasure was far greater than the value of the field. So he covered it back up, and joyfully went out to sell all that he had in order to obtain enough money to buy the field. The owner of the field would have said,

> "You give me more than this field is worth. You'll never get your money back. This field is worthless."

The owner didn't see the treasure in the field. And he who saw the treasure sold everything he had in order to obtain the field for the sake of the treasure. If you know what is inside a package, it doesn't matter what the wrapping looks like. You choose it for the treasure inside, not for the way it looks outside.

The Treasure Revealed

Not only that, the man sold everything he had. That means that he was really searching. God too wants us to search for His messenger, even if it doesn't look attractive. The treasure will be revealed to him who searches for it.

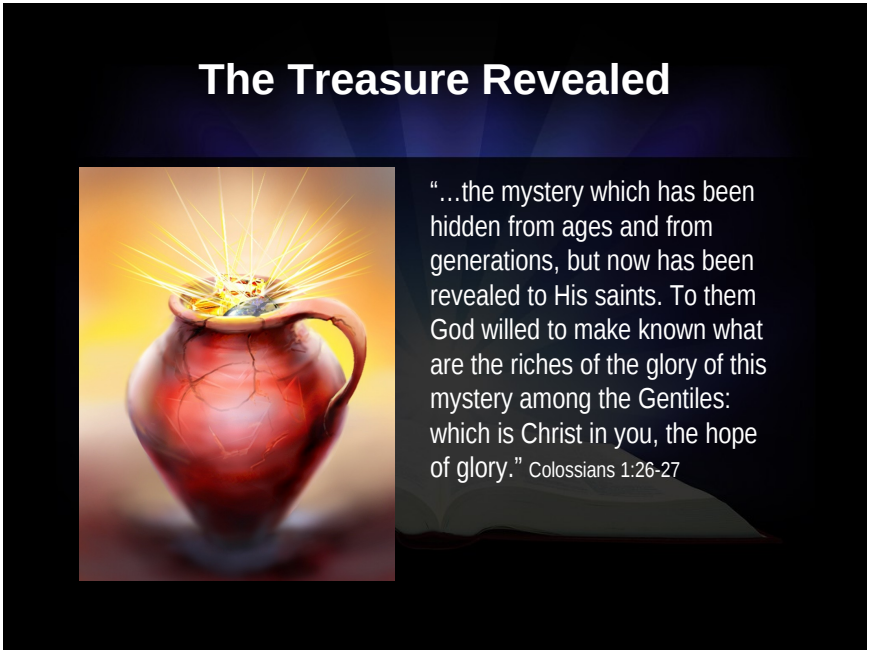
> **Colossians 1**
> [26] ...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.
> [27] To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

God wants to reveal His treasure in an earthen vessel.

> **2 Corinthians 4** [NLT]
> [6] For God, who said, Let there be light in the darkness, has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.
> [7] We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure.

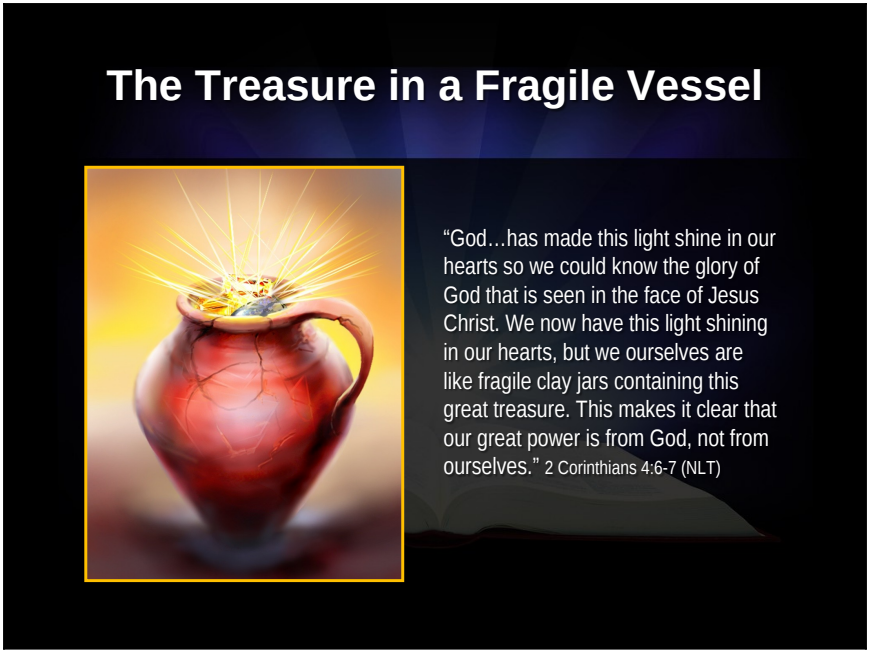
This modern translation says "fragile clay jars." Other translations say unadorned, frail, brittle, or ordinary. The picture in our diagram portrays fragility. That means that the vessel God uses as a messenger through which He wants to speak with us, cannot be

expected to be good-looking or attractive. The Greeks and Romans erred when they portrayed messengers in such an ideal way. The messenger of God came in a different way. He came with our weaknesses, in our fragile body. And today God speaks to us through messengers who are very fragile.



Can we hear God speaking to us? We can hear Him speaking to us when we are ready, when we don't look at outward appearances. In the world everything is in a pretty package. The nicer the packaging, the more worthless the contents often are. If someone wants to sell something of little value, he only has to wrap it up in something nice.

God doesn't work this way. He doesn't work with pretty packaging and worthless contents. He works with valuable contents—a treasure. He makes the packaging such that He can come close to us. Our language is written upon this stone. That means fragility, for such is our language. In this way Christ comes near to us.



Next time we want to continue studying the reasons why the stone is a scandal. But with these thoughts I would like to close for today.

15. How God Speaks With Us—5

Only One Key
Sabbath, May 31, 2008

I ASSUME you all came into this meeting room through the same door today. But does anyone know how many doors we have in this building through which we could go out? Five? One? Six? Four? Actually, there are nine doors we could go out through. Here on the right, straight ahead, to the left, over the ramp, via the garage, then through the garage downstairs. There are also two downstairs at the staircase, and one more over there. There are nine doors altogether. Technically shouldn't I have nine keys? But I only have one—one single key. It fits everywhere. That's practical. If I had nine keys, I would have a huge key ring.

We want to study about this today. Our topic is, "Only one key." The guiding text for our study says,

> **Acts 4**
> [12] Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Only one key. No other name by which we must be saved. Later, we will come back to this verse in context—where it was said, under what circumstances, etc.

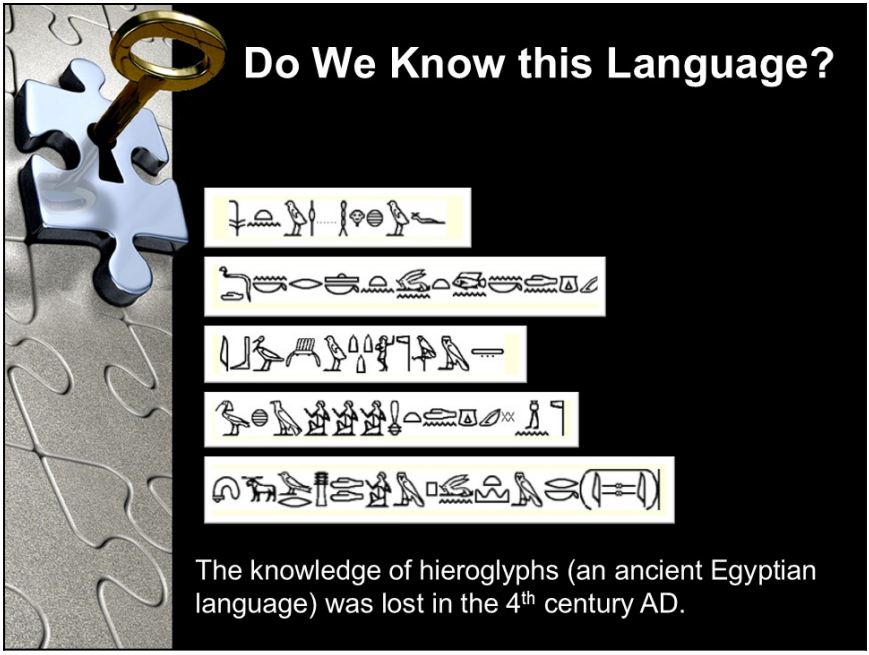
The Rosetta Stone

First, we will have a little review. Do we know the language pictured on our diagram?[121] It is ancient Egyptian, otherwise known as hieroglyphics. By the 4th century AD, this language had been forgotten and no one spoke it. When people began researching it a few hundred years later, they weren't able to read it. Scientists tried, but were unsuccessful until the Rosetta stone was found. This stone is like God's messenger.

How does God speak to us? He speaks through His messenger. That is God's messenger. Upon this stone they found a text both

[121] See diagram on the next page.

in Greek and in hieroglyphics. Greek was understood very well, and people could read the writing; but they could not read hieroglyphics. However, the Rosetta stone held a one to one translation. In this way, they were able to match the languages up precisely. Generations of scientists devoted themselves to decoding it, and they were able to do it by using the Rosetta stone, which can still be found in a museum in London today.



Spiritually speaking, this stone is Christ. On Him we find God's language, as we read:

Hebrews 1

[1] God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
[2] Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;
[3] Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power,

when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

He is the express image of His person, the brightness of His glory. He carries God's language on Him. It is carved into Him. If we want to understand this language, we need a translation. We have it in that same stone—Christ. On Him we also find our language, as we read:

Hebrews 2
[11] For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,
[12] Saying: I will declare your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.' And again: 'I will put my trust in Him.
[13] And again: Here am I and the children whom God has given me.
[14] Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,
[15] And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.
[16] For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.
[17] Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
[18] For in that He himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Christ became like His brethren in all things. For this reason, He also carries our language in Him. It is carved into Him. He is a stone upon which we find both languages—God's language and the language we speak. Now we can occupy ourselves with this Stone in order to understand God's language, to understand what He wants to tell us. That is our task now—to understand what

God wants to tell us. The Rosetta stone [Christ] is the key to it. Jesus explains God. One of His disciples once asked Him to reveal God. But Jesus said to him,

> "I've been with you for so long, and you don't know me, Phillip?"[122]



Stumbling Over the Stone

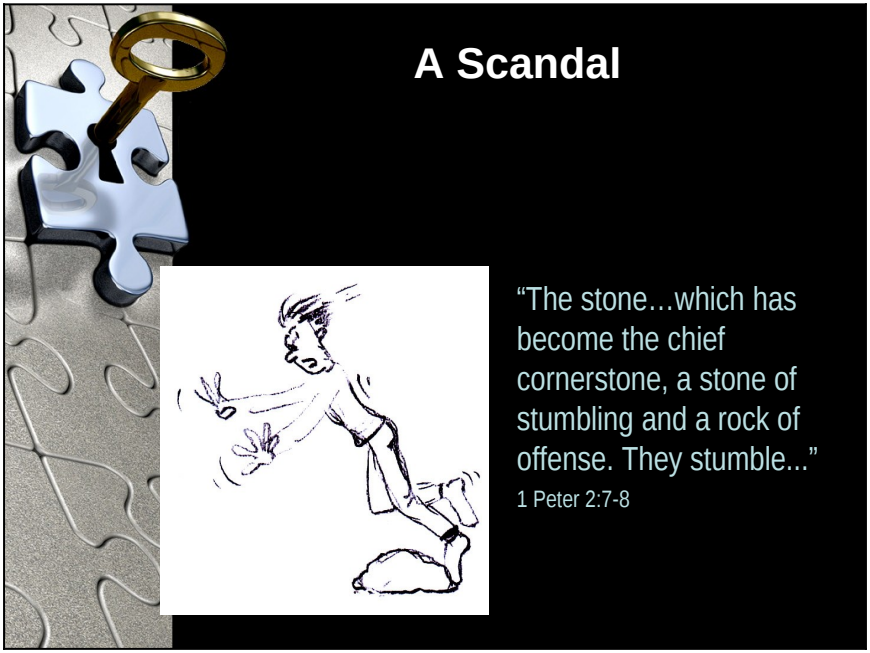
We need this Rosetta stone. But it is also a scandal—a stone of stumbling which people easily trip over. Why?

> **1 Peter 2**
> [7] The stone…which has become the chief cornerstone,
> [8] A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble [over it].

In our last study, we saw that the reason He is a stumbling stone is that He did not come the way people expected. He comes

[122] See *John* 14:9.

in an earthen vessel. There is a treasure there; but on the outside, he bears our nature. He looks no different than us. That is why He is not valued. That is why the great gift God gives us in this vessel is not recognized, and He becomes a stumbling stone.



We now want to look at another reason why Christ is a stumbling stone even though He explains God's language to us. For that, we will come back to the verse in *Acts* 4:12. The people who were questioning this fact—the fact that Jesus was the only One through which we can be saved—were religious people. They even professed to have a special connection with God. It was those very people who thought it a scandal that everything goes only through Christ, of all people. Let us read this in its context.

Acts 4

[12] Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

[13] Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.
[14] And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

Here we find Peter and John before the Sanhedrin. They had to give an answer as to why they healed a crippled man who was begging at the temple. They had said,

> "In the name of Jesus, get up."[123]

Now they had to answer for it. They were asked,

> "With what authority and in whose name did you do that?"[124]

The disciples replied,

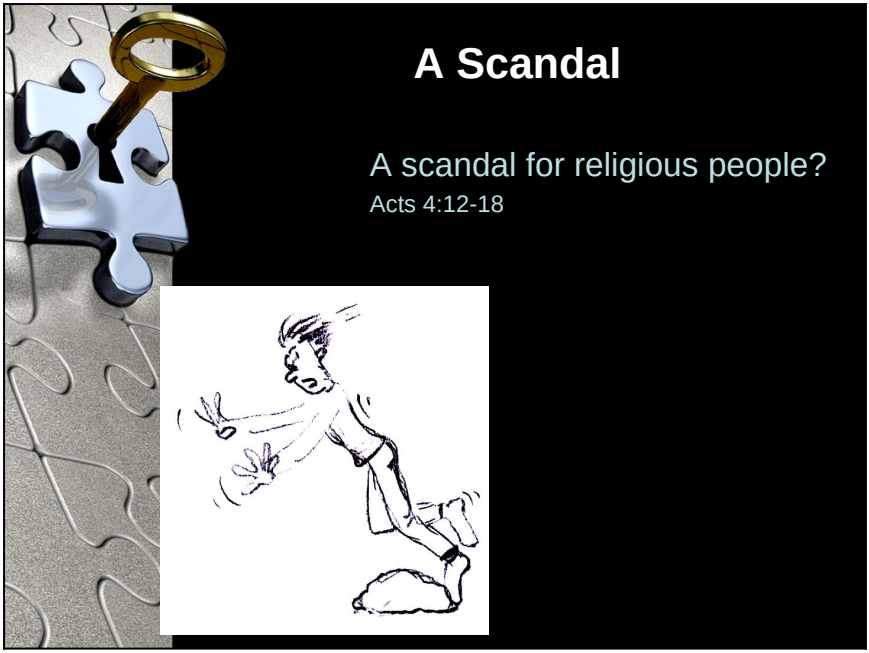
> "There is no other name through which we are healed except Christ."[125]

When the Sanhedrin noticed that they were not afraid, they wondered what to do with them.

Acts 4
[14] And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.
[15] But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,
[16] Saying, What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.
[17] But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.
[18] So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

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[123] *Acts* 3:6.
[124] *Acts* 4:7.
[125] *Acts* 4:12.



That was a real stumbling stone for them. It was a stumbling stone that of all people, we are healed only through Jesus. Wasn't it really their task to evaluate that? They were the religious leaders, after all. Now others suddenly come on the scene and say,

> "No; it's someone else."

That would be like someone coming and saying,

> "Your key doesn't fit this door anymore. There's another key now."

I would say,

> "No way."

It was incredible for them that someone else was really supposed to be the only key to God. They couldn't cope with it. Therefore it was a stumbling stone, a scandal. The disciples, on the other hand, were convinced of the fact that Jesus was the only key to God. They saw nothing but Jesus alone.

Jesus Only

An interesting incident occurred when they were on a mountain with Jesus one time. First, they were tired and went to sleep. They were awakened by a great light. The light was so bright that they fell to the ground. When they got back up again, they saw only Jesus—no one but Jesus alone.[126]

> **Matthew 17**
> [8] And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save *Jesus only.*

That was the case throughout their entire lives. Whenever any thoughts came up, they saw only Jesus. Whenever they were confronted by anything—whether sickness, problems, persecution, even joy and peace—they always only saw Jesus. Jesus was everything. They spoke about Jesus so much that they were even named after Him. They were called "Christians."[127] Christ is another word for Jesus. Jesus was His name as a Man, but He was the Christ.[128] Since they were always talking about Him, since they continuously kept Him in mind, they were called Christians. They saw nothing but Jesus alone.

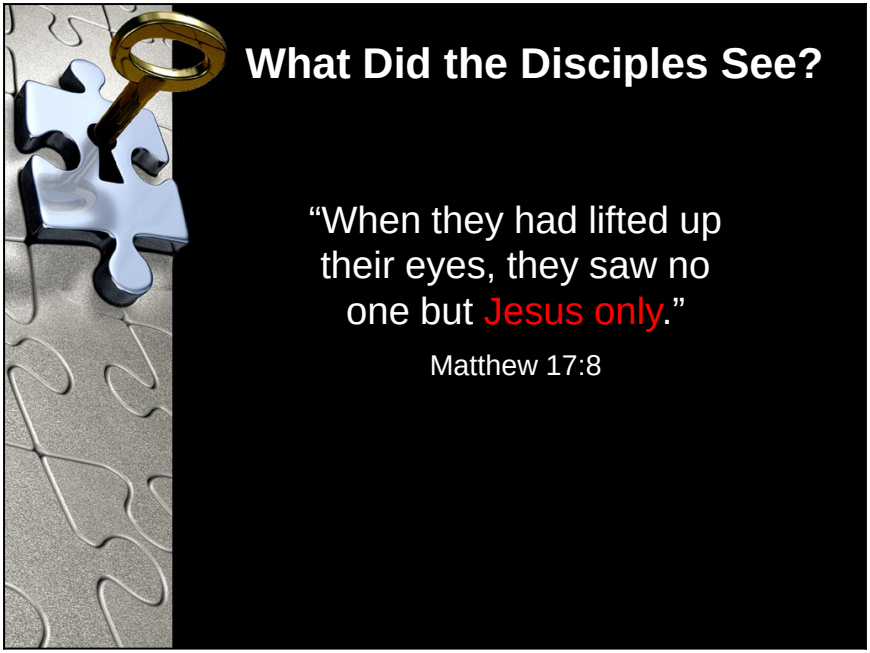
He is the only key to God. This they also wrote down in the New Testament. Let us read some of these texts, the first of which is in John. John writes that He was the Father's only Son.

> **John 1**
> [13] Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
> [14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

> "We have seen Him, the glory of the only begotten of the Father."

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[126] *Matthew* 17:1-8.
[127] *Acts* 11:26.
[128] Christ is from *Christos*, a Greek translation of the Hebrew word, *Masiah*, which means the Messiah, or anointed one. It is not so much a name, as a title.



What emphasis is placed on this fact! Then it says that He is the only one who brings us near to God.

John 1
[18] No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

He is the only Rosetta stone. We have no other. He is the only key to understanding God's language. This fact is expressed again by Jesus himself, who is quoted by the disciple John.

John 3
[16] For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

He gave His only begotten Son. He did not have many sons that He could have given, only One. This one Son is the point of decision; everything depends on Him, as Jesus himself says two verses later.

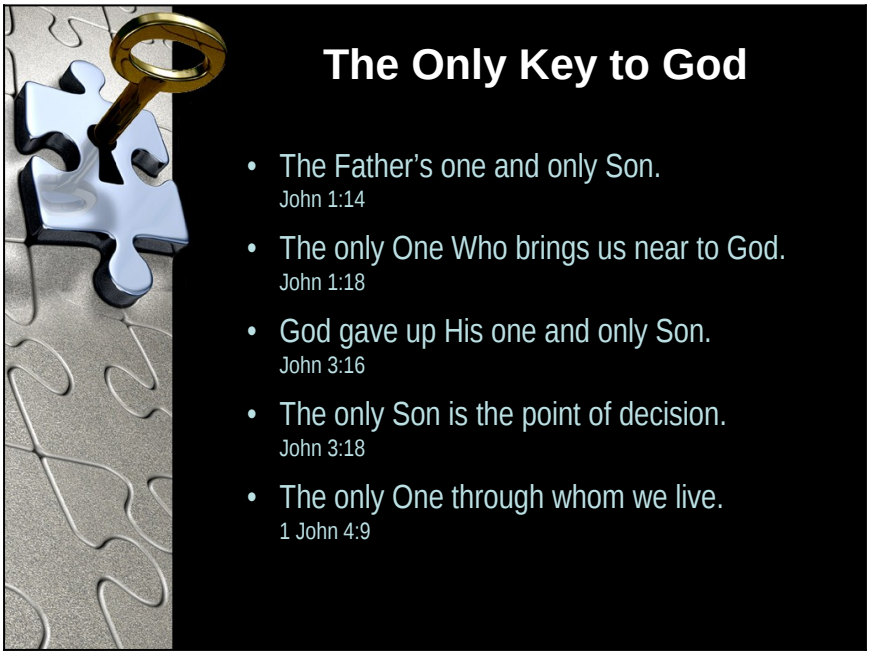
John 3

[18] He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

That is like trying to get through a locked door with a key other than the one belonging to it. It doesn't work. He is the only Son. John later wrote,

1 John 4

[9] In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.



How often this thought is emphasized! The one and only Son. He is the only key. God always works this way, with a single key. It is a pattern according to which God works. We see this in *Ephesians*, where some other things are mentioned about how God works.

Ephesians 4

[4] ...*one* body and *one* Spirit, just as you were called in *one* hope of your calling;
[5] *One* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism;
[6] *One* God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

The word "one" is emphasized again and again. One single body. The body which Paul is speaking of is the Church. God works through one body, one Church. He works through one Spirit, not through many spirits. Through one hope, not through many hopes. Through one Lord, not though many lords. Through one faith, through one baptism, and through one God and Father. That is God's method of working. He always uses one key.



For example, it would be very inconvenient if I had to have one key to every door. I would always have to find the right key every time I needed to go through a door. Perhaps I could color-code them, but even that wouldn't help me in the dark. It would be

very complicated. It's really very practical that there is one key to all the doors. This is how God works.

This way is an offense. It is a stumbling stone. Why? Because we want to have a choice. It's like saying,

> "I would like to try out another way, too. Always going this one way and using this one key is getting boring. It restricts me. I'd like to try out other keys, too."

And when God says,

> "No; there is only one key,"

–it is a stumbling stone for me—an offense. That's the problem with us human beings.

ONE FATHER AND MOTHER – ONE MARRIAGE PARTNER

Let us look at some object lessons. The first is from human nature. How many natural fathers do we have? One. How many natural mothers? One. One father and one mother.



Exodus 20

[12] Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

God created it this way, and He gave our parents a special position in our lives so that we would honor them in a special way. That honor belongs to no one else.

Ephesians 6

[1] Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.
[2] Honor your father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)
[3] That it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth.

A further object lesson is monogamy. That means to only have one marriage partner. That is how God made marriage in the beginning.

Genesis 2

[21] And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.
[22] Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.
[23] And Adam said: This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.
[24] Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

This text clearly expresses that one man received one wife, and not many wives. Lamech was the first one to take two wives, as it is described in the Bible. That means God's thought was for one woman to have one husband, and one man to have one wife. Jesus confirms this:

Matthew 19

[5] For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.



This is further confirmed in the New Testament:

Titus 1
[6] If a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

Here Paul is describing, as in the letter to Timothy, how important it is for a bishop, a deacon, or an elder to only have one wife.

[6] ...the husband of one wife...

You may say,

> "But there were people in the Old Testament who had more than one wife, too. Wasn't Abraham one of them? How about Jacob, and David, and Solomon?"

That is true. But every law that God gave in the Old Testament discouraged this polygamy. And in the New Testament, Jesus said,

"It was because of the hardness of your hearts that God allowed it, but it was not that way originally."[129]

God wanted to give only one man to one woman, and one woman to one man. Once again, that clearly shows that there is only one way, one single key.

ONE TREE OF LIFE

Let's consider another object lesson. In the Old Testament, we read about how sin came up in the beginning. At first, God gave man a garden, and in this garden a tree of life. We read,

Genesis 2
9 And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God provided one tree of life. He provided many trees, but one tree was the tree of life. From this tree they could take and receive life. But someone came along and said,

"That's not how it is!"

Let's read this.

Genesis 3
1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?
2 And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;
3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.
4 Then the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die.
5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

[129] *Matthew* 19:8.



The serpent was saying,

> "You will not die if you eat of it. Instead, you will be like God, who is immortal. Here is the tree of life. Come! I will give you another key. You don't need this one single tree. I have another one."

Would I get in the door if I chose another key? I wouldn't. And Adam and Eve didn't get to life by choosing another tree, either. That is the sad story of our fall—the choosing of another key.

ONE ALTAR

Yet another example is that of a prophet in the Old Testament. We can read about it in *1 Kings* 13. There was a king of the northern tribes who was quite apostate. He began to create his own worship services against the rules which God specified. He did it the way he wanted to, mingling in the heathen ways of worship. He erected an altar and tried to win over the Levites to participate, but they didn't want to. So he elevated a few others to priestly

status, and they were supposed to do it. Then God sent a prophet to rebuke him. The prophet said,

> "If you continue like this, you ought to know that it is not in accordance with God, and this altar will split apart."[130]

The king became so furious about this prophet's speech that he stretched out his hand and said,

> "Seize him!"

The moment he stretched out his hand, though, it shriveled up. He couldn't move it anymore.[131] Afterward, he got very sick. In his despair, he called to the prophet and said,

> "Please pray to God for me, so I am healed."

The altar split in two as well. The king's hand got better and everything was okay again. The king then said to the prophet,

> "Come stay with me. Everything's fine again, and I'm glad that you said something to me. Stay with me for a little while."

But the prophet said,

> "No, I have strict orders from God not to stop anywhere, and not to eat or drink anything. Even if you gave me half of your house, I wouldn't stay with you. I have to go back."

So he went back by another way, because God's command was still ringing in his ears:

> "Eat nothing, drink nothing. Go straight back and don't delay anywhere."

On the way, he was overtaken by another, older man, who invited him home. But the prophet replied,

> "No. God told me I have to go."

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[130] *1 Kings* 13:3.
[131] *1 Kings* 13:4.

"I'm a prophet too!" said the old man. "And God told me you should come with me and eat something at my house."

"No," was the reply again, "I have to go."

But the old prophet insisted until the prophet finally agreed. At the house, during the meal, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly came over the false prophet, who gave the invitation. We read,

1 Kings 13

[21] And he cried out to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, Thus says the Lord: Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord, and have not kept the commandment which the Lord your God commanded you,

[22] But you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which the Lord said to you, Eat no bread and drink no water, your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.

That was a prediction. After he had eaten, the prophet started on his journey again. A short time later, a lion came and killed him. He shouldn't have stayed; it only did him harm. God foresaw what would happen and tried to help him. We might ask,

"Why did God allow it?"

That was a very powerful message for the king of the northern tribes. It showed him that we cannot afford to choose another key. We have to keep to the one key that God gives us. If we try to use another key, we won't get in. But not only that; we will lose our lives. This story was a very clear lesson to the king, as it should also be to us.

ONE GOSPEL

"But," we may say, "the other man said he was a prophet."

What should we do when someone comes to us and says,

"I am a prophet. What I am telling you is from God"?

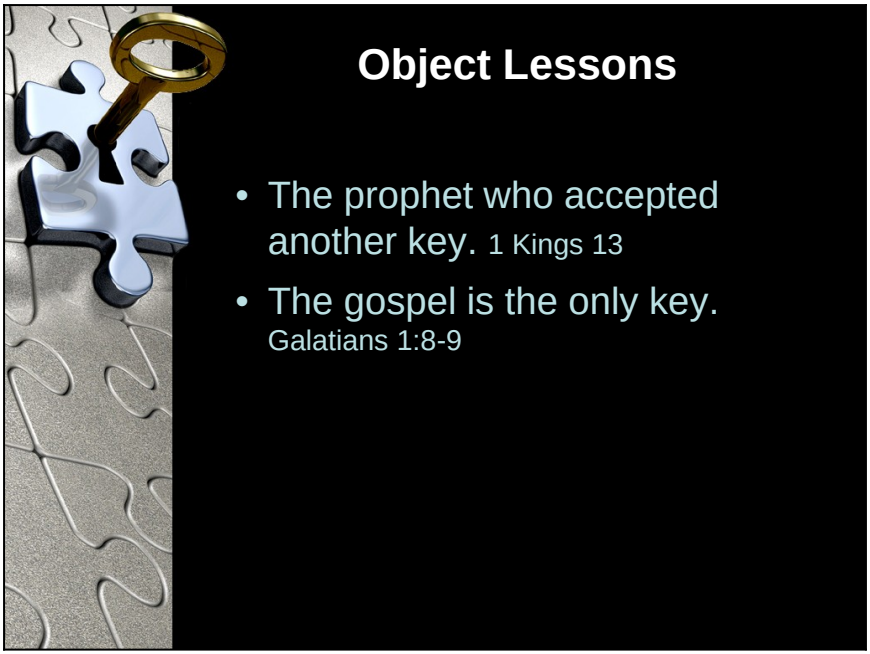
Paul gives advice about this in *Galatians*. The entire letter of *Galatians* is highly interesting. During Paul's time, there were

some people who clung to the old things from the Old Testament. Paul wanted to show them,

> "All of that no longer exists, because Christ is here now. Why are you still occupying yourselves with such nonsense?"

Nonetheless, some of these teachers came and said,

> "You have to do this, that, and that."



Paul was very sad and indignant about this. Among other things, he writes the following:

> **Galatians 1**
> [8] But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

That was another prophet—a different message. He was accursed.

Galatians 1

[9] As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Twice Paul emphasizes this point. There is only one gospel; there is only one key. If someone else comes and says,

"I'll give you a key because I got it from God,"

–don't believe it. God has one key, one gospel which we have received. God speaks with us through Christ. Christ is God's key.

ONE WORD, ONE SPIRIT

It is not up to us to choose what key we want. We must accept the key God gives us. He speaks to us through His messenger and through His Spirit. This does not mean that we can choose between God's messenger and His Spirit, because both work together. Both speak of Christ; therefore, they are both the same key. Some people want to reject the messenger, because they say,

"The Spirit talks to me directly."

That is what this false prophet said.

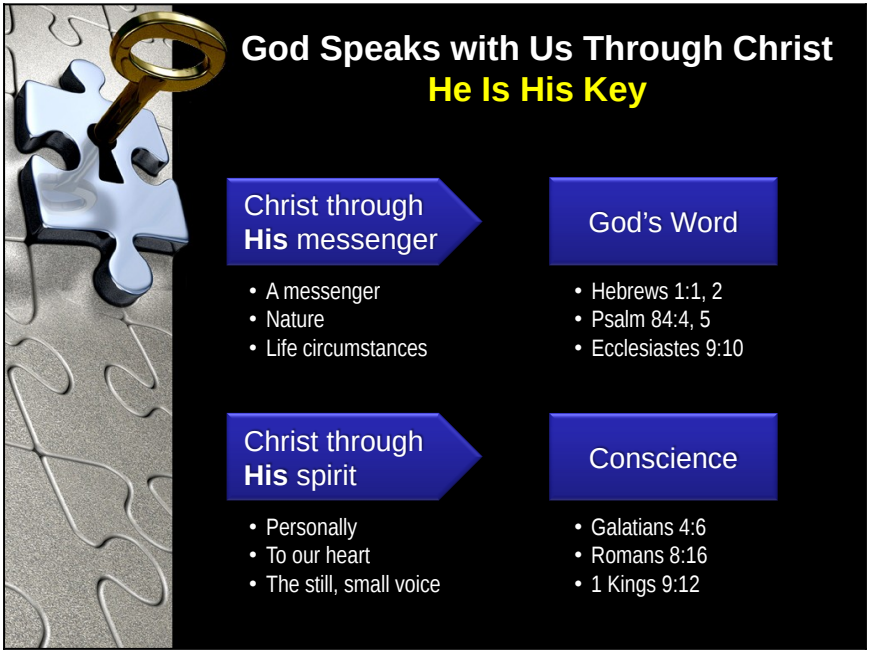
"Here–the Spirit spoke to me."

Meanwhile, others reject the Spirit because they have chosen their own messenger.

The messenger God sends can be His human messenger; but it can also be nature through which He speaks to us, and we cannot choose nature. We didn't create the laws of nature and we can't change them. They are there. Likewise, we cannot change life circumstances. They have been made for us. Those are the messengers through which God speaks to us.

The Spirit speaks to us personally; He speaks to our heart. It is the still, small voice. We also call God's working through His messenger the Word of God. When He works through His Spirit we call it the conscience. It is very important to really lift these

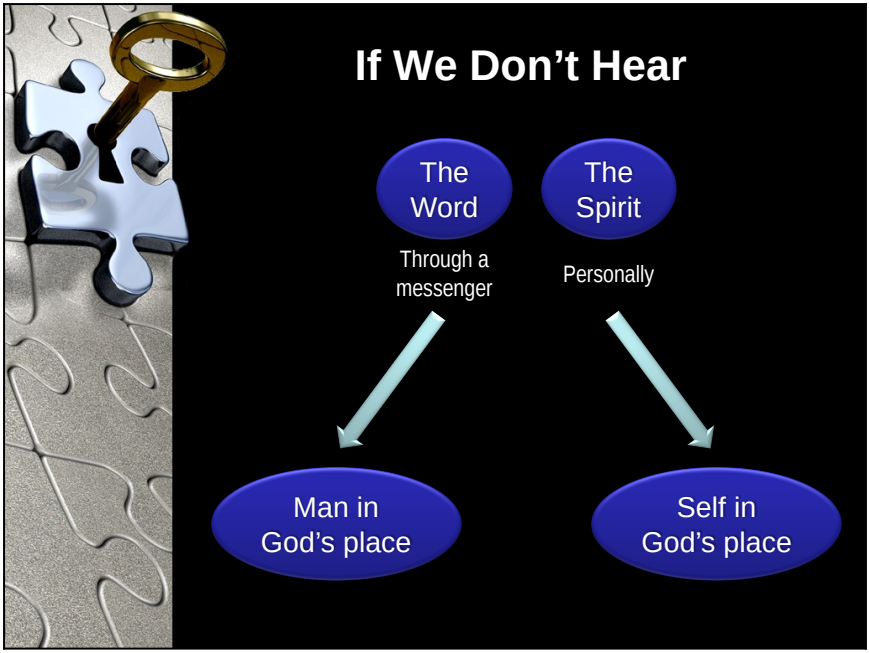
two things up high: the Word of God and the conscience. The Reformation in the 16th century emphasized just how important the Word of God and the conscience are, through which God speaks to us.



If we do not hear, it is because we have either chosen a man in God's place—a man who doesn't lead us to God, but rather to himself—or we have rejected the Spirit by putting ourselves in God's place.

We do this when we don't want to listen to His Spirit's voice, but would rather listen to the voice that speaks to us out of our own love of ease, or our old habits, etc.

If we put self in God's place, we often reject every messenger; and if we put a person in God's place, then we reject God's Spirit, who wants to speak to us personally. That is why we do not hear God speaking to us.



To summarize again, God's key is one key.

Ephesians 4

[4] ...one body [that means one Church], and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;
[5] One Lord, one faith, one baptism;
[6] One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Amen.

16. We Did Not Follow Cunningly Devised Fables

Joachim Schwarz
January 31, 2009

TO BEGIN I would like to look at this text in more detail. Let's turn to it now.

Eyewitnesses

2 Peter 1

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.
17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.
19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

That is the text, and I assume that it is not very well understood. We have often read it, but what if I were to ask you,

> "Can you tell me what it means without looking in the Bible?"

Think about it. What is it saying? Let's read it again.

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables…

So far we understand it quite well.

16 …when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.
17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

[19] And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed…

Do we now understand it completely? I'll read it again.

2 Peter 1
[16] For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,…

So far we understand it,

[16] …but were *eyewitnesses* of His majesty.
[17] For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
[18] And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.
[19] And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place…

I think that it will slowly become clearer to us. What is the apostle saying? Is Peter saying,

> "We did not follow cunningly devised fables, but rather the Word of God"?

Is that what it says? Was Peter saying to those reading his letter,

> "Pay attention! I haven't been telling you fairy tales, I've been telling you about *the Word of God. I've read it for myself"?*

Was that his argument? No it wasn't. Of course, he was presenting the Word of God, but that wasn't his argument. Did he argue this way:

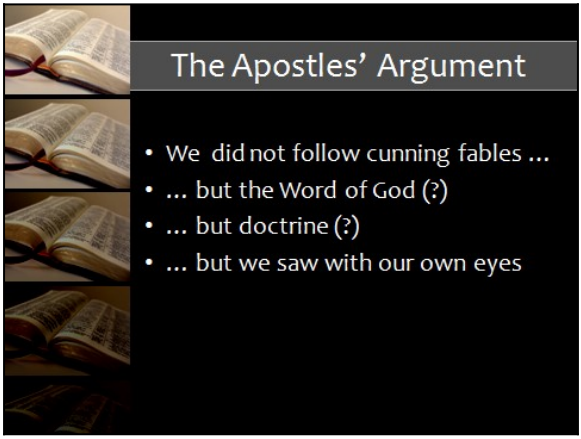
> "Dear listeners, we did not following cunningly devised fables, but rather *the message or the teaching*"?

That was not his argument. So what was his argument?

> "We did not follow cunningly devised fables, but rather *we saw it with our own eyes.*"

Of course the Word of God and the message were not fables, but that was not his argument. That was understood.

2 Peter 1
[16] ...but we saw it with our own eyes.



A Graphical Representation

Let's try to portray this graphically, and this time I will try to draw it even though I can't draw very well. I think this will make the matter clear. Peter said,

2 Peter 1
[16] For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...

In the beginning, for example, there was a fable. It might have been what the others claimed. So I'll write here a fable. So Peter says,

> "Here's something that would be called a fable, a fairy tale, a story, an invention."

And what does this fable say? It says:

> [16] ...when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...

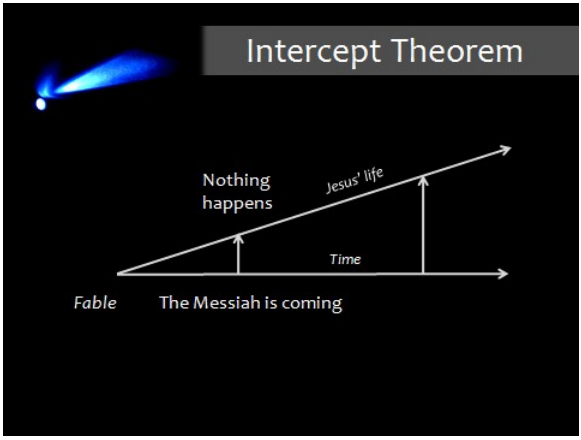
This story says that the Messiah is coming within a certain time. Peter said,

"We're telling you that the Messiah *did come*,"

–and that was not a fable. But anyone can say that. So this bottom axis is called *time*, but there is another axis we can draw, and this is the line of redemption: Jesus' life. This represents that which brings us salvation; how God solves the problem of sin. So, for example, if Peter and his coworkers say,

"The Messiah is coming,"

–then the time comes for this to happen and, nothing happens, what would you say? What is that? A fairy tale. They say the Messiah is coming, and nothing happens. A fairy tale.



But what does Peter say?

"We did not follow cunningly devised fables, for when the time came for it to happen, *we saw it*."

These are two things that belong together.

"We experienced it for ourselves; we touched it; we spoke with it. When the time had fully come, we were able to touch the

things we are telling you about, and that is what we are telling you."

Is that understandable? I would like to present a few examples of this, but before we do this, I would like to read our text from the *New Living Translation* because I think this will make it all much clearer.

2 Peter 1 [NLT]
[16] For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We saw His majestic splendor with our own eyes when He received honor and glory from God the Father.
[17] The voice from the majestic glory of God said to Him, This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.
[18] We ourselves heard that voice from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.
[19] Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets…

They are reliable. We have experienced it, and that's why we know that these prophecies are reliable.

[19] …You must pay close attention to what they wrote,

The events talk about the future, and they will be fulfilled. The beginning is right, and the end will be fulfilled.

[19] …for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts.

Let's read the last paragraph again.

[19] Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts.

This is called the intercept theorem. Those who know something about physics can see these two lines. It's like a flashlight. It

shines where the two lines start. The two lines are like two light rays from the same light, and the events occur at the same time on both of the lines. These are called parallel events. When the time comes for the Messiah to arrive then He does arrive. And later when a message for a certain time comes then it will happen because it all comes from the same light. Both lines, both rays of light, come from the same source.

2 Peter 1

[19] ...which you do well to heed as a light...

–that sends out bright rays.

Examples of Living Truth

Let's look at this intercept theorem a little further. I won't hold a physics class. Perhaps later Peter can say more about this, or maybe the students, but I think we understand the matter up to this point. There is this time axis [the line at the bottom] which we have already seen, and there is the axis which we have called the line of redemption. Then there are two parallel events.

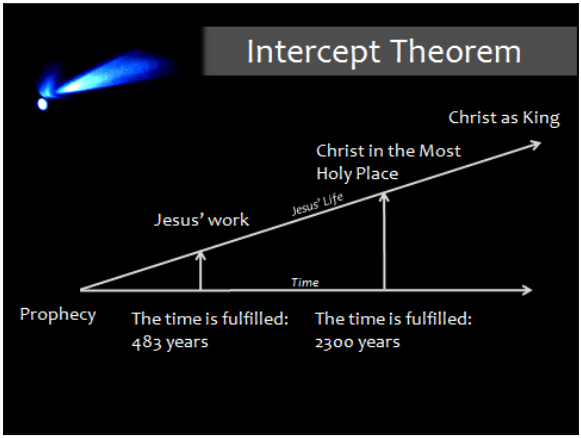
Let's say that we have a fable which says that the Messiah will come at a certain time. Then look at Jesus' life or the history of redemption, and nothing happens. That is a fable; a confession, a witness, and story without any foundation; a religious confession without an experience; a sermon without a living story behind it. These things are useless.

Let's look at some examples. Let's consider prophecy, which Peter named. The prophetic word is this light source. We have time, and we have Jesus' life. The prophecy says that after 483 years, the time will be fulfilled, and Christ will come. And what happened just at this very time? Jesus did begin His public ministry; in the middle of the week He was crucified; and at the end of the week, the church was persecuted. The prophetic week was completely fulfilled. That is what Peter said:

"We saw it with our own eyes."

And this prophetic word is just as valid for the future. It comes from the same light source.

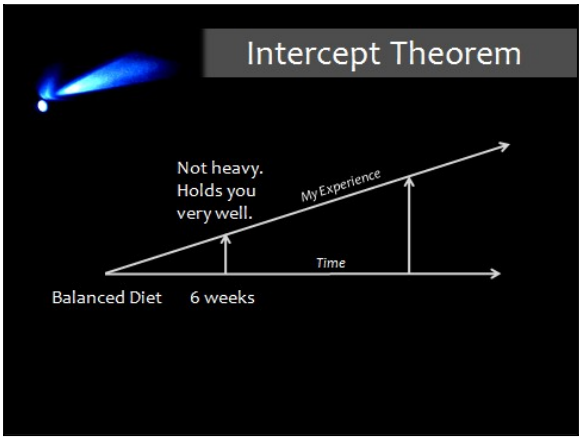
Another example is the prophecy from *Daniel* 8:14 about the 2300 days (years). It comes from the same light source. And what occurs on the time line has a parallel event on the line of redemption, starting here with Jesus' work and continuing until today. And, without going into all the historical details, here we have Jesus in the most holy place. He went from the holy place to the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary. Many of us know this history very well. Those who are not familiar with this can ask about it afterwards since we can't include everything in our study today.



But what does Peter say? He says that we saw Him on the mountain. We saw His glory. We actually saw that He is King. So Peter was saying that we saw His work on the earth, but we saw more than that. We saw that He was honored as the King of heaven, and therefore He will return to this earth as King.

Let's consider another example. We have these two rays of light —time and my personal experience. Both are governed by the same principles. Here we have balanced diet. Some might know this and some not, but it has recently become more apparent to us that our diet should not only be vegetarian but should also be bal-

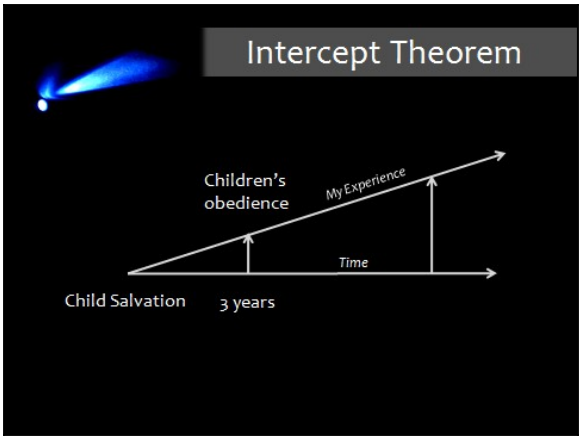
anced; that there should be a balance between protein, carbohydrates, and fat. I see this point, and I can also explain it and represent it.



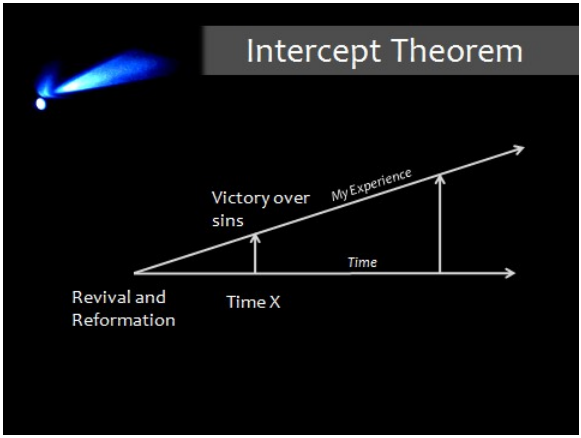
At the present time my family is doing an experiment which will last six weeks. We've gone two weeks so far, and even after that short a space of time I can relate an experience. The food is not too heavy. In the beginning I experienced some difficulties for the first few days. This food holds you very well, which in the beginning I didn't think would be the case, and it is very, very tasty. I am not relating to you a theory. I am telling you about what I have personally tasted, tried, and realized. And I can say that as this test progresses, it will only become better. Do you know why? Because the beginning premise was correct. It was not a fable. And because the experience is true, the results will improve.

Here's another example, child salvation, again with the time axis and the experience axis. We visit someone and try to explain to him how God saves the children. In the meantime the children are fighting. Let's say that three years have gone by. How is it with the child? What experience can I relate? Is the child obedient? Is it easily entreated? Does it have a longing for spiritual things? Then I could speak of an experience. The doctrines, the teachings, the child salvation message, are the foundation. There is no question about that. The other gives power to the message

and makes it worthy of belief. The experience shows that it is real.



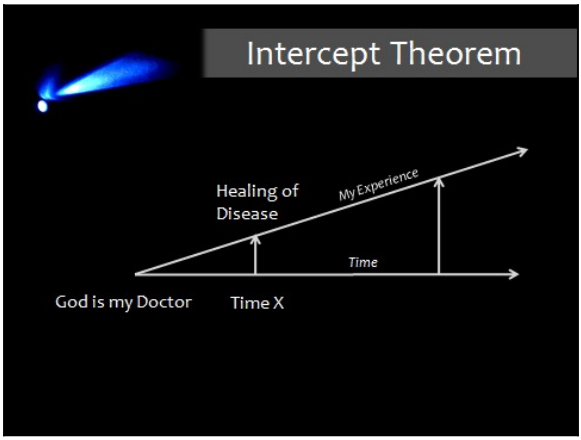
We could show one example after the other. Take revival and reformation. This is a message that this church has taught from the beginning. God heals from sin. He can change my character. That which I have carried around with me for years and decades, God can change. Is my life a witness of this? Have I experienced a change from greed to generosity, from narrow-mindedness to liberality, from being self-willed to going forward in God's will? If that is not the case, then my message is a fable.



After a certain amount of time, an hour, a day, perhaps even three years, a sin, a certain sin, will be overcome. Self-will. Rebellion. Greed. Anger. And when I can give a testimony of victory, then I can testify to the fact that God will have a perfect people. I can testify to how God brings an end to sin. That is when the message has power.

Another example. I remember when the message came out on God is my Doctor. It was lovely and clear. It warmed our hearts. I also know the fanaticism that occurred. I remember a young man who told an elderly lady to throw her crutches away, that God was her doctor. The woman did it and fell over and had to take up her crutches again. This young man had not experienced the message. This was pure fanaticism: a fable.

When God gives us a message, of course we are going to share it. It is in our heart to do so, but it will only be real when our personal life testifies to it, when we really live it in our own lives. After a certain time, I will be healed from disease. I will be able to give an experience. I will simply know the message from experience, and this experience will grow.



We know the verses in *1 John* 1:1-3. The same is stated here in principle. What we have seen and heard we preach unto you. Not just some theory.

1 John 1

[1] That which was from the beginning, which we have heard,
which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon,
and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—
[2] The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness,
and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father
and was manifested to us—
[3] That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you
also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is
with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

John really emphasizes the fact that they touched these things. They knew it.

Living by the Teaching from God

Think back to our source of light. This is not about a fable, but rather about a teaching and that which God has given. There are many statements for this. When you have time tonight or during the week, look up the word "teaching." The verb is interesting, but look up the noun, and you will see how many times this word occurs in the Bible. For example,

Malachi 2

[7] For the lips of a priest should keep *knowledge*, and people
should seek *the law* from his mouth; for he is the messenger of
the Lord of hosts.

That is the light; that is the message; that is the teaching.

Proverbs 19

[27] Stop listening to *instruction*, my son, and you will stray from
the *words of knowledge*.

We could write "teaching" on the board.

This week we had a small presentation about water. On the one side there was a reasonable teaching, just simply experiences and principles that were obviously correct. Then questions arose about energy currents, etc. These were fables mixed in with the teachings.

"My son, if you stop listening to instruction, if you stop listening to what God gives through the priest, the messenger, then you will stray from the words of knowledge."

In one German translation, "words of knowledge" are rendered as "*reasonable* teaching." In principle we have this word from gospel order. Another text is:

Luke 1
[4] ...that you may know the *certainty* of those things in which you were *instructed*.

"My son, I am writing to you the gospel of Luke so that you may experience the *sure teachings which instruct you*."

That was the teaching that Luke wrote. Paul wrote,

2 Thessalonians 2
[15] So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to *the teachings* we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

A letter was the teaching. Why? Because God spoke through the priest, the messenger, the instrument. It is just as simple as that. Parents are priests to their children. That is the foundation. That is the beginning. If anything else is in the place of this teaching, then it is a fable and will have a corresponding experience. That is reasonable. That is what God has given. This is what the apostles were reporting.

An Early Adventist Experience

I would like to look at an event that occurred among the early Adventists. We all know that the believers in 1844 were waiting for Christ to return. During this time many questions arose as to why Christ had not returned. Then a special knowledge came—light—and a little while later God gave Ellen White a vision about the meaning of this knowledge. I would like to read this with you:

Early Writings, p. 14:
While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above

> the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, "Look again, and look a little higher." At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the midnight cry.

Do you see what is happening here? Here was the source of light. Here was the midnight cry: that was the light, that was the teaching. It is on this path that the Advent believers were moving forward.

> This light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble. If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and said the city was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before.

Think of our intercept theorems—Child Salvation, God is my Doctor, Living Righteously, and all the messages God has given us. All of these apply here.

> Then Jesus would encourage them by raising His glorious right arm, and from His arm came a light which waved over the Advent band, and they shouted, "Alleluia!" Others rashly denied the light behind them and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and lost sight of the mark and of Jesus, and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below.

They were saying that the teaching wasn't from God. It was a fable. Why? Because the experience didn't agree with their ideas. It was too strenuous. Because they hadn't made the message their own personal experience.

> Soon we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus' coming.

Why Do We Follow Fables?

Now let's look at the other side. Why do we follow after fables? Why did these Adventists follow after fables, and why do we? I would like to read a text about this:

> **2 Timothy 4**
> [3] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, [it is again talking about teachings] but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;
> [4] And they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

This will come because their ears are itching, because fables please them better. Let's see what Ellen White writes about this:

> **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 504:**
> By the pride of human wisdom, by contempt for the influence of the Holy Spirit, and by disrelish for the truths of God's word, many who profess to be Christians, and who feel competent to teach others, will be led to turn away from the requirements of God. Paul declared to Timothy,
>
> > **2 Timothy 4**
> > [3] The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
> > [4] And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

What are these fables? My desires; my inclinations; my ideas.

> The apostle does not here refer to the openly irreligious, but to the professing Christians who make inclination their guide, and thus become enslaved by self. Such are willing to listen to those doctrines only that do not rebuke their sins or condemn their pleasure-loving course. They are offended by the plain words of the faithful servants of Christ and choose teachers who praise and flatter them. And among professing ministers there are those who preach the opinions of men instead of the word of God. Unfaithful to their trust, they lead astray those who look to them for spiritual guidance.

I think these words are plain. Why do we follow after fables? I would like to make a distinction between two categories:

1. DESPISING THE TEACHING

For example, "This is too hard!" Seeking takes too much effort; it requires time. You can ask my wife or her helper how much time it takes to work out this balanced diet. It is strenuous. It is an effort to study it through and work it out, but it is full of blessing.

What about child salvation and bringing the children to the point where they are really obedient? It takes a lot of effort.

Another objection is that the truth takes too long. It has to happen faster. Think of the Adventists who became weary.

It doesn't work properly. It's not quite right. In this connection I would like to ask Tobias to share his experience.

> [Tobias]: This is an experience from our bakery where I work. We were looking for a bread made from gluten-free grain for the sake of those who are allergic to gluten. Our bakery in New Zealand, where there are a lot of people allergic to gluten, came up with a successful recipe. I called them and asked them if they would give us their recipe so we could try it here. They naturally shared it with us, and we tried it, but the results were not particularly good. The loaf was fairly compact and moist, even soggy.
>
> So I called them again and asked what they thought might be the problem. This didn't work and that didn't work. We couldn't seem to come to a good result. I must say that in that moment I developed a real aversion to this bread. We couldn't work it out, so I thought that it probably wasn't the bread we were looking for.
>
> Then I started looking around for gluten-free bread recipes. I looked on the web. I read a book. I looked at a forum. I made a lot of attempts and put a lot of time into it. I remember we baked ten different loaves at the same time according to different recipes, including the one from New Zealand, and none of them was particularly good, except that the one from New Zealand was the best out of all of them.

So we kept looking. We asked baking companies, and tried different things, until I settled on one that I thought was worth selling. I presented it to Aris, the head of the bakery, but he was not satisfied with it. He asked, "Why didn't you really look into the solution God already revealed to our colleagues in New Zealand?"

At that moment it became plain to me that it was a mistake to look around. So I especially prayed again and called New Zealand, and we went through the whole procedure step by step. What we discovered was that their grinder was not so great and the resulting flour was coarse. So the next day we here also produced coarse flour, baked the bread, and it came out perfect. It was nice to cut, loose, and dry. The solution was simply there.

What this showed me personally was that God had already given a solution, and that is where we should put our efforts. And when I say that it isn't working and I have to look elsewhere, then a lot of time is lost and the results still aren't there. It also caused confusion to look elsewhere.

But I can really say that it spoke to me when, after so many months of trying, it only took one loaf of bread, and the results were there.

And how long did it take you to bake this one loaf?

[Tobias]: Just one hour.

And before?

[Tobias]: Many weeks.

Months. Thank you. I think that that made it very clear. Despising the teaching. It doesn't work properly. I need another technique. Or it doesn't suit me. This teaching doesn't please me. That too is a reason why we go after fables.

2. DESIRING SOMETHING ELSE

There is also another reason why we go after fables. The first reason is despising the teaching. The second reason is just the desire

for something else. For example, a fable can be stimulating, exciting, and something new.

> "Did you see that link? You've got to look at this clip!"

There is also a desire to identify with something. In fables there are many heroes.

> "That's what I am. He did a good job. I want to watch that. I want to see that from another perspective. When he kicks the ball through the goal, it's the best when you can see it from three different angles. How did he manage it?"
>
> "How did Barack Obama say it to the bankers? What were his exact words? How did his face look?"

Identification with a hero. That can be following after fables.

We can feel like looking for something new because the old doesn't do the job any more.

Another point is that I can choose which fable I like. There is not just *one teaching*, I can look for what suits me. I furnish myself with my own message. I will found my own church when I have a following.

I don't have to change because the fable fits in with me. The message is tailor-made to fit me. I can hide my sin. And finally, this fable fulfills my hopes and desires.



Why do we follow after fables? Because they fit in with our desires.

Where Do We Find Fables?

The next question is,

> "Where do we find these fables?"

Which of you reads fairy tales? Could you raise your hands please? Let's look at the slide and then ask who reads fairy tales. I think that we quickly put this thought out of our minds. We think we have nothing to do with fairy tales, even though they contain some very interesting principles.

Let's take the round table as an example. What is discussed there? The things we have heard from here and there, and the things we have seen or suspected. Everything that satisfies my heart is told. Round tables are not only found in the bar. They can occur within the circle of our colleagues and friends. We are in the world, but not of the world.

Gossip. Chit-chat. That's where fables are told.

Our "traditions" and ideas. This comes out in what we say about diet and dress.

> "We don't do things that way."

I remember believing that a vegetarian diet contained everything we needed. It's the best. No animal products. Only completely fresh plants. But when we looked at the matter honestly, deficiencies came to light. I don't want to say that there is no one who has done it, and I firmly believe that in the end there will be a diet where no animal products will be necessary. But I know of no one at the moment who knows how to do this. But I know of many who act as if they know, and they follow after fables. Not a healthy teaching, but things they have heard from different corners; from chit-chat, gossip, the newspaper, a professional maga-

zine. But they haven't experienced these things and touched them with their own hands.

Where do we search for truth? Surfing the web or in forums?

"Here's a solution, and there's one."

A little while ago I treated a patient who had a difficult sickness. She had received some medical directions, but of course she is free to do what she wants. Her problem became worse, and I asked her,

"Did you take the medicine?"

"No," she said, "I found a tea on the web."

In this case she abandoned the teaching and went looking for fables. How often we are inclined to do this because we don't trust the teaching, or it doesn't please us. It doesn't taste good, or is too expensive, or doesn't exalt us. Like Naaman, who didn't want to wash in the muddy Jordan river to remove his leprosy, because he thought there were better rivers in the country that he came from.[132] For these reasons we go after fables.

We also look for fables because we have experienced a *disappointment*. In 1844 the Adventists experienced an incredible disappointment. And after this disappointment, many different ideas were raised to try and explain the difficulty. The faithful waited for God's answer, which was in harmony with the previous light; but the foolish came up with answers that denied God's leading in the past. We already read this, but here is the relevant part again:

Early Writings, p. 14:

Others rashly denied the light behind them and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and lost sight of the mark and of Jesus, and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below.

[132] *2 Kings* 5:10-14.

Incidentally, it's the same when we're driving and we have to have the radio on. We are showered with fables, and they do go into our minds. It is normal in the average company to have the radio playing. The radio is like constantly listening to gossip or being at the round table.

I find fables in *my desires*, in *my feelings*, and *my ideas*.

I can find fables in *so-called signs* from God. Some people work out a sign with God. We have experienced this, and I also have had it happen to me. Before I knew anything of this message, I came to an arrangement with God where He would give me a sign, and He seemed to answer me. But for someone who knows the message and the teachings, this type of sign making is nonsense.

I would like to read a statement with you. It's about an experience reported in the *Ellen G. White Biography,* Volume 6, "The Later Elmshaven Years," p. 350-354. There was a businessman surnamed Harris, and he wanted to make some money available to the church. He had a particular way of going about this. He took a coin and said to God,

> "Should I buy this piece of land or not? When the coin lands heads up, I'll buy it, and if not, I won't."

Is that a good technique or not? We smile, but isn't it similar when I said to God,

> "If you give me this sign, then I'll do this thing"?

And how often we think up signs for God to give us and then claim that He has spoken to us! That is not a reasonable teaching. This not according to principle but according to personal ideas and desires, and then chance is involved as well.

So the wife of Mr. Harris wrote to Ellen White and said that she was worried about him. She asked if this method was correct. Ellen White first gave an answer based on principle, and then her son stated,

"But the man prays before tossing the coin. Would not that make some difference?"

She responded by saying that that is not God's way. She said that after the great disappointment, many used this type of method to obtain guidance. They were trying to deal with the disappointment. For example, they wrote "yes" on one side of a card and "no" on the other side. Then they would drop the card, and the answer would be face up. One time someone had the impression that a dead child should not be buried because it would be resurrected. In another incident someone put his hand on a hot stove because he thought God was telling him to do so. Of course his hand was burned.



All of this is following fables and personal ideas. I ponder something and then say to God,

"Heads or tails?"

How often do things like this happen in our quiet moments! And then I stand under a powerful impression. And how simple it would be to come back to a reasonable teaching that God gave through His messenger and elders, the workers and priests! Of course I will have experiences, but the safe foundation is the healthy teaching.

Where Do We Follow Fables?

Where do we follow fables? Generally everywhere. When I think about furnishing my house, or what I will study as a profession, I can look here and there and everywhere. Perhaps Esther can relate to you her experience.

> [Esther]: This is about how I came to choose my vocation. I saw that someone was needed in the medical practice. I also wanted to work there. There were a few days left to make my decision, and I was advised to look around elsewhere for various reasons, one of which was to be a missionary and not dependent upon a doctor. I couldn't represent or defend the system personally, but as an assistant I would have to.
>
> So I spent a whole night looking for an answer, and afterwards I was totally confused. I did not know what was right or wrong.
>
> A short time later I spoke with a friend who said, "Put every thought out of your mind and only ask God what the others need."
>
> So I went away and within two minutes I really asked myself where I would be needed, and it was very simple and clear. I looked back to what had already been made clear to me, which was that I was needed in the practice. Then it was plain and finished.
>
> Searching on the web brought me nothing but confusion. I couldn't tell what was God's leading and what were my ideas. It was all a blur.

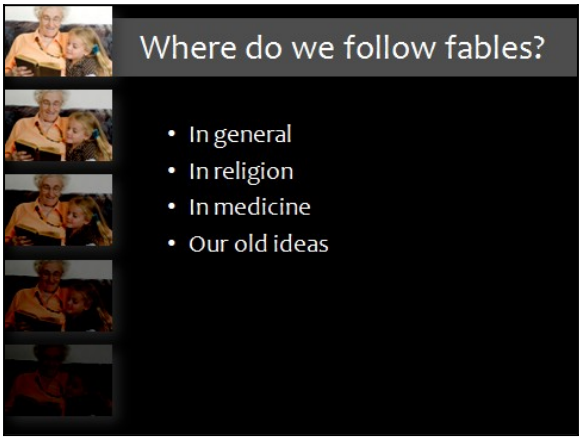
We can follow fables in daily life. We can follow them in religion. There are so many different religious beliefs, and most of them are fables and a following after fables—personal ideas and desires. And then the Bible is taken up to explain these.

In medicine we experience disappointment again and again. One disappointment, which I mentioned earlier, was when we concluded that a purely vegetarian diet, as we practiced it back then, was deficient. Some people were so disappointed that they started searching for themselves. It is good to make personal investigations, but under the teaching, under that which is already

God's leading. Some have gone everywhere looking for truth. They have gone to professional journals, various circles, and even to the internet. The result was great confusion, and finally doubting the message and gospel order. This is following fables.

Our *old ideas*. Those things I have known for a long time.

"They have to be right!"

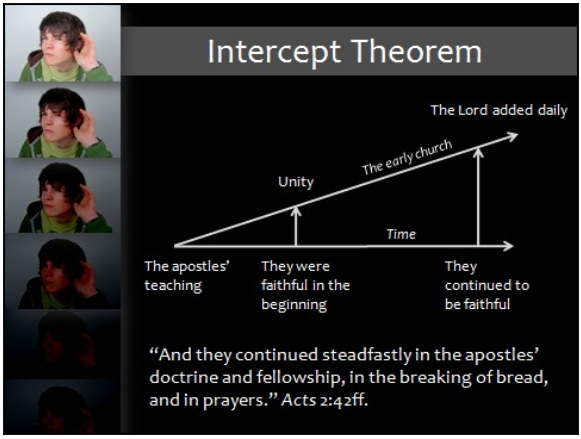


The Early Church: Living the Truth

To close, let's look at our intercept theorem. Remember we have the two axes. The horizontal one is time, and in this case the other is the early church. The apostles taught that which God had given them. It was called the apostles' teaching. These men were in the message and did not follow after fables. They were very loyal, constant in the breaking of bread, constant in the teaching they had received from Christ, and they were unified. On this basis, the work moved forward. It says,

> **Acts 2**
> [42] And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

This is represented by the first vertical arrow in the diagram.



43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

Why? Because they stood under the teaching.

Acts 2
44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,
45 And sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.
46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,
47 Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

When we go out, when we preach to others, when we want to share the message with others, we will have power only if it is done in the light that God has given, under the teaching, and connected with our own personal experience. Then our witness will be irresistible, and the results will be complete.

17. Making Friends with Angels

Sabbath, June 9, 2018

TODAY we'll be studying about angels, but our general topic is still the one way of practicing the healing art which heaven approves. We will specifically study about gospel order today. Let's begin by reading a Bible text.

The Unjust Steward

Luke 16

[1] He also said to His disciples: There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods.
[2] So he called him and said to him, What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.
[3] Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg.
[4] I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.
[5] So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, How much do you owe my master?
[6] And he said, A hundred measures of oil. So he said to him, Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.
[7] Then he said to another, And how much do you owe? So he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said to him, Take your bill, and write eighty.
[8] So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.
[9] And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.

This story is an object lesson, but it also actually happened. The people involved listened to Jesus and knew exactly that their

story was being told. It must have been interesting. They were evidently tax collectors.

The biblical account is divided into two parts—the actual story and then the explanation which Jesus gave. The rich man who praised the unfaithful servant does not represent Christ. Rather, he was the servant's boss. The servant had deceived and bribed in order to save himself. And he was indeed still fired. But yet his boss thought he was a clever man. Deception was very common in those days, especially among the tax collectors. It was so common that it was thought of casually—as not being especially bad. The servant had to leave his job because of his previous actions, but the deception itself was not considered such a problem. Instead, the employer thought he was shrewd and that he had done well, despite the fact that it had cost him. The deception itself was quite normal.

Jesus didn't praise the servant's approach. He praised neither the methods nor the aim. What did He praise? Actually, He didn't praise anything. He simply said that the man was shrewd. That's what the servant's boss had said.

There are certain characteristics which we can indeed learn from the enemies of God. We can even learn from Satan. Such characteristics include cleverness, endurance, and courage. But these characteristics didn't help the unfaithful servant. He still was fired. Similarly, these characteristics will not help us, because they will come to an end. And if we don't have friends when they come to an end, then that's the finish. So, mammon doesn't help us. The wrong methods don't help us. They are all limited in time.

Mammon is an Aramaic word which means "money." We can substitute this word into the verse as follows.

Luke 16

9 Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous *money*, that when the *money* ends and has no value, then at least you will have friends who will receive you.

This is what Jesus said.

The Lessons of the Parable

What exactly are the lessons in this parable? What exactly do we need to learn from the enemies of God? That is an important question because we often learn the wrong things from them. And when we learn wrongly, then it's all for naught.

People are often very successful in temporal matters, and yet they are not qualified for the gospel work. That is because they are lacking in character. On the other hand, there are those who do seek after God, but who accomplish nothing because they are lacking wisdom—spiritual wisdom. This is the point. We could also call it spiritual intelligence.

The disciples marveled at wisdom. We probably do also. When someone manages to do something special, it's great. We marvel at people when they have an excellent career, or when they make a lot of money. The disciples also marveled at such people. They marveled at Judas and the fact that he could manage everything so well. They thought that his talent was definitely needed in their little team. Let's read about this.

> **The Desire of Ages, p. 294:**
>
> The disciples were anxious that Judas should become one of their number. He was of commanding appearance, a man of keen discernment and executive ability,...

That's wonderful, right?

> ...and they commended him to Jesus as one who would greatly assist Him in His work. They were surprised that Jesus received him so coolly.

They did not understand it. Such a talent must be used! The same situation happened when the rich young ruler came to Jesus, offering to follow Him. The disciples thought that someone with so much money could not be simply sent away. But Jesus placed such a high requirement upon him that he wasn't willing to come along. The disciples were puzzled by it.

The disciples valued wisdom, but they didn't value spiritual wisdom. That is the important point. Jesus doesn't tell us that we should be actually as clever as the people in the world. Rather, He says that cleverness is good, but that we also need the counterpart to it, which is spiritual wisdom. Are cleverness and wisdom hindrances which keep us from working in God's kingdom? It seems so. Jesus spoke about this in the following verses in relation to the rich young ruler.

Matthew 19
[23] Then Jesus said to His disciples, Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.
[24] And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

That is quite a statement! Worldly talents are hindrances. So, His disciples wondered who could be saved.

[26] But Jesus looked at them and said to them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

With God it is also possible for a rich person to enter the kingdom. With God it is possible for a clever person to enter the kingdom. Paul said something similar as well. Let's read this.

1 Corinthians 1
[26] For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

Not many wise are called. That is because it is often a problem. What kind of wisdom is needed in order to be able to work in the kingdom of God? What is spiritual wisdom, or spiritual intelligence? We can see two aspects in the parable Jesus told:

1. Thinking about the future.
2. Making the right friends.

1. THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

First, the servant thought about the future. Most people think only about the temporal. They want to have recognition and money now, without seeing that there is something eternal to gain. Whenever we have difficulty understanding God's ways, it is because we see only the temporal matters and miss the eternal ones. If we could see the eternal, and if we could keep this in our view, then we would see so much wisdom in God's actions. We would see so much righteousness in how He acts. Spiritual intelligence doesn't see merely the temporal. It sees the eternal. It sees beyond the present.

The second aspect is that we need to seek and make the right friends—those who will receive us in eternity. Those friends are the angels. Do we seek friendship with the angels more than we seek friendship with people? Do we seek friendship with the heavenly beings—with God and His angels?

These are the two aspects which make up spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence is involved with the spiritual and invisible world, and with the future which we do not see yet, but that is promised to us in His word.

2. MAKING THE RIGHT FRIENDS

How do we make friends? How can we become friends with the angels? This is the question we will consider today. Angels are often mentioned in the Old Testament. The angel of the Lord is especially mentioned. Abraham, Lot, and many others met angels. Adam and Eve also met them in *Genesis* 3.

Looking at how some people have fought against the angels also helps us to see what the hindrances are which keep us from cooperating with them. There is one man who refused to cooperate with the angels. The Moabite king, Balak, wanted to curse Israel. He sought out Balaam, who was purported to have magical powers. Balaam was also a prophet of the Lord. He was supposed to curse Israel, being paid a great deal of money in return. Balaam wanted to do this, but God didn't allow him to. Ultimately, he

went ahead anyway. He was allowed to go there, but he was not allowed to achieve his goal. Let's read the story as he traveled with the Moabites.

Numbers 22

[21] So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.
[22] Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the Lord took His stand in the way as an adversary against him.

Here we see a person who didn't work together with the angels. The angel was not his friend. Instead, the angel stood against him. It was a conflict. If we act in a way which makes the angels have to stand in our way, then we're not co-working with them. We are then working against each other. That's not effective.

Numbers 22

[23] And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. Now the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road.

Balaam fought against the angel. Of course, he didn't see the angel. Therefore, he could excuse himself and say his actions weren't so bad. He could blame it on his lack of understanding. Similarly, we don't see the angels. But we should know when we are working with them and when we are working against them. This we should know. Balaam should have known this too. How could he have known it? Let's think about this.

[24] Then the Angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side.
[25] And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck her again.
[26] Then the Angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

[27] And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff.

Balaam thought it was just the donkey, but there was actually much more going on.

Numbers 22

[28] Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?

It's astonishing for a donkey to speak. But Balaam was in such a rage that he didn't even register that fact.

[29] And Balaam said to the donkey, Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you! [30] So the donkey said to Balaam, Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you? And he said, No.

Now Balaam starts to understand.

[31] Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.

Had Balaam been able to see the angel before, he would have certainly apologized and said,

"I didn't understand."

Let's read a commentary about this.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 440:

There are thousands at the present day who are pursuing a similar course [to that of Balaam]. They would have no difficulty in understanding their duty if it were in harmony with their inclinations. It is plainly set before them in the Bible or is clearly indicated by circumstances and reason. But because these evidences are contrary to their desires and inclinations they frequently set them aside and presume to go to God to learn their

duty. With great apparent conscientiousness they pray long and earnestly for light. But God will not be trifled with. He often permits such persons to follow their own desires and to suffer the result.

Psalm 81

[11] My people would not hearken to my voice...

[12] So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.

When one clearly sees a duty, let him not presume to go to God with the prayer that he may be excused from performing it. He should rather, with a humble, submissive spirit, ask for divine strength and wisdom to meet its claims.

Balaam could have known. How? He could have known, either through the Bible or through circumstances. The circumstance with the donkey was obvious, wasn't it? Reason is another way he could have known. Reason would have told him that it wasn't possible for God's people to be cursed at the command of a heathen, idolatrous king. That contradicts all logic. Moreover there was the situation with the donkey. And he also had the word of God which could have shown him everything very clearly. All this should have shown him in which direction the angel was going. And he could have gone together with the angel. But instead, he went a different way.

God also send angels to us, to accompany us in every work that we do each day. We are not alone. Even when it seems we are alone, we're not actually on our own. And when we are together with other people, there are still others present—the angels. These angels play a great role in all the circumstances which we experience. Let's read about this.

Psalm 91

[11] For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.

[12] In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

The Companionship of Angels

When are our angels our companions? When are they our opponents? We need to know the answer to these questions.

SELFLESSNESS

In the parable we read in *Luke* 16, it is obvious that the angels are our friends when we act selflessly—when we use what is entrusted to us for the benefit of others, when we give. Selflessness is a very important aspect. It makes the angels our friends. Selfishness makes the angels our opponents.

It is so critical that we have the right relationship to the things of this earth. This is true in the matter of selfishness and selflessness. Everything which is temporal—whether a possession, a house, a family, a car—and everything which binds us to the temporal, makes the angels distant. The angels see beyond it all. It's not important to them. They know that it will all burn. They know that nothing will remain permanently. And for this reason, our holding onto what is temporal makes the angels our opponents. But the angels are our friends when we fully cut these things off in our hearts. Let's read about this.

> **1 Corinthians 7**
> [29] But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none,
> [30] Those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess,
> [31] And those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

This was Paul's attitude. He didn't hang his heart on what was temporal, and this made him a friend of the angels, because they're not attached to what is temporal either—absolutely not. The selflessness which is expressed here is that we want nothing of this world for ourselves. This doesn't necessarily refer to money. It can also be praise, recognition, ease, and so on.

We need to understand what character the angels have, in order to understand how we can co-work with them. Let's read a statement about this.

The Desire of Ages, p. 21:

The angels of glory find their joy in giving,—giving love and tireless watchcare to souls that are fallen and unholy. Heavenly beings woo the hearts of men; they bring to this dark world light from the courts above; by gentle and patient ministry they move upon the human spirit, to bring the lost into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know.

The angels have absolutely no thought of self-exaltation. That's why they remained in heaven when Satan and the others left. We're referring to the faithful angels whom God sends to accompany us. These angels are happy when they can constantly give to us, and when they can bring us further than where they are themselves. That is selfless joy. We make these angels our friends when we take part in that joy.

John the Baptist partook of this joy. Let's read about it.

John 3

[29] He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice.

[30] Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.

There were competitive thoughts between John's disciples and the disciples of Jesus. John's disciples came to him and basically said that Jesus was stealing his show by doing more than him. How could that be possible? John was there first. But John replied that this was the exact purpose of his existence. He was happy about it. It made him a friend of the Bridegroom. It made him a friend of the angels. "He must increase, but I must decrease." This attitude is friendship with the angels. Friendship with the angels means to have the same character as they do, which is the character of giving.

DOING THE WILL OF GOD

We also have friendship with the angels when we do the will of God. Let's read a text about this.

Matthew 12
[48] But He answered and said to the one who told Him, Who is my mother and who are my brothers?
[49] And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, Here are my mother and my brothers!
[50] For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

We could also say that they are friends. Jesus said exactly what the angels also think. If we were to ask any angel who their friends are, they would give exactly this answer. They would say,

"Those who do the will of our Father in heaven are my friends."

Jesus expressed this again in the following verse.

John 15
[14] You are my friends if you do whatever I command you.

The angels would say,

"You are our friends when you do what Jesus commands you."

This is exactly what Jesus wanted to say. It is also what the disciples ultimately understood, even though they didn't understand it at first. Spiritual wisdom was not natural to them, but they obtained it. That is described in the Bible too. Let's read it.

Acts 2
[42] And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.
[43] Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.
[44] Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common.

There was a good unity among them because they were also friends with the angels. Friendship was a very important aspect of their being together.

GOSPEL ORDER

Let's continue reading in chapter 4.

> **Acts 4**
> [32] Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.
> [33] And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.
> [34] Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,
> [35] And laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

The next verses tell of a believer who sold his land and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Gospel order is described here. And it is gospel order which makes the angels our friends. How do we see the gospel order here? Let's take a closer look. The believers sold their land and laid the money at the feet of the apostles. Then the money was distributed according to the individual needs. This means that many could probably provide for themselves. Others needed to be supported, because of persecution or other circumstances. But there was no lack in the end. Jesus also asked His disciples if they ever had a lack and they answered that they did not.

RELINQUISHING OF CONTROL

This selflessness is the character of the angels. Let's look at it more closely. The believers sold what they had and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles. What does it mean to lay something at someone's feet? It means that we completely give up control. We don't retain any control over it. When it is laid at an-

other's feet, then it is no longer under our control. We must understand this. Let's read another verse about this.

Psalm 8

[6] For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands; You have put all things under his feet.

In other words, "You gave everything into His control." God gave everything into His Son's control. He completely surrendered it all. It belonged to Christ. And this is also what is meant when we read that possessions were laid at the feet of the apostles. The possessions were given to the apostles and were no longer under the individual's control.

We often give a gift, with the condition of getting it back again. But the angels give without expecting anything in return. They surrender it, and do not hold the control.

The tithe is another area where we recognize that what we have is not under our control. God said to give ten percent. It's not for us to decide whether we give this much or that much. Rather, God said that ten percent belongs to Him. So, we give it away, completely. It is no longer under our control. We don't determine how it is used. Instead, its use is determined by others. The same is true of other amounts which are laid at the apostles' feet. They are no longer under our control.

Alternatively, we could try to administer the ten percent ourselves and spend it according to our own opinion. We could say that we are using it for this or that missionary project—for going house to house, or for printing literature. But that is not giving it away. This is holding onto it for ourselves.

The early believers laid their money at the apostles' feet. The apostles could have announced the needs of the various believers and each individual could have given as they thought best. But that's not how it went. Instead, it was handled systematically. Ev-

erything was laid at the apostles' feet, and then it was distributed. That is gospel order. It is a very important aspect.

Acts 4
[35] And they distributed to each as anyone had need.

First of all, who is "they"? And what does it mean that it was given according to need. Often people will ask either for more than they need, or less than they need to live. Do we think that we would be able to distribute to everyone correctly, if we had that task? Would we be able to give to everyone exactly what they needed? That would be very difficult. We feel more comfortable dealing with our own needs, since we know what we need. The task of distribution requires much wisdom. And that wisdom is needed again and again.

Let's read about distributions given to widows.

1 Timothy 5
[3] Honor widows who are really widows.
[4] But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.

First is described what a real widow is. Then many conditions are described.

[5] Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.
[6] But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.

Those who live self-indulgently are obviously in a different category.

[9] Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number.

Interestingly, there is a long list of rules for the support of widows. And these principles also apply to those who are workers and elders in the church.

1 Timothy 5

[17] Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.
[18] For the Scripture says, You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain, and, The laborer is worthy of his wages.

The needy people included not only widows, but also gospel workers. Many rules are described for the distribution to those in need.

As long as everything was being distributed well, the church was a very good team. They were one heart and one soul. There was gospel order, as well as the spirit of the angels and cooperation with the angels. It was as Jesus described. They had made friends with the angels. But later on, the team was threatened with collapse. Satan succeeded in bringing in prejudices and selfishness. We know this from later chapters in *Acts*, for example the story of Ananias and Sapphira. Their selfishness brought in a totally different element. They worked against the angels, instead of with them. Let's read about another attack of Satan against the friendship with the angels.

Acts 6

[1] Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.
[2] Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

The friendship with the angels was put into question. As a result, the team was also put into question. It was necessary for the apostles to give a clear leading. So, they spread their responsibility onto more shoulders. The task was given to seven deacons. Importantly, those seven were men who cooperated with the angels. To the degree that the work and needs grew, the spirit of the angels needed to be in those who made the distribution. It is not easy to make such distributions. And it won't work anymore

when selfishness enters in, as it did with Ananias and Sapphira, or with those who murmured. It was absolutely necessary to have the right spirit. Thinking of others as higher than myself is such a critical aspect.

HARMONY WITH THE CHURCH

Harmony with the angels also means to have harmony with the church. Just imagine if one of the seven deacons claimed the right to the greatest share, because he had the largest piece of land. Or, imagine if one deacon had complained that another had received too much. It would not have worked. The spirit of the angels needed to be ruling. This also means that a spirit of coworking and teamwork is needed.

How can we recognize whether someone is really bearing the responsibility of the right arm work? The work of the seven deacons was right arm work. How can we know if someone is bearing such responsibility correctly?

The first aspect is that a person is following the instructions of God. Abraham's actions with regard to Ishmael show us that he meant well, but he didn't follow God's instructions. He tried to fulfill God's work in his own strength. This is the first and most important aspect in the right arm work. If we want to build up a right arm work, our good motives are not enough. The promise of God must also stand behind it.

The next point is that the principles God has taught us must be heeded. We read several principles about distribution in *1 Timothy* 6. But we could read many more. God has given us many principles in His word.

The last point is harmony with the church. We'll look at this point in more depth. If we build up a work which is not in harmony with the church, then something is not right. Harmony with the church also means that we allow the work to be judged by the church. It means that we don't just do it for ourselves, citing our good motives and taking other things into account. Instead, it means that the whole church sees light in the work—at

least those who are connected with it, such as the local church. Let's read a statement about this.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 291:

When Satan became disaffected in heaven, he did not lay his complaint before God and Christ; but he went among the angels who thought him perfect and represented that God had done him injustice in preferring Christ to himself. The result of this misrepresentation was that through their sympathy with him one third of the angels lost their innocence, their high estate, and their happy home. Satan is instigating men to continue on earth the same work of jealousy and evil surmising that he commenced in heaven.

Here we see what it means not to work together with the angels. We can see how selfishness came into the work of God. Let's continue reading a little further on.

Let him seek meekness, and learn to esteem others better than himself.

This is an important point.

If he will work in fidelity and in harmony with God's plan he will hear the sweet words, "Well done," from the lips of the Master. But if he rejects the labors of God's servants, if he chooses his own way and leans to his own understanding, he will surely make shipwreck of faith. God has not passed His people by and chosen one solitary man here and another there as the only ones worthy to be entrusted with His truth. He does not give one man new light contrary to the established faith of the body.

It would also be contrary to the angels.

In every reform men have arisen making this claim. Paul warned the church in his day:

Acts 20

[30] Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

> The greatest harm to God's people comes through those who go out from among them speaking perverse things. Through them the way of truth is evil spoken of.

When people start a right arm project in their own strength, then the work gets a bad name.

One example of this is the Kellogg brothers. John Harvey Kellogg was a doctor. He also had a younger brother, Will Keith, who researched with him into making healthy foods. The brothers found out how to make cornflakes. They were so happy to have this new product for the people. Dr John Kellogg offered this to his sanitarium patients. His brother Will decided to do more with the recipe, so he started to distribute it throughout the country. He opened a big manufacturing operation. Unfortunately, he then added sugar to the recipe because it appealed more to people's taste. The product sold much better with sugar in it. John Kellogg opposed these actions, stating that the product was no longer healthy. He sued his brother, but lost.

Of course, this story is about worldly gain and success. But what if you were doing something to serve the people, and someone were to come along and do exactly the same thing, only adding sugar, so to speak? They would be doing it for personal gain, and it would no longer be a service to the people. That's sad, isn't it? But this is exactly the problem. It is precisely what happens when we build up a work in opposition to the principles by which the church works. It happens when we're not open—when we do what we do for ourselves. It causes great harm to the cause. People will only be confused between the two works.

People who understand the nature of sugar would say that W. K. Kellogg gave the people a very bad product. It is a crime against society when we think of all the sickness and dental cavities caused by it. That's what they would say. They would not respect him.

This specific case is not our concern at the moment. But the point I want to make is that the greatest damage to the work of

God happens because of those who stand up from within the midst and speak falsehoods. They use what God has given and change it a little. Then they use it to exalt themselves. That is what it means to work in opposition to the angels.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 291:

Let none be self-confident, as though God had given them special light above their brethren. Christ is represented as dwelling in His people. Believers are represented as...

Ephesians 2

[20] ...built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Cornerstone;
[21] In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord:
[22] In whom you also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

Ephesians 4

[1] I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, [says Paul,] beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called,
[2] With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love;
[3] Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
[4] There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
[5] One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
[6] One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Let none say, "I have more light than you!" That is presumption. That is not working together with the angels. To work together with the angels means three things. Let's repeat them:

1. To follow the instructions of God.
2. To obey the principles.
3. To act in harmony with the church.

The one way of practicing the healing art which heaven approves is gospel order. Gospel order means selflessness, harmony with the principles of truth as we understand them today, and

harmony with the church. All this is to work together with the angels and to have them as friends.

FURTHER REFLECTIONS

I would now like to make a few additions to the study.

First, the choosing of the seven deacons was an important step in gospel order. But the problem is that we often misunderstand it. We often think that there was an unjust distribution and that the seven deacons were chosen in order to make the distribution more fair, because the apostles couldn't do it anymore. But this is a wrong assumption.

The problem was not unjust distribution. Instead, the problem from the beginning was the murmuring. This murmuring came up because of old prejudices between the Christians in Jerusalem and those who were outside of the city. There had always been prejudices between the groups. Those who were in Jerusalem were thought to be better than the others. They were the elite. It's like the differences which exist between the races today. One group thinks they are better than the others.

> [Audience]: Today we can compare it with being in Dickendorf or Giessen, versus the rest of the church.

These old prejudices were the problem. The seven deacons had the simple task of spreading the spirit of Christ, which is the spirit of selflessness. They were to stop the problem at the root. It was not their task merely to distribute the gifts fairly. The murmuring needed to be stopped at the root.

Jesus did the same work when the two brothers came to him to have their inheritance divided. And slavery was also dealt with in a similar manner. The root was dealt with. That was the task of the seven deacons. It's not just about a fair bookkeeping. It all depends on the spirit.

The second point is about laying everything at the feet of the apostles. How do we do this? We do it by being open from the

very beginning. It is not true openness when we present our work only after we have already built it up. In such a case, it is hard to change anything. For instance, once the sugar was in the cornflakes, the whole project would need to be started all over again from the beginning. It is also embarrassing and hard to be open about these mistakes. So, it is best to be open from the very beginning.

Another difficulty is when we present an idea and ask what we should do. But we can speak with joy if God has given us something, just as Joseph Bates was happy to tell about the Sabbath truth. There will be harmony as well. But if we just ask what we should do, then we are placing our responsibility on others. It's not really teamwork. Thinking as a team is to know that we are led by God and then to lay it at the apostles' feet. In this way there will be harmony with the angels and with the church.

Again, the three principles which make angels our friends are selflessness, harmony with the truth, and harmony with the church.

> [Audience]: Earlier, you mentioned that the first point was to follow the instructions of God. And actually, we can only understand God's instructions when we are selfless. We will always misunderstand them when selfishness comes in. Obedience and selflessness are basically synonyms. There is an obedience which is from fear, as well as an obedience from duty. But fear is not in love. We will never hit the real point if we have fear. Love drives out fear. And selflessness and love are synonyms.

Yes, thank you.

18. Gospel Order (2019)

Sabbath, February 2, 2019

Editor's Note: This sermon follows the same outline as the previous one, Making Friends with Angels, from June 19, 2018. But there were a few differences, so it is worthwhile to reproduce it in this collection.

OUR subject is the one way of practicing the healing art, which is gospel order. Gospel order is the one way of practicing the healing art. We'll start with the following parable that Jesus related.

Luke 16

[1] He also said to His disciples: There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods.
[2] So he called him and said to him, What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.
[3] Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg.
[4] I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.
[5] So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, How much do you owe my master?
[6] And he said, A hundred measures of oil. So he said to him, Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.
[7] Then he said to another, And how much do you owe? So he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said to him, Take your bill, and write eighty.
[8] So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light.
[9] And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.



The Rich Man calls the Unjust Steward

The text says, "when you fail," but the original Greek can be translated as "when it fails." That refers to mammon failing. That is the better translation,

Luke 16

[9] ...that when mammon fails you, they may receive you into their homes.

This story was a parable, but it was also an actual event which happened among the publicans. Dishonesty, theft, bribery, and extortion were all common among publicans in those days. The unfaithful steward received commendation from his master—not

from Jesus—even though his actions were a sort of bribery. The publicans were smart in such matters. They were shrewd and clever, knowing how to gain an advantage for themselves. Jesus said that this was an interesting fact.

What did Jesus commend? He didn't commend the man's actions. Certainly not! Bribery is not anything to commend—especially not by Christ. He didn't commend the man's aim of self-enrichment, either. What was it that Jesus commended? He commended the man's shrewdness, or his intelligence. Shrewd is an older word. Today we would refer to it as intelligence. Jesus commended the servant's intelligence.

Let's read another verse which shows how Jesus recommends intelligence.

> **Matthew 10**
> [16] Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

We are to be shrewd, or wise, as serpents. We are not to be serpents, but rather to be as *wise* as serpents—which is not the same thing. At the same time, we are to be *harmless as doves*. We are to have both characteristics.

We can learn certain attributes from God's enemies. That is what Jesus tells us in these verses. We can even learn from Satan. The attributes we can learn are intelligence, endurance, and courage. These are certainly attributes which are commendable. But they will not ultimately help God's enemies. As we have read, mammon will fail them. These traits cannot be depended upon, even though they are good in themselves.

Character and Ability

Let's look more closely at what we need to learn from our enemies. We really need to understand this lesson. The problem is that church members are often very unsuccessful, because they lack intelligence. They try to build up this or that, but they do not

succeed. It seems that they lack common sense. They are well-meaning but they don't accomplish much.

On the other hand, people in the world who accomplish much and who attain a lot of knowledge, possessions, money, fame, and so on, do not have the character which would enable them to be entrusted with the right arm work. As much as we would like to have them among us, they don't have the necessary selfless character.

As church members, what is it that we are lacking? We are lacking the intelligence, right? We already have Christian characters, don't we? So, we just need intelligence, right? That's how the parable of the unfaithful servant is often understood. But, actually, we need *both* intelligence *and* a selfless character. What does it mean to have both of these aspects together?

The disciples also realized that they lacked some attributes which people in the world had. One of these traits was executive ability. And if we lack an attribute then we need to get it from others, don't we? So, the disciples were looking for people with the attributes they sought and who also wanted to follow Jesus. One such person was Judas. Judas wanted to follow Jesus, and he also had the abilities which the other disciples were lacking. Therefore, the disciples were very surprised when Jesus didn't receive him with the amount of enthusiasm which they thought he deserved. They imagined it would be fantastic if Judas were to join their band of disciples. Let's read about their reaction.

The Desire of Ages, p. 294:

> The disciples were anxious that Judas should become one of their number. He was of commanding appearance, a man of keen discernment and executive ability, and they commended him to Jesus as one who would greatly assist Him in His work. They were surprised that Jesus received him so coolly.

Judas seemed to have the right character, because he wanted to follow Jesus. Who would want to follow Jesus unless they saw His spiritual power? He wasn't attractive otherwise. It meant

something to join His band of disciples. Those who wanted to join that band must have had somewhat of a spiritual mind. And Judas had the intelligence which the other disciples lacked. He had executive intelligence.

There was another person, a young ruler, who also had many abilities. One of those abilities was wealth. That young man had a lot of money. He must have been shrewd to have accumulated so much money. This shrewd, rich, young person wanted to join Jesus. But Jesus made such high demands upon him—demands which made it impossible for him to follow Jesus. What a disappointment! Judas was completely disappointed that Jesus didn't receive this man. Judas thought the man was just what they lacked. Can intelligence and all these qualities which Jesus recommends actually be a stumbling block? It seems so. In the case of the rich young ruler we read the following.

Matthew 19

[23] Then Jesus said to His disciples, Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

It is hard for a shrewd man to enter the kingdom of heaven. How can we be rich without being shrewd? A rich man must be able to increase their wealth. Perhaps some rich people have their wealth by inheritance, but most wealthy people are shrewd. They know how to deal with money, to retain money, and to increase it. That is shrewdness. That's what Jesus commended in the unfaithful servant. He had made friends. He made a wise investment. Let's read another text which describes this.

1 Corinthians 1

[26] For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

Not many wise, or shrewd, are called. So, should we concentrate only on character? Then why did Jesus commend shrewdness?

Spiritual Intelligence

On one side we have shrewdness, or intelligence. On the other side we have a character of selflessness. Those with intelligence may say that that's enough. To have character would only be a hindrance to their wealth. Those with character may say that they have enough, because intelligence would be a stumbling block to their eternal life. But Jesus says we must have both attributes.

What does it mean to have both attributes? What does it mean to have both a character of selflessness as well as intelligence? We often compartmentalize these two attributes. We keep them separate in our minds. We sometimes live in one universe, so to speak, and sometimes in the other. For instance, if we are going to school, we live in a different universe from when we are in church. That is compartmentalizing.

Jesus didn't mean for us to compartmentalize; He intended for both attributes to become one. This means that we have a different intelligence. It's not mere street-smartness. Instead, it's a different wisdom. We'll call it *spiritual intelligence*. I would say that spiritual intelligence is much more than intelligence. That is my thesis now, and we will study more to prove this point.

If people with intelligence are so successful, how much more successful should we be with spiritual intelligence? We should be much more successful! Let's read a statement about spiritual wisdom, or spiritual intelligence.

> **Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 2, p. 702:**
>
> A minister once said that he could but think that Christ must have known something about science. Of what could this minister have been thinking? Science! Christ could have opened door after door of science. He could have revealed to men treasures of science on which they might have feasted to the present time. But knowing that this knowledge would have been appropriated to unholy uses, He did not open the door.

Jesus did have such knowledge. He could have spoken about it. Then we would speak of Him today as we do of Pythagoras, Plato,

or other famous scientists. In fact, these men would all be a mere shadow compared to Jesus. He would be the greatest astronomer, the greatest chemist, the greatest man in medicine, and so on. Door after door He could have opened. He had all the knowledge. But He did not use it to give himself fame. Rather, He used it to be a blessing for humanity. He did that in an unobtrusive way—in a way which people wouldn't realize.

Why is it bad to make all knowledge known to people? Consider what happened when Einstein and his peers realized that their knowledge had led to the construction of the atom bomb. It was a horrible burden for them. They probably wished that they had never contributed their knowledge to it.

Jesus knew beforehand what would happen. He had the wisdom to know that giving all knowledge to humankind would not always lead to a blessing. That is why He used it wisely. We don't know what it was that He could have said, but certainly He could have explained many aspects of modern science. Jesus had a lot of intelligence. But He had spiritual intelligence. He always used that intelligence for the blessing of others—not only in His present time, but for all of the future. It's impossible to create such a movement as Christ began without intelligence or spirituality. These two aspects were completely married within Him. We need to understand this further.

What is spiritual intelligence? It is intelligence which is guided by a selfless character. Spirituality and divine wisdom are two other names we could use for it. It means that we think of the future, not only of what is present. It means to see the spiritual, not only the earthly. It means to build on the eternal, not on the temporal.

This reminds us of the famous "Marshmallow Test." It is a test given to children in which the researcher gives a child a marshmallow, or something similar, to test their self-control. The child can either eat the marshmallow immediately, or they can wait a few minutes until they are given a second marshmallow. Those

who were able to wait have been shown to have more success in later life as well. The question is whether their ability to wait was a predisposition in their character which also made them more intelligent later, or did their education train them to be able to wait and cause them to develop more successfully in life? And what did the children ultimately do with the capital they had, namely being able to wait? These are interesting questions to consider. But the main point is that the children who waited were able to gain the future reward.

What is more important for us? Is the gratification of our present need more important, or can we wait for the future? And it's much more than this. Are we able to see the eternal in comparison to the temporal? Are we able to see the spiritual in comparison with the earthly? Are we able to see the selfless in comparison with the selfish? Are we building on the eternal, or on the temporal?

Making Friends with the Angels

Mammon is an Aramaic word for "money." Making friends with mammon, or money, means that we don't cling to it; it means that we let it go. And we make friends when we let it go. Who do we make friends with? We make friends with the good angels.

There are two kinds of angels—those who work for God and those who work against Him. The good angels are those who work for God and whom He sends out as ministers. They are a protection and guide for us, as we read in *Hebrews* 1:14.

Are we interested in having such friends? Or are we more interested in having earthly friends? Whom do we appreciate more—earthly or heavenly friends? Are we more interested in the spiritual or the temporal? If we are interested in having spiritual friends, then we won't worry about whether or not we have earthly friends. This doesn't mean that we won't have any friends. Rather, it simply means that we won't be concerned about it. That is because it will be more important for us to have angels as friends, than it is to have earthly friends. We may in-

deed lose earthly friends when we follow principle. But we will win heavenly friends—those whom God sends out as servants. There will be powerful, invisible beings standing by our side.

What kind of attitude do we need for such friendship? Let's read a text about this.

1 Corinthians 7

[29] But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none,
[30] Those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess,
[31] And those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

In other words, they have no interest in this world. Their minds are completely focused on the heavenly. And when our minds are turned to this, then we should be even more successful than the man in the parable who was commended as being shrewd. And again, it was the servant's master who commended him. It was not Jesus who commended him.

How do we become friends with the angels? That is our big question. We become friends with them by adopting their character, and by following the way of God, just as they follow God. Let's read a statement about the joy of the angels and how they follow the path of God.

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 109:

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. *Love for God makes their service a joy.* So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are reechoed,

Psalm 40

[8] I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart.

"Love for God makes their service a joy." The angels like and love to serve.

We will now look at an example of someone who did not cooperate with the angels. But this story also shows us how the angels work. Let's read the story of Balaam.

Numbers 22

[21] So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.
[22] Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the Lord took His stand in the way as an adversary against him.
[23] And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. Now the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road.
[24] Then the Angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side.
[25] And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck her again.
[26] Then the Angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.
[27] And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff.
[28] Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?
[29] And Balaam said to the donkey, Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!

[30] So the donkey said to Balaam, Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you? And he said, No.
[31] Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.
[32] And the Angel of the Lord said to him, Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before me.

The angel stood *against* Balaam. Normally, angels are given for our protection, as guides and companions. They are not usually our adversaries. But this angel was Balaam's adversary. How was that possible? Could Balaam have seen that the angel was his adversary? He lacked spiritual intelligence.

How to Gain Spiritual Intelligence

How can we gain spiritual intelligence? What is it? It is very simply the following:

1. The word of God,
2. Reason, and
3. Circumstances.

These are what give us sufficient intelligence to gain even more intelligence. Let's reads this.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 440:

There are thousands at the present day who are pursuing a similar course [as Balaam]. They would have no difficulty in understanding their duty if it were in harmony with their inclinations. It is plainly set before them in the Bible or is clearly indicated by circumstances and reason.

Here are the three aspects—the Bible, circumstances, and reason.

But because these evidences are contrary to their desires and inclinations they frequently set them aside and presume to go to God to learn their duty. With great apparent conscientiousness

they pray long and earnestly for light. But God will not be trifled with. He often permits such persons to follow their own desires and to suffer the result.

Psalm 81

[11] My people would not hearken to my voice…

[12] So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.

When one clearly sees a duty, let him not presume to go to God with the prayer that he may be excused from performing it. He should rather, with a humble, submissive spirit, ask for divine strength and wisdom to meet its claims.

This shows us how to make friends with the angels. We make friends with them by following these three guidelines—the Bible, reason, and circumstances. All three of these spoke against Balaam's way. Reason spoke against it. How could he go and curse the people whom God had chosen as His representatives? That was against reason. It's also against what the Bible says about God's people. And the circumstance of the donkey pressing Balaam against the wall gave such a clear message. Everything spoke very clearly to Balaam. But he lacked the intelligence.

When are the angels our companions and when are they our adversaries? To be friends with the angels is to work together with them for the fulfillment of God's will. It means that we adopt their character. What kind of character do the angels have? Their characters are absolutely selfless. Let's read this.

The Desire of Ages, p. 21:

The angels of glory find their joy in giving,—giving love and tireless watchcare to souls that are fallen and unholy. Heavenly beings woo the hearts of men; they bring to this dark world light from the courts above; by gentle and patient ministry they move upon the human spirit, to bring the lost into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know.

That is the character of the angels. They give "tireless watchcare" to those who don't deserve it, for people who "are fallen and unholy." The angels "woo the hearts of men…" They bring us

"into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know." Such selflessness! Their message to us is,

> "You must increase; we must decrease."

This message is given through word and action. This is the work of the angels. Only those who adopt this same spirit of selflessness can work together with them. Otherwise it is not possible.

Jesus spoke about this same principle in the parable of the unfaithful servant. The man wasn't holding on to the possessions. Jesus tells us that we will lose whatever we hold onto. He says that mammon will fail us one day. But the angels won't fail us. They will stand by us in the time of trouble. Money will not. Mammon will fail. So, it's actually not very intelligent to cling to mammon, is it?

When we are friends with the angels, then we will do what they do. We will follow the way of God with joy—just as they follow the will of God with joy. That is the character which the disciples finally gained.

Gospel Order in the Early Church

Now let's take a closer look at gospel order. Gospel order is working together with the angels. It means to be friends with them. It means to be in harmony with them. It means to have the same shrewdness as they have. This means to have real shrewdness, which is thinking of the eternal, not the temporal. It is thinking of the future, not of the present.

Selflessness led the disciples from one victory to the next. The Holy Spirit really filled them with the selfless spirit of love. Let's read this.

> **The Acts of the Apostles, p. 38:**
> The Spirit came upon the waiting, praying disciples with a fullness that reached every heart. The Infinite One revealed himself in power to His church. It was as if for ages this influence had

> been held in restraint, and now Heaven rejoiced in being able to pour out upon the church the riches of the Spirit's grace. And under the influence of the Spirit, words of penitence and confession mingled with songs of praise for sins forgiven. Words of thanksgiving and of prophecy were heard. All heaven bent low to behold and to adore the wisdom of matchless, incomprehensible love. Lost in wonder, the apostles exclaimed, *"Herein is love."* They grasped the imparted gift. And what followed? The sword of the Spirit, newly edged with power and bathed in the lightnings of heaven, cut its way through unbelief. Thousands were converted in a day.

"Herein is love." They really grasped the selfless spirit. As they grasped it, they were mightily successful. The Spirit gave them intelligence to deal with each other in a way that would give them true success. Let's read some of these reports.

> **Acts 2**
> [42] And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.
> [43] Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.
> [44] Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,
> [45] And sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.
> [46] So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,
> [47] Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

That is quite the story! They were very successful in their work. Why was that? It was because they had the combination of both intelligence and character. The two aspects were combined in one. They were not separated. The believers didn't have only intelligence or only character at different times. Instead, the two attributes were always combined together.

Acts 4

[32] Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.
[33] And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.
[34] Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,
[35] And laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.
[36] And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,
[37] Having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

That is gospel order. It is working together selflessly in a team for the advancement of God's work. It's especially interesting in these verses that the believers laid the proceeds at the apostles' feet. This means that they systematically dealt with the money they got from selling their properties. The believers did not give stipulations about how their money should or should not be used. They did not individually support this or that believer with their proceeds either. Rather, it was all done systematically. Everything was laid at the apostles' feet. That was order. It was gospel order.

What does it mean for the money to be laid at the apostles' feet, instead of being given into their hands? Of course, this is a symbolic expression. Practically speaking, the money would have been given into their hands. But the Bible says that it was laid at their feet. What does that mean? There is a symbolic meaning. It means that they gave it into the control of the apostles. They gave control of those means away. That is the important point. They didn't tell the apostles how the money was to be used. They gave the control away. It was no longer in their hands.

The fact that this is the symbolic meaning is also seen in other Bible verses. Let's read one.

Psalm 8

[6] You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands; You have put all things under his feet.

This verse speaks about Jesus. The Father put all things under His feet. He put all things into His control. Likewise, when the believers laid everything at the apostles' feet it means that they gave the control away. The question is, of course, are we willing to do this? That is order.

The believers did this not only willingly, they did it because they wanted to do it. They did it out of love. Love was the motive which made them work together in such a manner. Gospel order can never function unless it is practiced with a motive and spirit of love. It will not function if it is done in a spirit of duty, or if we say, "I *have to* do it." Rather, it must be something which comes from the heart.

The next step is to distribute the goods. That is very difficult. Once the proceeds were in the apostles' control, they had to distribute it justly so that no one lacked anything. We read that no one lacked anything. Everyone was cared for. How is this possible?

Just imagine that we have to feed a large group of people. As we start the task, we will come across many problems. The various people will state their different needs. But perhaps those who say they need little, actually need more, but they don't dare to ask for so much. They will still suffer then. And perhaps there are others who claim to have a great need, but they don't have the ability to handle what is given them. It's like putting money into a black hole—and they will continue to suffer. How can the proceeds be distributed then? It is a very difficult task to distribute money to needy people.

Many scriptures give evidence to the fact that it was not easy in the early church, just as it is not easy in our day. Let's read one such text.

1 Timothy 5

[3] Honor widows who are really widows…

–those who are really widows. In other words, give to those who are genuinely widows. Similarly, we could speak about the genuine, or worthy poor. What is the difference between a poor person and a worthy poor person? A poor person may simply be poor because they cannot handle money. They will lose it no matter how much is given to them. Whereas worthy poor are people who are really in need. Perhaps they have lost money because of circumstances beyond their control. They can really be helped. The same difference applies here to widows. Widows have lost their husbands, so they are in need of support. Let's continue reading.

[4] But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.

First let the children help their mother.

[5] Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.
[6] But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.
[7] And these things command, that they may be blameless.

Paul here describes how the money should be distributed. We see that wisdom and intelligence are needed for that. It would be simple to distribute the money equally among the people. But then some would get money that they don't actually need and others would not get enough. The money was distributed so that no one had any lack. This means that they distributed it intelligently.

Even though the disciples distributed the money intelligently and were shrewd, there was still dissatisfaction. Satan always wants to take advantage of our habitual wrong thinking. He wants to strengthen it. He is present in every meeting of Christians and tries to destroy the influence of the Spirit of God. He

wants us to begin to doubt the word of God. He wants to stop us from listening to the word. He may even prevent us from coming to the meetings. He is so busy and active to this end. Yet God is at the same time overruling Satan. We can be safe if we choose.

Let's read a statement about Satan's tactics.

Early Writings, p. 267:

I saw that Satan carries out his plans well. As the servants of God appoint meetings, Satan with his angels is on the ground to hinder the work. He is constantly putting suggestions into the minds of God's people. He leads some in one way and some in another, always taking advantage of evil traits in the brethren and sisters, exciting and stirring up their natural besetments. If they are disposed to be selfish and covetous, Satan takes his stand by their side, and with all his power seeks to lead them to indulge their besetting sins. The grace of God and the light of truth may melt away their covetous, selfish feelings for a little, but if they do not obtain entire victory, Satan comes in when they are not under a saving influence and withers every noble, generous principle, and they think that too much is required of them. They become weary of well-doing and forget the great sacrifice which Jesus made to redeem them from the power of Satan and from hopeless misery.

The Spirit of God leads to generosity, and to nobility of mind. It leads us to place emphasis on the heavenly instead of the earthly. It leads us to think of the future life instead of the temporal life. The Spirit of God is constantly doing this. The grace of God melts away the covetous, selfish feelings. This happens while we are under the influence of the Spirit of God. This is, for example, during our meetings when God's Spirit is influencing us. At that time, our selfish feelings are pushed back. That is really the case. They melt away. But do we really give up our covetous, selfish spirit? If we do not obtain the entire victory, Satan will come in when we are not under the saving influence.

Jesus described this situation as a house being swept free of demons. If the clean house is not filled with something else, then

the demons will return in even greater number.[133] In other words, our old covetousness will come back unless the victory is complete.

How is it possible for the victory not to be complete? It can happen when we are not fully willing to give up our old life in order to receive the new life. Or it can happen if we don't keep up communion with God. Both of these causes are possible. But an entire victory is necessary. Otherwise Satan will come back.

The wrong spirit did come back in the early church. We see this in the story of Ananias and Sapphira in *Acts* 5. They promised to give everything, but then decided to keep some of it instead. They lied about their decision and said that they had given everything. The wrong spirit also came back in the murmuring of the Greek widows against the Hebrew widows. The Greeks said that they were neglected in the distribution. These situations were Satan's work to turn the minds away from eternal, spiritual matters. It was taking away the spiritual part of the intelligence.

So, the apostles built even more firmly upon gospel order after that, by distributing their spirit and authority to others. These were the seven deacons who helped make the distributions. This was a continuation of the gospel order which God established from the beginning. It was a continuation of the selfless spirit of giving, which was present at the beginning.

The apostles could have decided to stop the system of distribution because of the accusations against them. They could have given up the responsibility and told the believers to handle it themselves. But that was not their attitude. They continued to make the distributions. They did not want to protect themselves or their reputations. Rather, they wanted the spirit of selfless giving to be continued. And it did continue. Gospel order did continue.

[133] *Matthew* 12:43-45.

To do medical missionary work in the right way means to do it in harmony with the angels. And to do it in harmony with the angels also means to do it in harmony with the church. That is another important aspect.

How can we know whether someone is bearing the responsibility of the right arm work correctly? Firstly, we will see whether they follow the instructions of God. Abraham did not follow God's instructions when he produced Ishmael.

Secondly, we will see whether they observe the principles, such as those found in *1 Timothy* 5. A person is not able to do the right arm work if they give unwisely, in an effort to protect their reputation. We must say "No" to those who are not worthy. That is what we have read.

Finally, we will see whether they are acting in harmony with the church, instead of according to their own thoughts. They will act in harmony with others. When God wants to do something, He will work for the whole church—not just for an individual who is independent of the others.

The one way of practicing the healing art is gospel order. This is selflessness. It is being in harmony with the truth—as much as we understand it. It is being in harmony with the church. It is following God's special direction. And this means to work together with the angels and to have the angels as our friends. To become friends with mammon means to give it away—to let it be under God's control, and under God's control through the apostles. This is what God wants us to do. And in this way the work will be really successful—just as it was in the early church.

19. The Center for Unity

Sabbath, September 14, 2019

LET'S begin with a question.

> "Why is it that there are so many different views and opinions in the world, when all people mean so well?"

One person believes the solution to all problems can be reached in one way, whereas another person believes it can be reached in another way. There are so many different opinions and ideas. This divided situation makes us unable to agree about how to move forward in unity, in order to finish the work and to do what is necessary to solve the problems of this world.

Does God have a solution for this? What would He want us to do? What did He want to do in the past?

God's Solution for Unity in the Old Testament

When God looked upon the world in the beginning, He saw this division and disunity. He saw the fighting that happened among people. He saw it all the time.

THE MISSIONARY CENTER OF ISRAEL

His solution began by calling out a family—the family of Israel and his children. They became a large people. Through them, God wanted to place a pattern in the world. He wanted to show how unity works and how everyone could finally agree, being of one heart and one mind.

The tower of Babel was quite the opposite of this. The people were all together at the beginning, but afterwards they were in terrible disunity. They ultimately had to go in different directions.

God wanted to unify. He wanted to unify His people first. Everyone should see that there were a people who were really unified. The purpose was to motivate others to desire to do the same. This unity also required a clear focus upon the divine laws, which are good for humankind and keep us alive. It is the transgression

of those laws which causes all the problems in the world. We can put all this under the heading of "selfishness." It is selfishness which causes division, and selfishness which causes all kinds of problems.

God wanted a people to show a pattern of what concentrating and obeying His laws does—for all humankind. That was His purpose. He established a center for this purpose. That was the sanctuary. The people were to learn about the laws in the sanctuary. They should become acquainted with God and His character there. They could become unified in that place. It was very important that the people of Israel should recognize that place as the center, as the source of their prosperity, and as the source of their unity. It was extremely important. This is what God tried to establish from the very beginning.

A UNIFIED WAY OF OFFERING: CAIN AND ABEL

People often say that it doesn't matter how we worship. They say that we can worship as we please. But the fact that this is untrue is made clear at the beginning of the Bible, in *Genesis* 4. That is where we find the story of Cain and Abel. When these two brothers grew up, Abel became a shepherd and Cain cultivated the ground. Those were their professions. Both professions are very noble, without question. Perhaps today we would say that the tiller of the ground is even nobler, because it is more important in our time to have food from plants than from animals, since it's not possible to feed the entire world's population from animal products. In those days, sheep were reared for other reasons than meat, but that doesn't matter for our discussion now. The point is that both professions were noble.

Both brothers brought a sacrifice. Cain brought a sacrifice from his crops as an offering. Abel brought a lamb and sacrificed it. We read that the Lord accepted Abel and his gift, but He did not accept Cain and his gift.

As a child, I always wondered why God accepted Abel's gift, but not Cain's. Wasn't God playing favorites? *Genesis* 4 even says

that God accepted Abel, but He did not accept Cain or his gift. So, God accepted the person. That was more important than accepting the gift. But God doesn't arbitrarily favor one person above another. He is an absolutely impartial judge. This means that since God accepted one but not the other, it must have been because of something in the hearts of the brothers. We know what that something was.

God had specifically prescribed how the offering should be brought and made. It wasn't to be brought only from the soil. They could offer something from the ground in addition to the main offering. But there must be a blood offering. Because that indicated the surrender of self. Bringing a bleeding animal was difficult to do. It is a hard job. By doing this, God wanted people to understand that it is difficult, but necessary, to surrender self. In summary we could say that Abel surrendered himself, but Cain did not. Cain refused to surrender himself. He was too proud. Essentially, Cain said,

> "I will bring God my sacrifice and He should accept it."

By contrast, Abel said,

> "I accept God's conditions."

It would also have been very humbling for Cain to have to go to his younger brother, Abel, and ask him to give him a lamb for the sacrifice. Cain didn't want to do this. He wanted to bring his own sacrifice, instead of asking someone else. He presented a sacrifice from himself.

THE SANCTUARY CENTER

There was a huge difference between these two kinds and modes of worship. God wanted to let Israel know this. He wanted to teach them and show through them that it's important how we worship. It *does* matter. It is not the case that we can just worship as we please—as long as we worship. No, it really matters. It is not so much the form that matters. These verses speak of both the

person and their gift. It is the motive behind the worship that matters. This motive is also expressed in a form.

Let's read the main text for today, in *Deuteronomy* 12, where God gave some very special instructions.

Deuteronomy 12

[1] These are the decrees and regulations you must be careful to obey when you live in the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must obey them as long as you live.
[2] When you drive out the nations that live there, you must destroy all the places where they worship their gods—high on the mountains, up on the hills, and under every green tree.

Just imagine, there were little places of worship everywhere—on the mountains, under the trees, and so on. We can also see them here in Germany today, when we go for a walk. But God told them to destroy all of those places. They were to all be done away with. Why? Because they were not promoting unity, happiness, or life. In fact, those places turned the minds to a false god—a cruel god who required child sacrifices, for instance. Baal required child sacrifices, among many other awful things. These requirements did not promote unity. So, these places had to be destroyed.

[3] Break down their altars and smash their sacred pillars. Burn their Asherah poles and cut down their carved idols. Completely erase the names of their gods!
[4] Do not worship the Lord your God in the way these pagan peoples worship their gods.
[5] Rather, you must seek the Lord your God at the place of worship He himself will choose from among all the tribes—the place where His name will be honored.

This is gospel order. God has prescribed an order. Instead of many little places, He gave the people one place to worship. Everyone was to come there. It was very important. When Israel apostatized, they started to worship at all the little places again. It happened gradually. They didn't start to worship Baal suddenly.

Rather, they gradually adopted this and that custom. One family had the idea of worshiping God in one way, and another family had another idea about how to worship Him. The Israelites were also influenced by their surroundings to some degree. And ultimately, they ended up worshiping Baal like the other nations did. That's why it was so important for them not even to begin to go down that pathway. That is why God told them that there would be just one place where His name would be honored. The people were to go to that one place.

Deuteronomy 12

[6] There you will bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your sacred offerings, your offerings to fulfill a vow, your voluntary offerings, and your offerings of the firstborn animals of your herds and flocks.

"There…" That is where they were supposed to offer everything. That was where they should take their tithes and sacred offerings. The tithes were not to be taken here or there, but rather to that one designated place. The same was true of the other offerings.

[7] There you and your families will feast in the presence of the Lord your God, and you will rejoice in all you have accomplished because the Lord your God has blessed you.

God made it abundantly clear that the place of worship was not supposed to be a place of sadness. It was to be a place of happiness. He told the people that they would rejoice in all they accomplished because of the blessing of the Lord.

[8] Your pattern of worship will change. Today all of you are doing as you please,

They were wandering in the wilderness. So, their place of worship changed, because they were traveling.

[9] Because you have not yet arrived at the place of rest, the land the Lord your God is giving you as your special possession.

[10] But you will soon cross the Jordan River and live in the land the Lord your God is giving you. When He gives you rest from all your enemies and you're living safely in the land,
[11] You must bring everything I command you—your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your sacred offerings, and your offerings to fulfill a vow—to the designated place of worship, the place the Lord your God chooses for His name to be honored.

Everything was to go to that one place.

Deuteronomy 12
[12] You must celebrate there in the presence of the Lord your God with your sons and daughters and all your servants. And remember to include the Levites who live in your towns, for they will receive no allotment of land among you.
[13] Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings just anywhere you like.

Not anywhere you like, and not any way you like. Instead, the sacrifices should be made in the place which God prescribed. He designated both the place and the manner or mode.

[14] You may do so only at the place the Lord will choose within one of your tribal territories. There you must offer your burnt offerings and do everything I command you.
[15] But you may butcher your animals and eat their meat in any town whenever you want. You may freely eat the animals with which the Lord your God blesses you. All of you, whether ceremonially clean or unclean, may eat that meat, just as you now eat gazelle and deer.
[16] But you must not consume the blood. You must pour it out on the ground like water.
[17] But you may not eat your offerings in your hometown—neither the tithe of your grain and new wine and olive oil, nor the firstborn of your flocks and herds, nor any offering to fulfill a vow, nor your voluntary offerings, nor your sacred offerings.

As far as offerings are concerned, not in your hometown. Neither the tithe, nor any offering. Nothing in your hometown. Of-

ferings were especially designated to be brought into the place that God had appointed, where the sanctuary stood.

Deuteronomy 12

[18] You must eat these in the presence of the Lord your God at the place He will choose. Eat them there with your children, your servants, and the Levites who live in your towns, celebrating in the presence of the Lord your God in all you do.

[19] And be very careful never to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land.
[20] When the Lord your God expands your territory as He has promised, and you have the urge to eat meat, you may freely eat meat whenever you want.

And wherever you want.

[21] It might happen that the designated place of worship—the place the Lord your God chooses for His name to be honored—is a long way from your home. If so, you may butcher any of the cattle, sheep, or goats the Lord has given you, and you may freely eat the meat in your hometown, as I have commanded you.
[22] Anyone, whether ceremonially clean or unclean, may eat that meat, just as you do now with gazelle and deer.
[23] But never consume the blood, for the blood is the life, and you must not consume the lifeblood with the meat.
[26] Take your sacred gifts and your offerings given to fulfill a vow to the place the Lord chooses.

That is the sacred gifts and the place the Lord chooses.

[27] You must offer the meat and blood of your burnt offerings on the altar of the Lord your God. The blood of your other sacrifices must be poured out on the altar of the Lord your God, but you may eat the meat.
[28] Be careful to obey all my commands, so that all will go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and pleasing to the Lord your God.

They could eat wherever they wished, if they killed a lamb and ate it. As far as sacred gifts are concerned, they were always to be brought into the sanctuary and to the altar that God had specified.

Deuteronomy 12
[29] When the Lord your God goes ahead of you and destroys the nations and you drive them out and live in their land,

[30] Do not fall into the trap of following their customs and worshiping their gods.

The purpose God made these laws was twofold.

Firstly, it was for unity among themselves. If everyone would worship just as they pleased and wanted, they would soon be of different opinions. One would worship this way, another would worship that way. There would be strife among them.

The second problem would be that the purity of the worship would not exist anymore. In order to maintain the purity of worship it was essential that they would all come to one place and always worship there. That was gospel order. In fact, God was so strict about this, that He even said that if someone brought a burnt offering somewhere else, then that person should be uprooted from the people.

Leviticus 17
[8] Give them this command as well. If any native Israelite or foreigner living among you offers a burnt offering or a sacrifice,
[9] But does not bring it to the entrance of the Tabernacle to offer it to the Lord, that person will be cut off from the community.

That law was quite strict. The reason God said this is that He wanted to establish a pattern for the whole world, to show how unity works, and how obedience to God's law works. In order to do this, the first step of deviation must be prevented. That is so important. Even the slightest way of doing it differently would eventually lead to great problems.

The people of Israel were very obedient about following this in their first years in Canaan; they were very strict. They understood what God had said to Moses. Joshua was the one who really enforced these laws. He reminded the people again and again of these laws which God had set up.

CONTROVERSY OVER THE ALTAR AT GELILOTH

When they possessed the land, they fought together against the Canaanites and finally they went into the land to take it. On the other side of the Jordan River, on the East side, two and a half tribes settled. They erected an altar there. Let's read this story.

> **Joshua 22**
> [9] So the men of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the rest of Israel at Shiloh in the land of Canaan. They started the journey back to their own land of Gilead, the territory that belonged to them according to the Lord's command through Moses.
> [10] But while they were still in Canaan, and when they came to a place called Geliloth near the Jordan River, the men of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh stopped to build a large and imposing altar.

What happened here? The strict law was that there was only one place of worship. Only one altar to bring sacrifices to. And now they began to erect an imposing altar.

> [11] The rest of Israel heard that the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had built an altar at Geliloth at the edge of the land of Canaan, on the west side of the Jordan River.
>
> [12] So the whole community of Israel gathered at Shiloh and prepared to go to war against them.

They thought they must be very strict and stop it immediately. Such a thing must not be left unpunished.

> [13] First, however, they sent a delegation led by Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, to talk with the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

Israel decided to give them a chance before they went to war.

Joshua 22
[14] In this delegation were ten leaders of Israel, one from each of the ten tribes, and each the head of his family within the clans of Israel.

[15] When they arrived in the land of Gilead, they said to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh,
[16] The whole community of the Lord demands to know why you are betraying the God of Israel? How could you turn away from the Lord and build an altar for yourselves in rebellion against Him?
[17] Was our sin at Peor not enough? To this day we are not fully cleansed of it, even after the plague that struck the entire community of the Lord.
[18] And yet today you are turning away from following the Lord. If you rebel against the Lord today, He will be angry with all of us tomorrow.

The sin at Peor was when Balaam deceived the people of Israel into the worship of idols. They committed adultery. Phinehas was the one who stopped it. He went into the tent of one priest who had boldly transgressed God's law and killed him with a spear.[134] This Phinehas was now the head of the delegation sent to speak with these two and a half tribes. He did some really tough talking to them.

[19] If you need the altar because the land you possess is defiled, then join us in the Lord's land, where the Tabernacle of the Lord is situated, and share our land with us.

In other words, Phinehas said to them,

"You are not cut off because you are on the other side of the Jordan River. You are welcome to come and be part of us. We don't want to separate from you."

[134] *Numbers* chapter 25.

Joshua 22

[19] ...But do not rebel against the Lord or against us by building an altar other than the one true altar of the Lord our God.

[20] Didn't divine anger fall on the entire community of Israel when Achan, a member of the clan of Zerah, sinned by stealing the things set apart for the Lord? He was not the only one who died because of his sin.

That was quite a lengthy speech. We don't know how long it was. Not every detail was reported. What is amazing is that the people on the other side of the Jordan, listened. They didn't interrupt. When you let others, who are very angry, talk, and you listen, they usually calm down. But, if you immediately react against their angry words, then you'll get a counter reaction and the situation will escalate. If you give them time to finish, and let their argument have its full weight, then give a reasonable answer, this is the best thing you can do. And that's what they did.

[21] Then the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered the heads of the clans of Israel:

[22] The Lord, the Mighty One, is God! The Lord, the Mighty One, is God! He knows the truth, and may Israel know it, too! We have not built the altar in treacherous rebellion against the Lord. If we have done so, do not spare our lives this day.
[23] If we have built an altar for ourselves to turn away from the Lord or to offer burnt offerings or grain offerings or peace offerings, may the Lord himself punish us.

They didn't defend themselves at all. They were fully in agreement with the rest of Israel, and stated that if what they had done was wrong, then they deserved death. That is a noble answer. They focused on the truth.

[24] The truth is, we have built this altar because we fear that in the future your descendants will say to ours, What right do you have to worship the Lord, the God of Israel?
[25] The Lord has placed the Jordan River as a barrier between our people and you people of Reuben and Gad. You have no claim to

the Lord. So your descendants may prevent our descendants from worshiping the Lord.

What they said, in effect, was that they didn't intend to establish a different worship, but in fact the opposite. They wanted to be connected and stay connected with the rest of Israel. That was the purpose of the altar—to be connected with the center. This purpose was the exact opposite of what the rest of Israel had thought.

Joshua 22

[26] So we decided to build the altar, not for burnt offerings or sacrifices, but as a memorial.

[27] It will remind our descendants and your descendants that we, too, have the right to worship the Lord at His sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices, and peace offerings. Then your descendants will not be able to say to ours, You have no claim to the Lord.
[28] If they say this, our descendants can reply, Look at this copy of the Lord's altar that our ancestors made. It is not for burnt offerings or sacrifices; it is a reminder of the relationship both of us have with the Lord.
[29] Far be it from us to rebel against the Lord or turn away from Him by building our own altar for burnt offerings, grain offerings, or sacrifices. Only the altar of the Lord our God that stands in front of the Tabernacle may be used for that purpose.

Then they made an inscription on their altar, so that all would know and understand that it was not for burnt offerings. It was only to remind the people that there was a center on the other side of the Jordan, where they were to worship. The delegation with Phinehas went back to the rest of Israel with very happy hearts. The situation was the antithesis of what it had looked at first. The law still stood. There was to be only one center. And the two and a half tribes confirmed that center with the altar they had built. It was unavoidable that the people would be dispersed through a larger amount of land. God had given them this land. But, it was still important that they had just one place of worship.

New Testament Examples

Let's look at another example. The disciples had asked Jesus who was the greatest. Jesus replied by saying that whoever is not like a child will not see the kingdom of God.[135] The disciples became humbler after this. They asked Jesus another question. Let's read about it.

THE MAN WHO LABORED APART

Mark 9

[38] John said to Jesus, Teacher, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because *he wasn't in our group.*

In other words,

> "He wasn't at the center. He was outside. So, we told him to stop."

The disciples were a little suspicious of the situation after Jesus had spoken about the children. So, they asked Him whether they had been correct. What did Jesus reply? The disciples were probably surprised.

Mark 9

[39] Don't stop him! Jesus said. No one who performs a miracle in my name will soon be able to speak evil of me.
[40] Anyone who is not against us is for us.
[41] If anyone gives you even a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah, I tell you the truth, that person will surely be rewarded.

Jesus said the opposite of what the disciples had in mind. They thought that everyone must be united at one center, because that is gospel order. They were not wrong in this thought. But Jesus said essentially,

> "The other man is united too. You don't see it, but he is one with us. Don't judge the heart."

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[135] *Matthew* 18:1-6.

The disciples thought that they had the honor of their master in mind. But they really had their own honor in mind. Their idea of a center was to be great and glorious themselves. Jesus had to rebuke that. That was at the foundation of the question,

> "Who is the greatest?"

They thought that they were the greatest. And because they thought they were the greatest, they also thought that everyone must be in their group. Anyone who was not in their group was to be excluded and rejected.

Mark 9

40 Anyone who is not against us is for us.

By saying this, Jesus was stating that the man was actually supporting the gospel. He was in fact supporting the purity of faith.

When Jesus sent out the disciples—the twelve and the seventy—they were not in the group at that time either, were they? They went out two by two. Two were in this town, and two were in that town. Imagine if someone had seen them and told them,

> "You're not in the one group!"

What would they have said? They would have replied that Jesus had sent them out. They would have said,

> "We are with Him. We are just passing on what He told us. That is indeed gospel order."

And it's true. That was also the case with the other man as well. He was sent by Jesus, as Jesus said very clearly. Christ said,

> "He is supporting the unity of faith. He is supporting the unity of God's people. Don't be mistaken about that. This is the fact of the matter."

IN THE GROUP, YET NOT IN IT

We'll look at some other examples now of people who were inside the group, but yet they were actually outside of it. Let's read a story about this.

Acts 8

[9] A man named Simon had been a sorcerer there for many years, amazing the people of Samaria and *claiming to be someone great.*

He claimed to be someone great. That is the root of the problem in having many places of worship. The problem is that people would say,

"We are the great ones."

And that is exactly what Simon Magus said. People actually said that about him. But he was pleased when he heard it. He liked it when they said he was great.

[10] Everyone, from the least to the greatest, often spoke of him as the Great One—the Power of God.

He liked that! But in order to appear to be humble, he would try to play it down. But he really thought he was great. He claimed it in his heart. That is what people who think they are great do. They don't say so publicly. Rather, they usually let others say it, while they themselves appear to be humble. That humility makes them appear even greater.

[11] They listened closely to him because for a long time he had astounded them with his magic.

The magic was his tool. It was what he used to make people say he was great.

[12] But now the people believed Philip's message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized.

Now Simon had competition—Philip and the others. They were receiving even more attention than Simon had had before. What

would Simon have thought. How would he react? How would a person normally react if another person got more attention than they did? The normal reaction is to respond with hostility. But Simon didn't do that. Let's see how he reacted.

Acts 8

[13] Then Simon himself believed and was baptized. He began following Philip wherever he went, and he was amazed by the signs and great miracles Philip performed.

It seems as if Simon was converted. He didn't fight against Philip, but rather joined him. But we can't overlook the trick used by people who want to be great. There is a well-known saying,

> "If you can't beat them, join them."

Simon was clever enough to realize and see immediately that he could not fight against the power which was behind Philip and the church. So, in order to continue to be great, what did Simon need to do? He needed to become like Philip himself. That is what he did. Let's continue reading.

[14] When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God's message, they sent Peter and John there.

[15] As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit.
[16] The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
[17] Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.
[18] When Simon saw that the Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money to buy this power.
[19] Let me have this power, too, he exclaimed, so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit!

Now his true spirit came out. It was evident why he had joined. He wanted that power for himself, because he wanted to be the great one. That is the reason. He even offered money for it. He

wanted to buy the power, and thought it would be a wonderful deal. It looks as if Simon really wanted to be at the center, doesn't it? But he wasn't at the center in spirit. He was in fact very far away from it. He was erecting his own altar in the various places. That's what he was doing in actuality. This was the case even when he was joining the disciples. So, even when he was in the group, he was still doing his own thing. Peter saw this very clearly.

Acts 8

[20] But Peter replied, May your money be destroyed with you for thinking God's gift can be bought!

[21] You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right with God.

Simon's problem was that he erected his own altar next to the real sanctuary—like those on the hill tops and under the trees. That is where he brought his own sacrifices—which were actually the same sacrifices as Cain's.

We could also study about Balaam in this context, but we will not do that now in detail. His story can be found in *Numbers* 22. The same principles can be found there. Balaam was a man of God. He understood very well where God's center was. He was faithful to the center until money was offered to him. Money was Simon's problem as well.

When the money was offered to Balaam, he used the sanctuary to enrich and flatter himself. He was very flattered by the many praises that the Moabite King, Balak, gave him. Balaam liked that praise. That was his own altar which he began to establish. It was like the altars on the mountain tops and under the trees—those altars which the Israelites should destroy. Whether it is fame, recognition, or money, it is always the same matter. It is about bringing our sacrifice to the wrong altar.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CENTER

When we think of the unity which God wanted to establish in Old Testament times, we are reminded of *1 Corinthians* 12 in the New Testament. Unity is described there. The chapter speaks of different gifts which the believers have. But they have one Spirit and one Head, where everything comes together. Let's read this.

> **1 Corinthians 12**
> [4] There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all.
> [5] There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord.
> [6] God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

This brings unity among God's people. It also causes unity with God, as well as harmony with God's laws. And as such, it brings prosperity and happiness to God's people. That is in contrast to selfishness.

Let's now look at a text where Jesus describes what this New Testament center actually is.

> **Matthew 11**
> [28] Then Jesus said, Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.
> [29] Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
> [30] For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.

This is the center where we are to worship. This is the New Testament sanctuary.

> "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you."

Don't place your own yoke upon your neck—where you think you'll worship me on this or that mountain, or under this or that tree. No, take my burdens. I will give you rest.

"Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

When we come to this center, we will firstly come into harmony with God's law. Secondly, we will come into unity with each other. That is the secret. Let's turn to a statement where this is nicely described.

The Desire of Ages, p. 330:

"Learn of me," says Jesus; "for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest." We are to enter the school of Christ, to learn from Him meekness and lowliness. Redemption is that process by which the soul is trained for heaven. This training means a knowledge of Christ. It means emancipation from ideas, habits, and practices that have been gained in the school of the prince of darkness. The soul must be delivered from all that is opposed to loyalty to God.

In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment. Amid the greatest opposition and the most cruel treatment, He was still of good courage. But many who profess to be His followers have an anxious, troubled heart, because they are afraid to trust themselves with God. They do not make a complete surrender to Him; for they shrink from the consequences that such a surrender may involve. Unless they do make this surrender, they cannot find peace.

The key word here is "surrender." Unless they make the surrender, they cannot find peace. In other words, we must destroy the other altars. We need to destroy them. We must destroy these altars, wherever they are. We should destroy them and surrender to Christ and His yoke. Then we will find peace. There is harmony with God and with one another in that place. The next paragraph tells us what needs to be destroyed.

The Desire of Ages, p. 330:

It is the love of self that brings unrest.

It is love of self that leads us to worship in other places.

The Desire of Ages, p. 330:

When we are born from above, the same mind will be in us that was in Jesus, the mind that led Him to humble himself that we might be saved. Then we shall not be seeking the highest place. We shall desire to sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn of Him. We shall understand that the value of our work does not consist in making a show and noise in the world, and in being active and zealous in our own strength. The value of our work is in proportion to the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Trust in God brings holier qualities of mind, so that in patience we may possess our souls.

It is really important to understand the differences between the other places of worship and the one that God has specified. The center of true worship is not when we feel we must give some evidence of how good we are, or act zealously in our own strength. Where is this center? It's where the Holy Spirit is imparted. The question is not how many people did you convert, heal or help. It's not how much you sell or how many you speak to. These are irrelevant. The question is,

"How much of the Holy Spirit do you have?"

That's the crucial point. Sometimes we wish that things would run more smoothly. We are very burdened by the fact that there are hindrances. We imagine that if only this or that would happen, then things would run smoothly. If only this person would see their line of work. If only the computer would work properly. Sometimes everything that could go wrong, does go wrong. That doesn't matter. The question is,

"How do I react to these circumstances?"

The impartation of the Spirit is the key point. This reminds me of when we had the camp meeting here at Dickendorf in 1985. Some of you might remember this. It was raining and raining. So much so, that all the tents were flooded. We could only sit in the

meeting tent when we had boards on the ground under our feet because the ground was too soft, and you would sink into the mud. When it was raining too hard, we couldn't have meetings because of the noise on the tent. Of course, we were saddened by these circumstances. However, the neighbor commented that he marveled how we were continuing to hold the camp meeting. What did he look at: the circumstances, or our reaction to the circumstances? He looked at the way we reacted to the conditions. This is the critical point.

How do we compose ourselves in adverse circumstances? It depends on the impartation of the Spirit. The Spirit is the center that God gives. There is one Spirit, one Head. Through this, God wants to unify us. Through this, God really wants to show the world how unity works, and what it will accomplish.

Let us all strive to be in that one center, rather than do a great and imposing work in the world. Don't make a lot of show or noise. But take Simon Magus as a serious warning. He wanted to be a great person. Let us seek for the place nearest to the heart of God, the Center, and not for the greatest place in the world. This is the gospel order God has placed on us. Let's pray for this now.

20. Gospel Order (2020)

Sabbath, May 9, 2020

The Main Point of Gospel Order

TODAY we will study gospel order. I can see that in the past, our focus has been in the wrong direction. If you were to ask most believers what gospel order is, they would usually tell you that it means the message is preached through one messenger. That is what stuck in their mind—*one messenger only!*

It is true that God has used one messenger in the past, most of the time—but not always. As we know there were 12 apostles, then there were Waggoner and Jones in 1888, and we expect even more messengers at the end, in the time of the latter rain. But mostly God did use one primary messenger and gospel order explained to us why and so forth. However, that is not the focus. The messenger himself can change. At one time we have this messenger, at another time another messenger—I am speaking here of primary messengers. In fact, everyone is actually a messenger.

If there are one or more primary messengers it does not matter, but what does matter is if it is *the same message!* That is the point. The real point of gospel order is not one-man-messengership, but *one message*—not many different messages often contradicting each other.

When you look at our history, how often can you see efforts to change the message a little here and a little there, and how people came up with their different ideas. Even while the message was going forward powerfully, people would come and say,

> "Hey, I have an idea here or there."

God has one message at one time—this point is true of all ages. Whether this is in the time of the apostles, the time of Waggoner and Jones, at the time of the latter rain, or any time in between, God has a specific message. At the time of the reformation, there

was also one message, but it was even preached in different locations. Often the messenger standing up in one location had no connection with another in a different location, and yet they gave the same message. That is the major point—the same message.

What Is the Message?

But what is the message? Many people think that this is simply a presentation from the Bible, such as a presentation of justification by faith, or the resurrection, or any other doctrine. But we have a far too limited concept of what the message really is. It is much more.

A message can be an experience. For example, the experience of Job when he suffered the attacks of Satan was a message for his time. It was a very powerful message too, which stretches beyond his time to give us enlightenment even today. That was not a theoretical dissertation about some Bible text. It was an experience. When you look at Bible stories, they are all experiences. And they are messages. Experiences are messages.

Also, a *work* can be a message. For instance, when Noah built the ark, he preached a powerful message without speaking a word. Every stroke of the hammer, each time timber was sawn, this was a message in itself.[136] And the message was that this world will be drowned by a flood. Of course, it was also accompanied by words that Noah spoke, but the work which he did was in itself a very powerful message—more powerful than his words could be. We need to understand this.

A message is not just words, not just dissertations, sermons, and so on—in fact that is by far the smaller part. Without a doubt, the more important part is the work that we are doing and the experience that we are going through—these are the message.

Whatever it is—a word spoken, or an experience, or work performed—in every case it is a presentation of God's character. And

[136] "Every blow struck upon the ark was a witness to the people." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 95.

this is the message in its various forms. When we think of one message, then think not only of words spoken. Think also of experiences, of work done. And there is one message on which God wants us to focus. He wants us to focus on a specific message at a particular time.

What does it mean to practice gospel order? When do we practice gospel order? It means to live the message in word and action. In other words, to speak about it and to practice it. If we do not practice present light—if we do not live up to the light that God has given—then we are not practicing gospel order. I think we understand this.

Distractions

What distractions are there? Now the problem that Satan throws in the way, to prevent us from practicing gospel order, is that he distracts us from the one message God has for us. Satan wants to distract us from this one theme. How are we distracted?

- We can be distracted by some favored sin, some cherished sin that we practice openly, or not so openly.
- It can be the demands of the family which distract us. It can be unbelieving parents, children, spouses—they want this, that, or the other.
- It could be some profession that I have.

In general, you could say that what distracts us is private matters! Matters of a private nature. Every private thing in our life is a distraction from gospel order, or a distraction from the one theme—the one message God wants us to dwell upon.

Let us read some of these messages.

Luke 9

[57] Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.
[58] And Jesus said to him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.

What was Jesus saying here?

> "You must count the cost before you make such a vow, or such an oath. Count the cost carefully."

Luke 9

[59] Then He said to another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

What is this? A distraction from gospel order. A distraction from the one theme that was important for this man here. What was the one theme, the one message at that time? "Follow me"—follow Jesus. But he wanted to be distracted.

> "Let me go first and bury my father."

That would have been such a distraction as to have prevented him from following Jesus.

[60] Jesus said to him, Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.

If you wanted to take this legalistically, you would construe this to mean that you should never conduct a burial anymore. But I think you can well understand that it would have been a distraction for this man.

> "Other people can do this job very well for you, but you are to follow gospel order."

This reminds me of a song that we sang many years ago in America. "I'm going to follow gospel order" to the melody "Down by the Riverside." Unfortunately, most of those who sang it at that time, then left us because of that message. That is very sad. When we are going to follow gospel order, we cannot allow ourselves to be distracted. What distracted them? Why did they not follow gospel order anymore? Mostly for family reasons. When you look at the cases of those who sang that song, they left because of the family.

[Audience]: This happened when the reforms and other messages came too.

Let's read on.

Luke 9
[61] And another also said, Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.

Again, the family! What does this mean? Distraction! If he had gone and bidden farewell, his family would have said,

"Oh, stay with us, you can't go. You know we have little children here and you can't leave them alone. And this and that and the other."

The family would have found many good reasons to distract him from following the Lord. So, what did Jesus say to him?

[62] But Jesus said to him, No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

These are some examples of distractions from gospel order. Let's look at some other examples.

Luke 14
[18] But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.
[19] And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.
[20] Still another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

You see that these are all distractions from gospel order. The first said,

"I have bought a piece of ground and you know it was very expensive. I can't just leave it now, or I will suffer a great loss. Such a loss would mean that I can't give to the work anymore. So, let me go and look after my property and multiply it, and then I can give something to the work."

This is a distraction. Another had bought the oxen, which are similarly a possession. And finally, the one who married said,

> "After all this is over, I will come and follow the Lord."

All these things which are mentioned here are private matters. Private matters cannot be the work of God—they can never be gospel order—that must be very clear. Let us turn to the epistle of Peter:

> **2 Peter 1**
> [20] Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.

Private matters play no role in the message of God—ever! As soon as you start to mingle your private things into the work of God, then it is not the work of God anymore. That must be very clear. Private things and the kingdom of God are contrasting matters.

The Kingdom of God

What is God's cause? Let us now see how the kingdom of God is described.

> **Acts 4**
> [32] Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

What is the difference between ideal communism[137] and the experience of the early church? In the early church they had all things in common.

> [Reinhard]: God brought everything together and made it common. In communism, the policy says everything is in common, but often at the cost of others.

Even if there were ideal communism, it would be different. Even if every person was equal and everybody had enough to eat,

[137] In communism as practiced on this earth, there are rich and poor people.

and so forth—even if this were so, it would still be different. The difference is that in communism, the things they have in common are their private things. Whereas what we have in common in God's church, is God's kingdom. That is the difference. In other words, in communism, everyone still pursues their private matters. Whereas in the church, everybody pursues the matters of God.

Let me describe this in the case of the early church. There was great persecution, and as a result, many lost their possessions. There were people in real need. As a result of having things in common, the need was met. In other words, nobody needed to starve because of this. But the point was that through distributing goods to one another as they had a need, they showed God's character. They showed the character of giving, by nobody claiming that anything belonged to them. No, they gave. In contrast to this was the spirit of Ananias and Sapphira. They also gave part of their possessions to the Lord, but of the rest, they said,

"That is my private thing."

They had promised it all already—according to the leading of the Spirit of God—but even if they had not promised and clung to their own possessions, it would have been an expression of greed, or selfishness. As such, it would have been totally in disharmony with the gospel message—gospel order—with God's character.

What is God's cause? This is the question now. Gospel order means to follow the message, but what is the message at a given time? Is it this message of this person, or is it that message of that person? We have several invitations from the world. One says,

"Come here,"

–while another says,

"Come here."

Some say,

"Christ is here,"

–and another says,

"Christ is there."

One says,

"My house is now the center where everybody should participate,"

–or,

"My office, my work is the center."

Another says,

"No, my work is the center, and everybody should come here."

How shall we, as the people of God, know what the cause of God is at the present time? Which experience is God's cause? There are many experiences. Everybody has experiences, all the time. But which is the cause of God? Which is the one message that we should follow? First of all, it is not a private matter. And the cause of God is where God leads. Let us take an example from *Exodus*.

Exodus 13

[20] So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness.
[21] And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.
[22] He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

It is very clear that the message was where the cloud led. You had to follow that cloud! It was very clear that this was the message for that time.

"Follow it!"

Whether it was given through Moses, or through Joshua, or anybody else, that does not matter. But,

"Follow the cloud!"

That is the important point. The work of God could clearly be seen when they went through the Red Sea. There was no question about it—that was the work of God. So,

"Go through, go into the water."

When they were given the manna, that was also very clear. When the early Christian church could care for their persecuted brothers and sisters, that was the work of God at that time. The experience of Job was the work of God. We know that in the last days it will be medical missionary work. We know this from Ellen White's statements. It could be agricultural work, which is a part of this medical missionary work, and it could be in different places, and different works.

Now I want to come back to the video of the flocks of birds that we saw at the beginning. The focal point changes from time to time. Sometimes the focus is in one area, sometimes in another, but there is always a focal point all the time. And wherever this focal point is, is where we see the greatest concentration of birds. They move from one country to another, traveling many, many miles in this way. But they follow a certain pattern—and that is gospel order, even though the focal point changes.

For the church, the focal point at one time was the Red Sea, at another time it was the care of the brothers and sisters, another time it was the experience of Job, medical missionary work, and so on. It could be different focal points at different times. But there is a common purpose. They had all things in common. What did they have in common? Following where God led.

Distinguishing God's Work

How to identify and distinguish? How do we distinguish better between private matters and the cause of God? How do we know

that the cloud is the cause of God? It seems to be a simple matter. Such a wonderful thing like a cloud that moves, shade by day, fire by night, and so forth. It is a marvelous thing, isn't it? It seems to be a simple matter, but it is not as simple as you think. It could be a natural phenomenon. Let's read about this.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 297:

After leaving the wilderness of Sin, the Israelites encamped in Rephidim. Here there was no water, and again they distrusted the providence of God. In their blindness and presumption the people came to Moses with the demand,

Exodus 17

[2] Give us water that we may drink.

But his patience failed not.

[2] ...Why chide you with me? [he said]; wherefore do you tempt the Lord?

They cried in anger,

[3] Wherefore is this, that you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

When they had been so abundantly supplied with food, they remembered with shame their unbelief and murmurings, and promised to trust the Lord in the future; but they soon forgot their promise, and failed at the first trial of their faith. The pillar of cloud that was leading them *seemed to veil a fearful mystery.* And Moses—who was he? they questioned, and what could be his object in bringing them from Egypt? Suspicion and distrust filled their hearts, and they boldly accused him of designing to kill them and their children by privations and hardships that he might enrich himself with their possessions. In the tumult of rage and indignation they were about to stone him.

What was the cloud? Was it so clear?

...[it] seemed to veil a fearful mystery.

It was a strange phenomenon of nature. It was as though you were looking at the birds that we saw in the video and say,

"Well, that is a strange phenomenon, but how shall I see God's leading in it?"

"...a fearful mystery." And Moses, who was he? To see the difference between the message and a private matter seems to be not so clear—at least not to the Israelites then. Let's turn to another statement.

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 507:

Many have in a great measure failed to receive the former rain. They have not obtained all the benefits that God has thus provided for them. They expect that the lack will be supplied by the latter rain. When the richest abundance of grace shall be bestowed, they intend to open their hearts to receive it. They are making a terrible mistake. The work that God has begun in the human heart in giving His light and knowledge must be continually going forward. Every individual must realize his own necessity. The heart must be emptied of every defilement and cleansed for the indwelling of the Spirit. It was by the confession and forsaking of sin, by earnest prayer and consecration of themselves to God, that the early disciples prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The same work, only in greater degree, must be done now. Then the human agent had only to ask for the blessing, and wait for the Lord to perfect the work concerning him. It is God who began the work, and He will finish His work, making man complete in Jesus Christ. But there must be no neglect of the grace represented by the former rain. Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it.

What could be a clearer message than the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? What could show God's guidance more clearly than the pillar of cloud and fire? Isn't this a sign that it is the message of God, and that this is what we should focus on? And yet we read,

> It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it.

In other words, we do not discern that this is the message—even though it is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And when we don't discern it, then we do not receive it. This shows that the distinction between private matters and God's work is not as easy as you think. But there is a clear condition mentioned in this paragraph that shows us how we can know. Nobody needs to be deceived, even though it is not easy.

So, how can we know? *By living up to all the light that God has given.* By receiving the early rain. By walking in God's ways at every step of advancement. In other words, if we follow God's leading—and God leads everyone in small as in big things—we shall be able to discern more and more where His message is. And then we can follow it. It is not difficult.

But it is not a mechanical process. It is not just looking at some outward sign, such as an explosion, or something equally obvious, and then saying,

> "Hey, that's it!"

You have to be guided by the Holy Spirit. You need to have a mature Christian experience where Christ leads you individually. And as you follow His guidance, you will see more and more what is the work of God. And you will recognize it and be there when it is important. That is following gospel order.

Is Unity a Sign?

Some people may say,

> "Well, one clear sign at least is unity, right? When we are unified, then this is a sign that it is the work of God."

Let us read about Korah in this connection.

> **Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 398:**
> In this work of disaffection there was greater union and harmony among the discordant elements of the congregation than had ever before existed.

Let us leave out the word "disaffection" because the people often do not see that they are disaffected. They think that they are doing a good work, whereas it is just disaffection, nothing more.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 398:

In this work...there was greater union and harmony among the discordant elements of the congregation than had ever before existed.

How wonderful! That *must be* the work of God. Such unity, such harmony. But that is no evidence that this is the message of God. And why not? Because it is a work of disaffection, or discontent. It is not a positive message which brings people together. Christ prays for unity and He says,

John 17

[21] Thereby the world will know that You have sent me—that they are one even as You and I are one.

When we see the statement above, we tend to think,

"Okay, there is harmony, unity, and so on."

But remember that the unity which Christ prayed for is a different kind of unity. It is not based on disaffection, not on opposition to the light of God, but it is based on the truth. It is based on Christ.

Some Practical Steps

In closing, I would like to describe some very practical steps in following gospel order. The first step is:

1. SHOW AN INTEREST IN THE WORK OF GOD

If you let yourself become distracted by many things, then you will lose it. For instance, we could be interested in the construction of our home, and how we shall arrange it. What shall we build, when we build our own house? Or a new car—we could spend hours and hours looking for a new car. Or a new computer, or whatever. You could distract yourself a lot in such a way. But it is important not to allow ourselves to be distracted, but to medi-

tate on what the message is at the present time. Meditate upon it. Joshua says to do this.

Joshua 1
[8] This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

It is interesting how Joshua presented a book to them and then said,

> "Now meditate upon it day and night."

That is quite an instruction. He could do this, because he knew that this was the message for his time.

> "Do this, meditate upon it day and night, and do not be distracted by your sheep, your oxen, children, land, harvest, and so forth."

Psalm 1
[2] But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.

He shows great interest in the message that God has given. And the message—let me say it again—is not just a word. It can be an experience, or a work. Those who showed a great interest in the building of the ark, such as Methuselah and Noah, of course, were following gospel order. Basically, we could summarize this first step with the words,

> "Watch and pray."

That is what Jesus said in *Matthew* 24 and 25,[138] when He admonished His followers to be always watchful. To be watchful means always to show an interest in where the work of God is.

Look at the birds. When they focus on one cluster, they all show an interest. They go there. They say,

[138] *Matthew* 24:42; 25:13.

"Ah, that's where the center is now."

That is where the work of God is. There we need to go, and to follow it. We show interest—and that is watching and praying.

2. PARTICIPATE IN THE WORK OF GOD

The second step is, participate in the work wherever you can, wherever you have the possibility.

Some people are quite curious about what is going on in the cause of God. As I hear, we have a lot of listeners who are very interested in what is going on. Some of them might be like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea, who later laid hands on the work, but others never show an interest in participating. They just want to know what is going on. But that is not enough. To follow the message—to follow gospel order—also means to participate in the work wherever I can.

Let us read a statement about this.

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 299:

> Oh, that the Lord might guide you! You should never in a single instance allow hearsay to move you to action, and yet you have sometimes done this. Never take action to narrow and circumscribe the work unless you know that you are moved to do so by the Spirit of the Lord. Our people are doing work for foreign missions, but there are home missions that need their help just as much as these foreign missions. We should make efforts to show our people the wants of the cause of God, and to open before them the need of using means that God has entrusted to them to advance the work of the Master both at home and abroad. Unless those who can help in [Battle Creek] are aroused to a sense of their duty, they will not recognize the work of God when the loud cry of the third angel shall be heard. When light goes forth to lighten the earth, instead of coming up to the help of the Lord, they will want to bind about His work to meet their narrow ideas. Let me tell you that the Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning.

The point is that there is a difference between a private matter and the work of God. When I have an interest in private matters, I try to proscribe God's work to my narrow ideas—to my private interpretation, my private ideas. When I do this, I will not be ready to come up to the help of the Lord, as it says here. Let us read this again.

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 299:

Instead of coming up to the help of the Lord, they will want to bind about His work to meet their narrow ideas.

What does it mean to come up to the help of the Lord? It means to participate in the work when it is needed—to be there when the call comes. Because it is a word from the Bible, let us read it.

Judges 5

[23] Curse Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse its inhabitants bitterly, because they did not come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

That is the song of Deborah, after the victory over Sisera and the enemies of Israel. They had a great victory and the song is in memory of that victory. Here Deborah expresses this curse. It is by inspiration that she does this.

In other words, God speaks a curse here against some inhabitants of Meroz, a town in Israel. This town was inhabited by people who would not participate in this battle against the enemies of Israel. They did not come to the help of the Lord. They were not ready. Why not? Because their private matters came first. Probably their houses, vineyards, family, and suchlike, all came first. So, they were not there when they were needed. They did not come to the help of the Lord, and this is how the word of God looks upon it.

"Let them be cursed!"

You may think that this curse is given because God needed them for the victory. No, God did not need them. The victory was gained anyway. God wanted them to participate for their own

sakes—not for His sake. God does not need us. But for our sakes, He asks us,

> "Come and participate in my work."

There is another story that is very interesting in this context, and that is Israel's deliverance from Babylon. Let's read it.

Prophets and Kings, p. 599:

Zechariah 2

[6] Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north,

–was the message given the scattered tribes of Israel who had become settled in many lands far from their former home.

[6] ...I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord.

[7] Deliver yourself, O Zion, that dwells with the daughter of Babylon.

[8] For thus says the Lord of hosts; after the glory has He sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that touches you touches the apple of His eye.

[9] For, behold, I will shake my hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me.

It was still the Lord's purpose, as it had been from the beginning, that His people should be a praise in the earth, to the glory of His name. During the long years of their exile He had given them many opportunities to return to their allegiance to Him. Some had chosen to listen and to learn; some had found salvation in the midst of affliction. Many of these were to be numbered among the remnant that should return. They were likened by Inspiration to...

Ezekiel 17

[22] ...the highest branch of the high cedar, [which was to be planted] upon a high mountain and eminent:

[23] In the mountain of the height of Israel.

It was those "whose spirit God had raised" (*Ezra* 1:5) who had returned under the decree of Cyrus. But God ceased not to plead with those who voluntarily remained in the land of their exile, and through manifold agencies He made it possible for them also to return. The large number, however, of those who failed to

respond to the decree of Cyrus, remained unimpressible to later influences; and even when Zechariah warned them to flee from Babylon without further delay, they did not heed the invitation.

Then came the difficult time in the days of Artaxerxes. We won't read all this now, but the point is that God invited them to participate in His work. Where was His work at that time? Not in Babylon, but in Jerusalem. And how few followed! How few came to the help of the Lord. God did not call them for His own sake. He said it for their sake because He knew what would happen in Babylon afterward. So, when God asked them to leave, and they did not follow the first time, then the second time they were even less impressed, and less inclined to go.

3. BE A MINUTEMAN

This leads to the third point. Do not hesitate to obey the voice of the Holy Spirit when He calls you. As soon as the voice of the Holy Spirit calls you, then go! That is following gospel order. If you hesitate—as you can see here with those who stayed in Babylon—the next time you will be even less impressed. You remain less impressible to later influences. That is the warning—therefore be a minuteman. Follow Him, go! Do not leave it on the bench. Don't procrastinate. As Jesus said, "Do not get your mantle," but flee.[139]

A good example of someone who was a minuteman, is Isaiah, of whom we read:

Isaiah 6

[8] Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I! Send me.

Isaiah reacted immediately! He did not say,

"But, Lord, first I need to be prepared."

No, he said,

"Here I am, send me."

[139] See *Matthew* 24:18.

In other words, Isaiah was ready—a minuteman—on the spot. And that is following gospel order. Let us turn to another statement.

Gospel Workers, p. 451:

The minister who has a due appreciation of service,...

Which of us is a minister? Everyone, right? A minister is to minister.

> ...regards himself as God's minuteman. When, with Isaiah, he hears the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" he responds, "Here am I; send me." [*Isaiah* 6:8.] He cannot say, I am my own; I will do what I please with my time. No one who has given his life to God's work as His minister, lives for self. His work is to follow Christ, to be a willing agent and co-worker with the Master, receiving His Spirit day by day, and working as the Saviour worked, neither failing nor being discouraged. He is chosen of God as a faithful instrument to promote missionary work in all lands, and he must ponder well the path he follows.

Gospel order is much more than just one man and his message. It concerns all of us. We are to follow the light—the message—wherever God gives it.

Here again are the three steps in summary, for following gospel order:

1. Show an interest in the work of God;
2. Participate in the work;
3. Be a minuteman.

This is our challenge.

