

The Revelation of Righteous Judgment Series

PART 5

JUDGMENT AT THE HOUSE"

(CONTINUED)

I PETER 4:17-18... *For the time Is come that JUDGMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD: and If it BEGIN with us, what shall be the END of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?*

In our last article, we climaxed somewhat abruptly with a startling conclusion --- that now, since according to New Testament writers there is but one true temple God has built up, and laid claim to as His Own (that temple being the vast assembly of believers united in Christ); and since He has made no plans to return to that old order of dwelling in "temples made with hands"; it stands to reason that the man of sin" referred to in II Thess. 2 must generally depict the Adamic nature dwelling In us all! Who else could actually "sit" in the temple of God? And while we readily acknowledge that there has been, and shall yet be various personifications of this "old man", outwardly expressed in the form of deceivers and false messiahs seeking to find refuge in the midst of the Body of Christ (so as to prey upon the unsuspecting and gullible), the fact remains that they are all but an extension of Adam's life! HE IS THE ONE AND ONLY MAN OF SIN!

Now, we are sure this came as quite a shock to those who have never really given it much thought. And no doubt, others may have casually brushed the Issue aside, since it did not coincide with their long-held traditional beliefs. We understand that it is very difficult to give up the idea of an earthly individual called "the man of sin", who is soon supposed to arise on the world scene, and rule the world from a natural temple in Jerusalem. (Human nature generally requires someone beside itself to blame for it's problems! As Gen. 3:11-12 reveals, this is a "hand-me-down" trait of Adam's)! We also understand that because many hundreds of books have been written, and many thousands of sermons have been preached over the years about this future world dictator, it has solidified this image within the minds and imaginations of millions around the world. These impressions are not easily removed (it requires a renewing of the mind). So if this is what you choose to believe, that is certainly your prerogative. We will not criticize you for it. As Paul said, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5). But as

for us, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20)! And we trust that the Spirit of the Lord shall confirm the truth to those with "hearing ears", that we all might focus our attention on the real source of the problem!

GOD'S DUE PROCESS IN JUDGMENT

As you know, Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians (especially the second chapter) has long been regarded as being an eschatological writing... dealing strictly with matters leading up to, and consummating human history. It has generally been associated with such subjects as "great tribulation", "the last days", and "the end of the world". According to many theologians, it is wholly futuristic in content; it had no relevance to the generation to which it was originally spoken, and has had no relevance up to our present time. In fact, since many have conveniently read the "pre-tribulational rapture doctrine" into it, they have concluded that it really has *nothing* to do with the saints at all! As they have interpreted it, it is totally irrelevant to the believer in Christ; since before any of these things will even begin to take place, we will all be "airlifted" to safety! This, dear friends, is what some perceive to have been Paul's purpose in writing this letter. They see it as a checklist of things neither they (of Paul's day), nor we, will ever be here to see!

As you are already aware, we hold quite a different view. It is our persuasion that all scripture has relevance to every believer, in every generation. And this letter is no exception! There are important truths revealed in these few words, as well as prominent principles vital to our understanding. These are words to live by! In order to snare our meditations from chapter two, however, we will first touch upon the theme of the letter, which is described in chapter one. This will assist us in placing all things in perspective.

Paul opens his letter with a much needed exhortation to the saints in Thessalonica. He begins by commending them highly for the abundant charity they have manifested one to another, inasmuch as he gloried in them in other churches "for their patience and faith in all their persecutions and tribulations that they had endured" (1:4). Why was this? Because at the very time of this writing, they were encountering intense opposition from their adversaries; quite remarkably, though, without retaliation. Obviously, they were being unjustly troubled and vexed from without, by some who "knew not God, and that obeyed not the gospel of God". Therefore, Paul sought to encourage them by telling them that their patience and faith acted as "a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God"; confirming that it was "a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that troubled them" (verses 5 & 6). He wanted those who were troubled to enter into a state of rest with him (verse 7a), by assuring them that their godly conduct was actually emblematic of God's righteous judgment. It served to justify the severity of God's actions against all perpetrators of unrighteousness; and it guaranteed that He would also reward those who diligently sought Him!

The basic theme of chapter one certainly harmonizes with a host of other notable scriptures, all of which attest to the fact that there is a day of reckoning and general judgment determined upon the world at large (and specially upon those who have persecuted His elect). Without question, our blessed Lord has appointed a time,

commonly referred to as "the GREAT and TERRIBLE day of the Lord" (Joel 2:11, 31; Mal. 4:5), in the which "He shall judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained". The reason it is called both "great" and "terrible" is simply because to some, it truly will be great; and yet to others, it will be dreadful! However, we see that Paul goes a step further in this exhortation to describe just HOW God has chosen to execute this world-wide judgment. According to verses 7-10, it is "...WHEN THE LORD JESUS SHALL BE REVEALED FROM HEAVEN WITH HIS MIGHTY ANGELS (Gr. "messengers of power"), *in flaming* fire taking vengeance on them that know not God... WHEN HE SHALL COME TO BE GLORIFIED IN HIS SAINTS, AND TO BE ADMIRER IN THEM THAT BELIEVE"! We would have you to notice carefully: the judgment of the world, and the restoration of all things will take place AT THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST... when He shall come "*in flaming fire to be glorified IN His saints*"! How dear and concise are these words! As we stated before in Part One of this series, it is God's purpose in Christ to judge the quick and the dead *with His saints*, from within His glorious temple made up of "lively stones" gathered from every generation, who have been prepared in their time for "such a time as this". "Know ye not that THE SAINTS shall judge the world"? What a glorious honor and privilege is reserved for us, when Christ is fully seated, settled, and glorified IN US! In that hour, it shall be said, "Behold, THE TABERNACLE OF GOD IS WITH MEN, AND HE SHALL DWELL WITH THEM, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God... FOR THE FORMER THINGS ARE PAST AWAY. And He that sat upon the throne said, BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW" (Rev. 21:3-5)! What a day of rejoicing that will be! For when the reality of this truly comes to pass, He will have taken full residence in His saints; and having done so, He will be able to freely administer righteous judgment from the throne of their hearts! This, dear friend, is what shall usher in the Day of the Lord; for "He hath prepared His throne for judgment" (Psa. 9:7)!

Paul closes the chapter by saying, "*Wherefore we pray always for you that our God would count you WORTHY OF THIS CALLING, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith and power: that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (verses 11-12). Now, lest we should take any of this for granted, and assume that we shall invariably be placed in this position, the words of this prayer disclose an important condition. For from them, we may rightly gather that there is a "measuring up" to this high calling, a qualifying and preliminary process, ere we are ready to judge with Christ. And this leads us to chapter 2!

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE SPIRITUALLY MINDED

"*Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the Day of Christ is at hand...*" (II Thess. 2:1-2).

From the appearance of the opening lines of this chapter, it would seem that certain individuals were going about perverting the truth concerning the Day of the Lord; and were obviously using it to strike fear in the hearts of the elect. Apparently, some had even gone so far as to actually forge Paul's signature to their own letters, in order for them to gain acceptance! (Isn't it amazing how far some will go to disseminate their doctrines)? The reasoning behind it all was obviously this: if the Day of the Lord truly was at hand (as these fear mongers were asserting), then the hardships, troubles, and afflictions the saints were presently enduring would naturally be perceived as God's wrath on them! Wouldn't this be the logical assumption of the natural mind? Furthermore, if this were true, it would apparently mean that their oppressors were actually "the rod of [God's] anger, and the staff in their hand [was His] indignation" (Isa. 10:5)! Correct? Now, it is not our purpose to speculate why these individuals went about insinuating such things; but you can more readily understand why the Thessalonian believers were somewhat confused and disturbed! They were afraid that perhaps the Day of the Lord really had begun, and they had somehow ended up on the wrong side of God's judgment!

In a previous letter to this same group, Paul had repeatedly assured them that "Jesus... [hath] delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10). Again, in that same letter he wrote, *AFOR God hath NOT appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Thess. 5:9). He sought diligently to convince them, first of all, of God's "great love wherewith He loved them"; and secondly, that all of His dealings (even chastisements), no matter how difficult they might seem at the time, were lovingly designed to assist them in "obtaining (full) salvation by our Lord". Therefore, they had no need to fear God's disciplinary judgments, as if they were purposed against them; for they were all aimed toward a righteous end... to work in their benefit, and not to their destruction!

As emphatic as Paul was about this, you would think that they would have long since laid their fears aside. But alas, they had not! They had not firmly established these facts in their hearts. So again, it became necessary for him to "stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance"; to lay out before them the successive order of God's eternal purposes, and the significance of their present situation, as it fit into the scheme of things. He earnestly desired to convey the truth to them that prior to the coming of "that great day of God Almighty", there was a dispensational process, and a revelational period through which the saints must pass!

Before we leave this opening portion of Scripture, we would like to comment on Paul's appeal, "Now we beseech you, brethren, *by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him...*". The wording of this has compelled some to assume that Paul was prefacing the following discourse with the hope of a pre-tribulational rapture. But was this his intention? Was he *really* appealing to the coming of the Lord, and '*the catching away*' of the saints, as some would have us believe? We would merely draw your attention to the word "coming". In the original, it is "PAROUSIA" (Gr. #3952); which is defined basically as "PRESENCE". Therefore, we might paraphrase this to say, "Now we entreat you, brethren, by the PRESENCE of the Lord, and by our uniting together with Him..."! Reading it this way puts us in mind of Matt. 18:20, where Jesus

said, "Where two or three ARE GATHERED TOGETHER IN MY NAME, THERE AM I IN THE MIDST OF THEM"! Did He mean that, literally, He would appear in a physical sense? Of course not. This brief sentence, spoken by our Lord, gives us assurance that whenever saints enter into the realm of Spirit, into a true state of spiritual assembly, they will meet with, and encounter His presence! He will make Himself known to them! And this, we believe, is what Paul made his appeal to. He was imploring them to enter into the Spirit, to assemble with him in the higher realms of the heavenlies, and consider the things he was about to say... that the Spirit might then lead them into all truth. Otherwise, they would not be able to receive them (I Cor. 2:14)!

We are given a very powerful admonition in II Thess. 2:3-4... as well as a great reservoir of deep spiritual insight. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for THAT DAY SHALL NOT COME, EXCEPT THERE COME A FALLING AWAY FIRST, AND THAT MAN OF SIN BE REVEALED, THE SON OF PERDITION; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; SO THAT HE AS GOD SITTETH IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD, SHEWING HIMSELF THAT HE IS GOD. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things"? In a nutshell, Paul was simply reminding them that before "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" would come in all of its force and fury, and before they were qualified to judge with Christ in that day, there must first come a time of testing; a period which would result in great deception for some... while providing a revelation of the man of sin in the temple, for others. This lawless one must first be exposed in all of his reprehensible ways... before he would be removed from the premises! In other words, before judgment would be given to the saints of the Most High (Dan. 7:22), it must first begin at the house (I Pet. 4:17)! This is the message that he stressed!

A FALLING AWAY FIRST

As we have previously stated, many have associated the notorious revealing of the man of sin with the end of the age. And rightly so! We certainly have no quarrel with that. With increasing visibility, he will be seen more and more in all of his vileness and corruption, as he moves about in the temple. However, there is another question we would straightway ask: and that is, when exactly did Paul say he would appear?

While our text does not specifically give a particular date, there are certain facts that may be deduced. Our conclusions are based not so much by what IS said, but what IS NOT said!

For example, while it is true that it DOES say that before the Day of the Lord commences, he must first be revealed in the temple; what it DOES NOT say is that JUST BEFORE the Day of the Lord is initiated, i.e. during the "great tribulation", he will suddenly make his appearance! But isn't that saying the same thing? Not at all! Our text simply says that it would happen BEFORE that Day; it did not say HOW MUCH before! You see, while it does give a general time frame, it *does not* specify when this exposure shall BEGIN! Why, then, have we ASSUMED that his appearing was a future event, something yet to occur, when Scripture says no such thing?

Another unfounded statement commonly made is that the man of sin "SHALL SIT in the temple of God". This, likewise, suggests a future fulfillment, an event relegated to another day. However, Paul plainly says that "he, as God, SITTETH in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God"! Now, beloved, unless we are badly mistaken, this word "SITTETH" is used in PRESENT TENSE! It denotes a current action!

Did not he say that "the mystery of iniquity (Gr. "lawlessness") DOTH ALREADY WORK" (verse 7)? And did not John say, "as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, *EVEN NOW ARE THERE MANY ANTICHRISTS*; whereby we know that it is the last time" (I John 2:18)? Can we deny his words in I John 4:2-3? "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: AND THIS IS THAT SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST, WHEREOF YE HAVE HEARD THAT IT SHOULD COME; AND *EVEN NOW IS ALREADY IN THE WORLD*"! How else could we explain this terminology, without admitting that Antichrist was already at work in their day (both in spirit and in bodily form)? Is there any way to get around this conclusion? And even if there were, why would we want to wrest the Scriptures? It would be to our own hurt!

On account of these, and many other confirming passages, it is our adjudication that when Christ initially entered the living temple of saints on the Day of Pentecost, He also began a crusade to expose the man of sin in their midst! At that time, our Lord inaugurated an age of divine illumination; and for the past two thousand years, He has incessantly uncovered this archenemy of our souls (in all of his many disguises and manifestations), shining the light of truth on his mysterious activities, so that he will ultimately have no place to hide! Throughout this entire Pentecostal period, Christ has steadily and systematically been evicting "the old tenant" from the house, in a way that we will never want to invite him back again! Praise God for it!

In his book, "Paradise Restored", David Chilton confirms these thoughts, when he says: "We generally think of the apostolic period as a time of tremendously explosive evangelism and church growth, a golden age when astounding miracles took place every day. This common image is substantially correct, but is flawed by one glaring omission. We tend to neglect the fact that the early Church was the scene of *the most dynamic outbreak of heresy in world history*. Continuing, he says: "The Christians had a specific term for this apostasy. They called it *ANTICHRIST*. Many popular writers have speculated about this term, usually failing to regard it's usage in Scripture... [they teach] that "the Antichrist" is a specific individual; connected to this is the notion that "he" is someone who will make his appearance toward the end of the world. Both of these ideas... are contradicted by the New Testament" (*end quote*).

One does not have to be a scholar to recognize the truth of this. Looking through the canonical records we have of those days, we read that from the conception of the early Church, all manner of deception, defection, and corruption began to surface. Some were perverting the gospel of grace, by teaching along side of it the continued observation of ceremonial laws (Acts 15: 1-29; Gal. 1: 6-9; 16-21; 3: 1-3; 5: 1-12). Others went the

opposite direction, teaching that grace was actually license for lawlessness (II Peter 2: 1-3; 10-22; Jude 4, 8, 10-13, 16). Some erroneously taught that the Resurrection had already occurred (II Tim. 2: 18); while others taught that it never would (I Cor. 15: 12). There were doctrines of devils circulating, which mixed Christianity with excessive asceticism and idolatry (Col. 2: 8, 18-23; I Tim. 4: 1-3); as well as the acknowledgment of Jewish fables and endless genealogies, which "minister questions, rather than godly edifying" (I Tim. 1: 4; 4:7; II Tim. 4: 4; Tit. 1: 14). Because of these, and other like professions, the apostles were continually sounding the alarm against heresy (Rom. 16: 17-18; II Cor. 11 :3-4, 13-15; Phil. 3: 17-19; I Tim. 1: 3-7; II Tim. 4: 2-5).

However, these were not the only problems they were forced to confront. Among the ranks of believers, there were reports of immorality, adultery, and perversion (I Cor. 5: 1-13; 6: 9-20); blasphemy (I Tim. 1: 19-20); perjury (Acts 5: 1-11); partiality and sectarianism (I Cor. 1: 11-12; 3:1-4; James 2: 1-9); gluttony and drunkenness (I Cor. 11: 20-22); as well as hatred, covetousness, emulation, jealousy, gossiping, slander, unforgiveness, and such like. In fact, one need not look further; every vice known to man could easily be found *right within the newly formed temple of God!* Even the apostles had their share of problems (Acts 1 5: 36-40; 9: 26; Gal. 2: 11-14)!

Now, in case you had somehow assumed that the early Church was the perfect pattern and example for us to follow, think again! In many ways, THEY WERE YET CARNAL (I Cor. 3:3)! They were still "babes", who had not yet learned to WALK! Our purpose for pointing this out, however, is not to diminish the glory and virtue that they did possess, but rather, to show that there has undoubtedly been from their day til now, A PERIOD OF GREAT FALLING AWAY. It was not restricted to the first century, nor is it relegated to a future generation. Is it not obvious that it continues even now? Certainly, evil men and seducers have waxed worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; but is it not also true that Christ is still revealing the carnality of our own hearts, as well? Who among us is exempt? Or who among us has mastered walking in the Spirit, to the point that we never "fall" into the realm of the flesh, in one fashion or another? It should be without controversy, therefore, that we have been passing through what might be referred to dispensationally as the "*apokilupto ek apostasia*" (revelation of apostasy); a time in which the Spirit has, and will continue to prove beyond any shadow of a doubt, the unstable and degenerate inclinations of the human heart! Left to itself, it will inevitably fall!

GOD'S LONG-TERM EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

But someone might ask, "Why didn't the Lord just simplify His sayings before He made His departure, spelling them out in the plainest of language, so that no one would ever slip into deception"? Or, "Why didn't He at least clarify the meanings of some of the more controversial issues found in the Word, which have caused men to stumble? Knowing all things as He does, He must have surely foreseen the conflicts that lay dead ahead, that would split the church into a thousand pieces"! Or better yet, "Why didn't the Lord just go ahead and totally perfect the saints when He returned on the Day of Pentecost? This would have prevented many from falling into divers snares and

temptations! He could have completely destroyed the "man of sin" in that one sudden appearance, and saved us the trouble of ever having to contend with him again"!

Our understanding would be greatly enlarged in the purposes of God if we comprehended this one simple truth: Although God does desire that we all come (corporately) "unto A PERFECT MAN, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4: 13), PERFECTION (maturity) IS A PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT; and this condition is only reached by DEGREES! In the same way that a child is not born fully mature, but must invariably go through life obtaining opportunities in order that wise judgments might be made, even so has Christ purposed for His Body. Often this means confronting various obstacles, problems, and situations which sometimes demand very difficult decisions. But this is what maturity is all about! It involves the process of time, and the making of proper choices! This is why Paul describes those who are "of full age" as having "had their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5: 14); for growth in maturity is directly connected with such exercises! It is for this cause that He has designated the "church age" (as it has commonly been called) as an age-long lesson in discernment... that we might continue to "GROW unto an HOLY TEMPLE in the Lord" (Eph. 2: 21). You might say that for the past two thousand years, we have all been in "Spiritual Law School", majoring in a course on the revelation of righteous judgment! He is teaching us how to be led of His Spirit, as He writes His laws upon our inward parts!

This explains why I Cor. 11: 19 says, "For there MUST BE also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be manifest among you". And Luke 17: 1, from the New American Standard, "IT IS INEVITABLE that stumblingblocks should come..."! For it is as we are daily faced with various occasions for judgment (both within and without ourselves), and we learn to wait patiently for the Lord's leadings before making any judgments on our own, that His approval of us is made manifest! Our response becomes an open proclamation of our inward state; and we are known by the judgment which we execute, whether it be of God, or not! This is why we read, "For as many as are LED by the Spirit of God, they are the SONS (mature ones) OF GOD" (Rom. 8: 14)! This is one of the sure measures of spiritual maturity, as we work toward our "Master's Degree"!

We need not question the wisdom of God in this. Just because we might decide that He has sufficiently educated the Church along these lines will not alter His plan; nor will it hasten the process. He has predetermined the length of time necessary to firmly ingrain this lesson within our consciousness, that we would evermore lean upon His Spirit. Did He not say, "THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS, and desperately wicked: who then can know it" (Jer. 17: 9)? If this is true, then what makes us think that we know better than God? Shall the student tell the Teacher when he has passed the test? Or does the pupil decide when class should be dismissed? Listen... the heavenly "Headmaster" knows exactly what He is doing, and the amount of time it will take to do it in, even when we are unsure of it (we may "drop out", but we will not receive our "diploma")! Since "it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power", He alone decides "Graduation Day"! (Our responsibility is simply to be ready when it arrives)!

Throughout this entire dispensation, the Lord has tested His church, allowing the "man of sin" to remain in the temple for a season. At times, he has been restrained (to a noticeable degree); at other times, he has been revealed. It is during these times of revelation that the saints have received opportunity to advance to the next "grade", or level 'of spiritual maturity (by correctly judging him according to the quickening of the Spirit), or to be forced to take the test over again. This has been in God's plan.

As a part of our "homework", we must learn how to dearly distinguish between the voice of the flesh, and the voice of the Spirit. This lesson is of such vital importance, it cannot be overstressed! You see, until we can accurately differentiate between the two, we will continually be led astray! We will be prone to accepting and pronouncing fleshly judgments, as dictated by the "man of sin"!

Of a truth, there have been many ways in which the "man of sin," has operated over the years; sometimes in open expressions of evil; and sometimes, under the guise of good. Generally, we have no trouble recognizing the obvious, such as those listed in Gal. 5: 19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like...". But because of his deceptive nature, the hearts of men have often been deceived into believing that many of his works were actually of God! This is why we read "that he, as God sitteth in the temple of God, SHEWING HIMSELF THAT HE IS GOD"! He delights in taking on the appearance of righteousness! But you can rest assured that before Christ is finished, He will leave no doubt as to their true origin: "For God shall bring EVERY WORK INTO JUDGMENT, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccles. 12: 14)! He will conclusively prove what is of THE FLESH, and what is of THE SPIRIT! The great thing about it is, He has allowed us the privilege of sharing in that judgment now... in preparation for the days ahead!

THAT SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST

As we raise this issue, we would ask: what exactly is inferred by the term, ANTICHRIST? Commonly, we would think of it as that which is opposite of, or against Christ. Certainly there is no error made by this opinion. In fact, it is upheld by Paul's definition of the man of sin: "...who OPPOSETH AND EXALTETH himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped". However, there is more to it than that. Vine's "Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words" comments on the use of the Greek preposition "anti", saying that "in the majority of instances in the New Testament, the idea is that of "IN THE PLACE OF", "INSTEAD OF", OR OF EXCHANGE". Now, taking into account that the word CHRIST (Gr. "CHRISTOS") may be used either to describe "the Anointed One" (personal), or "the anointing" (impersonal), this certainly broadens the definition!

Think about it! The implications are staggering! According to this simple explanation, we may reasonably conclude that not only individuals, and not only that which is openly opposed to and antagonistic of Christ, but *anything* that is used IN THE PLACE OF,

INSTEAD OF, AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR, OR IN EXCHANGE FOR THE ANOINTING IS CONSIDERED ANTICHRIST! Though it may seem to be godly; and though it may actually seem to further the cause of Christ; it is considered to be a natural enemy of His. And therefore, it is directly under God's judgment!

We are given the criterion for discerning of spirits in I John chapter 4, verses 1-3: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but TRY THE SPIRITS whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ *is come in the flesh* is of God: and every spirit that confesseth NOT that Jesus Christ *is come in the flesh* is NOT of God: AND THIS IS THAT SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST, whereof ye have heard that it should come"! While the text surrounding this admonition deals basically with the detection of false prophets, it also serves as a principle and standard by which we may judge all things. Would we not all agree that every thought, word, or action expressed stems from a motivation? If that is true, then that motivation must also have a source. Therefore, it is in light of this that we are encouraged to TRY THE SPIRITS whether they are of God! Consider the motive... as well as it's source!

What, then, is the measuring rod of discernment? Simply this. Every spirit is known by it's testimony. If it attests to the fact that Christ is come in the flesh, we may accept it as being of God. Otherwise, we may not! Now, this confession does not speak of a mere acknowledgment of the Incarnation, that "God was manifest in the flesh" some two thousand years ago. There are plenty of spirits that would admit to that! Rather, it is that Christ *is presently come* in the flesh (more specifically, in our flesh, or in that of another's), prompting and motivating the action(s) under consideration (this includes all thoughts, words, or deeds expressed). And every spirit that does not disclose, declare, attest to, or confess the life, nature and attributes of Christ is obviously NOT OF GOD! "Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (I John 4: 6)! It's just that simple!

Can we grasp this? It is hardly a revelation! It is an elementary test; and yet, extremely difficult for the natural man! The reason for this is that before one can judge the counterfeit, he must first unmistakably know the real! He must be able to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd; as well as which expressions and manifestations are befitting of Him! This is where the real test comes. How well do we really know Him? For if we truly know Him, we will immediately recognize anything or anyone that is seeking to replace Him! It will be obvious! If not, we might well follow the voice of the stranger!

While we have just begun this examination, we will dose for now with a quote from a prophetic message originally spoken in tongues, and afterwards interpreted by John G. Lake in the year 1916. We believe the weight and authenticity of this word will speak for itself!

"...The triumph of Jesus Christ was attained through His willingness to be led by the Spirit of God. The triumph of the Christian can be attained only in a similar manner.

Even though God has baptized a soul in the Holy Spirit, there yet remains, as with Jesus, the present necessity of walking in humility, and permitting the Spirit of God to be his absolute guide.

"The unveiling of consciousness, of the desire of the flesh, of the sensuality of the nature and the thought of man, the *revelations of adverse tendencies, IS PART OF GOD'S PURPOSE,* and necessary for growth in God. *How can the nature of man be changed, except that nature first be revealed?* So there arises in the heart the desire and prayer for the Spirit of God to eject, crucify, and destroy *every tendency of opposition to the Holy Spirit.*

"Think not that thou shalt attain the highest in God until within thine own soul a heavenly longing to be like Him Who gave His life for us possesses thine heart...

"Fear not to place thy hand within the nail-pierced palm. Fear not to trust His guidance... He leadeth thee aright and heaven's splendor soon shall open to thy spirit, and thou shalt know that all triumphant souls --- those who have overcome ---have found their entrance by this path into the realm of light" (end quote). Hallelujah! We judge this to be the truth!

In the coming messages, we will endeavor to focus on this all-important theme. Needless to say, there is much to be learned about being led of the Spirit! Maranatha!

to be continued...

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