

THE IMAGE OF JEALOUSY

THE GREATEST DANGER TO THE END-TIME CHURCH

As we approach the end of the age all of us are aware that the Church of God has been scattered, it's once unified power fragmented. Many groups have splintered and then splintered again or, maybe, in disgust splintered once more into the living room Church of God.

At this time of endless splintering many wonder WHY God is allowing this to happen to His church, though scripture indicates that the final years of this age will not commence until the power of God 's people has been completely crushed (Daniel 12:7).

“ And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.”

We should not be surprised at this turn of events, for God's word amply details the great danger facing God's people at the end time, a danger from within the church ! We have long understood the **results** of this threat- we find the New Testament replete with prophesy relating to the end-time falling away: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1Timothy 4:1).

2 Thessalonians 2:3 “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first” This apostasy in the latter days will involve doctrinal deception, in particular the great threat of idolatry, deceptively posing as “The Government of God.”

“And I saw thrones and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image ...” (Revelation 20:4).

Herbert W. Armstrong explained in his Feb. 1939 Good News article "Did Christ Re-organize the Church"
“And thus the very principle of Church Government becomes the image of the Beast ! The whole thing is false! It is part of Babylon! Those who are IN and members of such an organized church government, submitting to doctrines declared as a fellowship test, are in Babylon, and actually worshippers of the image of the Beast! And God is calling us, His people OUT of Babylon today, before it is too late before the plagues fall! Brethren, let us have the courage to accept the Truth, and to come out ! ”

I'm sure most have read these words several times, even in the pages of 'The Journal.' I thank God for the pastors who recognized their responsibility as watchmen for God's sheep, to warn them of this great danger to their salvation, clearly prophesied throughout God's word, when the principle of duality is understood. God has shown us from the example of Solomon that a man can be used to build the very temple of God and yet by his actions later encourage idolatry. See 1 Kings 11:1-10. “But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the

sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded.”

A key principal is 1 Corinthians 10:11: “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come,” so, the warnings God gave to Israel apply to us too !

"And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young ones, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still, but he shall eat the flesh of the fat and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock!" (Zechariah 11:15-17) and again, “For the idols have spoken vanity and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd" (Zechariah 10:2).

Have **we** listened to idols who taught a lie about the Government of God, and prophesied falsely? Have **we** gone our way seeking a true shepherd only to fall prey **again** to those who claim to speak for God? “Deliver thyself O Zion (God's church) that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon” (Zechariah 2:7).

What a great lesson we have had to learn! As it happened in ancient Israel, so it has happened in spiritual Israel, but the tragedy is that though several ministers have warned of this danger, many in the different branches of God's church still do not recognize **why** the falling away from the truth occurred, and so are repeating the process again, or remain with an apostate organization out of a mistaken sense of loyalty.

“A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies and the priests rule **by their own authority**, and my people love it this way” (Jeremiah 5:30 **NIV**).

All of us must be familiar with Christ's condemnation of dominion and rulership in Matthew 20:25-26. “But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister ” .

Anything in God's church that hints of a pope, a figure-head, hierarchies, rank and rulership is plainly against God's instructions for the New Testament ministry. 1 Peter 5:1-3 “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

God's true ministers understand that they, like the rest of God's people, are called to serve! “ For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Some have understandably become so disgusted with false ministers that they no longer believe in the need of a ministry at all, but God does. “And he gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11).

As we read, these are gifts, not ranks, given “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" v.12-13.

All of us must realize that if we do not follow Christ's example of true service now, we will not come unto that perfect man, the stature of the fullness of Christ, or qualify to rule in God's Kingdom.

“Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the

will of my father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7: 21).

God's ministers should set the example, not concerning themselves with authority and control over large groups of churches, but simply serving God in their local assembly. As ministers, our job is to provide spiritual food in due season to God's people, to care for and nourish God's flock. "For I was hungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink .I was a stranger and ye took me in. Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:-35,36,34) .

Isn't it plain that only those who prove themselves genuine in their desire to SERVE now will be qualified to be entrusted with great power, and authority in the Kingdom of God? "One is our master, and we are all brethren," (Matthew 23:8) and yet time and again we see groups splintering in order to follow another 'Pastor-General' or 'President', various 'Directors' and 'Bishops' with authority over the local ministry and churches - whole ranks of men attempting to insert themselves between God and His people. The cause of the organisation's departure from the truth is not recognized and so the whole process is destined to be repeated one more time.

Let us remember that just before the return of Christ God's people are protected by the seal of God in their foreheads.

"And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea. Saying Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Revelation 7:2-3).

This links with another prophesy, long claimed to concern us today, found in Ezekiel 9:4-6 "And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem (symbol of the church) and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that SIGH AND THAT CRY for all the abominations that be done IN THE MIDST THEREOF. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity. Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women: but go not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin **at my sanctuary**. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house " (the leaders and elders in God's church).

What are these abominations that we should all be sighing and crying over?

The answer is actually found in the previous chapter, where Ezekiel is carried in vision from his captivity by the river Chebar to the Temple in Jerusalem!

"And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head, and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looked towards the north; where was the seat of the **image of jealousy which provoketh to jealousy**. And behold the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain. Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up your eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way towards the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this **image of jealousy** in the entry" verses 3-5.

There within the very **sanctuary of God**, had been erected an image of jealousy, an affront to God , to provoke him to his face as His people are tempted into spiritual adultery. Worse still, the priests are pictured as going on to brazenly lead the people into Babylonian idolatry and sun worship. **V16** "And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house , and behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord , between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east." Which Church of God has organized Easter Sunday sunrise worship services and encouraged it's congregations to worship on the day of the sun ? What is the result?

"Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of [spiritual] Israel committeth here, **THAT I SHOULD GO FAR OFF FROM MY SANCTUARY**" v.6

Have we not seen all of this occur within God's temple today - the Church of God? But how many of God's people still remain in organizations from which God has gone far off, while they still espouse an image of jealousy, or the image of the Beast as God's word also describes it ! How many realize that God always goes far away when men erect such an image, gradually withdrawing His Spirit so that eventually the truth is lost and even Sunday worship seems required?

One of the first signs of such apostasy we can notice is the departure of love, joy and peace, as many of us have experienced in the past, though this will always be relative to the application of rulership in the local congregation. However, even with the best will in the world the local minister will not be able to stem the departure of God's Spirit from the idolatrous organization and its consequential departure from the Truth.

We can expect God's church to continue to fragment until this lesson is learned, for God will not tolerate rivals. We are looking at idolatry as the main reason for the fact that, at the last, only a half of God's people will retain the Holy Spirit!(Matthew 25:1-3). "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:"

Are **you** coexisting with the image of jealousy because it is claimed to be an integral part of God's temple? Don't allow yourself to be deceived! Even the Pilgrim Fathers fled England to America to escape the image of the Beast! The New Testament knows nothing of a Petrine supremacy over the other apostles Acts 15:13-19 "And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:"

Galatians 2:11 "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed."

1 Peter 5:1 "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:" Hierarchies or oligarchies are about human control and power, and power corrupts as we have seen, even in God's church! The true government of God involves our submission to the will of God as revealed by His word- not submission to men who claim to speak for God, for this leads to dominion, and idolatry. Don't ignore Jesus Christ's words and example of service. Listen to God's warning! We cannot hope to be more merciful than God, and He has said; with regard to the image of jealousy, "Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: even though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them" (Ezekiel 8:18), and "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

"And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God: as God has said, I will dwell in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:16-18).

Yes, in God's Kingdom there will be government from the top down – by proven faithful, selfless, incorruptible, all knowing members of the God family who have shown by their physical lives that they desire only to follow in the example of Jesus Christ's service to mankind. Ruling with justice involves seeing into the hearts of those who come into judgment. None of us yet has that qualification and the pre-emption of such divine authority by those grasping for power, privilege and rulership now has only resulted in the bitter fruits of idolatry, and the fragmenting of the Church of God.

You now understand the greatest threat to your salvation. If you are a part of an organization which upholds an image of jealousy, history shows that such men will not repent and their urge to control the church leads to the

imposition of their “views” of God’s word rather than the pure word of God. In practice this means that they place the protection of their own power, status and income before the simple truth of God’s word. That is why God hates the hierarchies and rulership of men, they lead directly to idolatry.

Follow your Father’s instruction and example and leave the image of jealousy behind. Many have already done so and are now free to worship God in spirit and in truth. Today the Church of God is returning to the pattern of the early New Testament Church, small independent fellowships and groups linked by God’s word and Spirit but supportive of each other and combining together for the Feast of Tabernacles and occasionally for co-operative works and conferences such as that we read of in Acts 15.

Remember, God has commanded us to assemble, to both worship Him and serve our brethren. Hebrews 10:25. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” Where two or three are gathered together He has promised to be there. If there is no church in your area you could become the founding member of a fellowship group which with God’s help will grow as you serve Him and we are here to help. Take courage – if you follow God’s word you will never walk alone !