

The Treasure Hunt of Eternal Destiny:

What is the True Gospel?

By

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Introduction

Have you ever wondered what the true gospel of Christ is?

Transfixed by a maze of divergent teachings all attributed to one source, you would certainly wonder! But not the Author of the one true gospel, the One who is and possesses ALL TRUTH, Jesus the Messiah!

He foreknew and foretold of the rise of false teachers who will come in His Name to deceive many. That is the catch! The false teachers will formulate their own unbiblical doctrines and attribute them to Him, the Saviour!

In His mount Olivet Prophecy, He warned:

Take heed that no man deceive you.

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many (Matt 24:4-5).

But more alarming, the false prophets will so polish up their act in these last days that the salvation of God's "very elect" will be in peril.

In the 24th verse of Matthew chapter 24, Christ again warns:

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

The last days then – the very times we are in – will see an astonishing intensity in the activities of false ministers of the gospel unlike any other time in history! Along with false teachings, false signs and wonders of awe will be performed ostensibly in the name of Jesus, but they will all be a means of deception!

Deception is the modus operandi of Satan and his human agents masquerading as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:13-15). And all that satanic deception seeks to achieve is to make us disobey God.

So when Christ tells us to “take heed [i.e. watch out, be alert] that no man deceive” us, He means we should guard against being deceived to rebel against God and His word. That is the essence of satanic deception, and the artifice he constantly uses to accomplish this end is to “change the truth of God into a lie” as he piloted in the Garden of Eden.

Watch out for this artifice whenever you come across any teaching. If any minister or preacher does not preach to endorse the truth of scripture or enjoin obedience to God, the light of God’s truth is not in him:

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isa. 8:20).

The Bible we hold in our hands holds the key to our eternal salvation. In order not to be deceived, God has put in His word several clues – warning signals as it were – to help us sift truth from error.

The Lord Jesus Himself gave us one example:

²³Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there [in a secret location]; believe it not.

²⁶Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

²⁷For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matt. 24:23, 26-27).

In order words, believe ONLY the scripture of truth! The true gospel both exists and is identifiable. Finding it is finding the “pearl of great price” (Matt. 13:45-46). You find life itself!

In the pages of this booklet, the nature and contents of the ONE TRUE GOSPEL preached since Adam have been laid bare. This gospel is Everlasting, as is its Author (who changes not).

In an age of unprecedented apostasy and ungodliness with proposals being made for an “International Blasphemy Day” (“Why Do the Heathen Rage? – International Blasphemy Day” www.christianpost.com/article/20090927/why-do-the-heathen-rage), the publication is a timely work. It is definitely time to take heed!

Even darker days are ahead! Very soon truth will be cast down “and all that dwell upon the earth shall worship” the beast (the antichrist) except those whose names are written in the Lambs book of life (Dan. 8:12; Rev. 13:8).

So that we will not be deceived now or in the near future, let us “give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb.2:1).

May the Lord by His infinite grace fill us with “the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:9-10). Amen!

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What is the True Gospel?

Preamble

1 John 4:1

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

2 Peter 2:1

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

2 Tim. 4:3-4

³For 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;

⁴And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

In the light of the above scriptures, how will you answer, dear reader, if I suggest it to you that the gospel you have followed all your life is probably false? Can you provide veritable proof from your own Bible that the gospel you hold on to is the *same* as the one written and proclaimed in your Bible?

Of the myriad of teachings that define today’s Christianity, how can you be sure the set of teachings you follow is the true one?

As puzzling and difficult as the task may seem, there is a *litmus test* right in your Bible to prove every doctrine so that you might “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

The Bible proclaims but one gospel. This is the gospel that is able to save our souls but is sadly lost in a sea of rival claimants, each trumpeting “I am the way”!

What is this gospel and how can we identify it today?

The Name of the One True Gospel

The one true gospel is called “the everlasting gospel”. ‘Everlasting’ in the sense that it is the only gospel preached in the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and it lives on forever!

We can say the everlasting gospel is the Bible itself – it is its core message! Scholars and all who care to study the 66 books of the Bible are amazed no end to “find a unity of thought that indicates that one Mind inspired the writing and compilation of the whole collection of books”. Rather than an account of man’s efforts to find God, the Bible is “an account of God’s effort to reveal Himself to humanity. The Bible is the revealed will of the Creator of all humanity, given to His creatures by the Creator Himself, for instruction and guidance along life’s paths” (*Halley’s Bible Handbook*, 25th edition, pg. 11).

Yet who can better the Bible’s own description of itself? In its self-portrayal, the Bible lays out in one fell swoop its origins, mission and goal:

¹⁶All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

¹⁷That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim 3:16-4:1KJV).

The *NIV* translation is this:

All scripture is GOD-BREATHED and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (Emphasis mine).

The *Amplified Bible* gives the following rendering:

Every scripture is God-breathed – given by His inspiration – and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, and for training in righteousness [that is, holy living, in conformity to God’s will in thought, purpose and action],

So that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well-fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work.

In the pages of the God-breathed scriptures are found the golden truths of the everlasting gospel. This is the gospel that should be preached in the entire world, “and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:14). It is the gospel which emphasizes obedience to God’s commandments – the gospel Adam and Eve rejected and many down the ages have rejected. It is the gospel summed up in Eccl. 12:13-14:

¹³Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

¹⁴For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

What is “the conclusion [or gist] of the whole matter” referenced by the preacher in the text? Remember this is Solomon speaking, the preacher-king, who by his own confession sought for the meaning of life in all sorts of activities and pleasures but to no avail. He ended up seeing all life’s pursuits *without* God and the doing of His will as complete worthlessness, as he put it, “vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (chasing after the wind). None had lasting value or satisfaction.

Only one thing mattered—the fear of God expressed through the keeping of His commandments!

This is what God has been putting across to man all the while. It is the whole point of the discourse (conversation) God is having with mankind; the import of all that He is telling us. All the detail of scripture – the historical lessons, the life stories of Biblical figures, the parables and plain sayings of divine inspiration – is geared towards this one point: Fear God and keep His commandments “for this is the WHOLE DUTY of man.” (See 1 Cor. 10:6, 11-12; Rom. 15:4). Any teaching that fails to recognize this fundamental truth is “another gospel”. Period! *The gospel makes but one call: Repentance from dead works to a new life of righteousness in Christ.*

Notice what the Book of Revelation reveals about the everlasting gospel:

⁶And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,
⁷Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters (Rev 14:6-7).

The fear of God is synonymous with obedience to God’s commandments (Ps. 111:10). The everlasting gospel from heaven which must be preached to every nation on earth enjoins obedience to God’s law. When “the hour of His judgment” comes, people will be judged based on whether or not they obeyed God’s law of righteousness (see 2 Cor. 5:10).

The apostle Paul warned: “the doers of the Law will be justified. On the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus” (Rom. 2:13 & 16 NAS).

What a strong affirmation of the gospel by Paul, the great apostle of grace! The doers of the law will be justified (declared righteous) on the Day of Judgment when God judges the secret/unforgotten sins of men through Jesus Christ, to whom the Father has “committed all judgment” (John 5:2).

The essential message of Paul’s gospel is no different from the gospel the gospel preached since Adam: Obedience! Obedience!! Obedience to God!!!

The Message of the Gospel of Christ

Of the gospel he preached, Paul wrote:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

What were the contents of the gospel of Christ Bro. Paul preached? Did he preach a different gospel to the Jews and another to the Gentiles?

Let's go for the answer in the book of Acts. In his defence before King Agrippa, Paul said:

But [I] shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20).

Earlier in Acts 20:21 he had mentioned in his farewell speech to the church in Ephesus how he had testified to "both Jews and also to the Greeks [Gentiles], repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (See Rom. 3:9, 10:12).

Note the common thread of "repentance." Apostle Paul states unambiguously here that in his public presentation of the gospel of Christ he always declared to his audience that "they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." In Acts 20:21, it is a message of "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

The gospel Paul preached conveyed the spirit of the everlasting gospel affirmed by Christ to the disciples in His Great Commission to the Church "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:4-7).

The "gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24) is a gospel that demands repentance and obedience to God, not disobedience! This, in fact, is the goal of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. The apostle Paul put it in black and white:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).

To Paul's understanding of the gospel of Christ (also known as the everlasting gospel), God's grace does not exempt us from righteousness which comes from obedience to God's law (Ps. 119:172; Rom. 7:12); instead, it leads to it. He asks in Rom. 6:1-2:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?
God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Since sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4), Paul is basically saying, 'shall we continue to transgress God's law so that grace may increase? God forbid! May we never transgress God's Law because grace has come!'

As the apostle Paul goes on to explain, Christ, the grace of God (Heb. 2:9), gave Himself for us (i.e. died in our place) not only to pay for our sins but also to "redeem us from all iniquity [lawlessness], and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works [not zealous of law-breaking or unrighteousness]" (Titus 2:14).

Redemption from "all iniquity" brings to full fulfillment the two-fold goal of "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). His redemption not only entails the ransom paid with His blood (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), but also a release to freedom – freedom from sin! Thus set free from the control of the former slave master, sin (Rom. 7:14; 8:7), the believer is now free to keep God's law with joy, for that is what he has been purchased and created anew for! (Read Rom. 8:1-2; Gal. 5:13-14; 1 Pet. 2:16; Jam. 1:25).

And God makes that absolutely clear in His word, interestingly through our same great apostle of grace, Paul. The grace of God revealed for our salvation leads us to the kind of life He charted for us in ages past, in eternity past!

Apostle Paul was inspired to write in Eph. 2:8-10:

⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.

¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Similarly, he wrote in Eph. 1:3-4:

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

⁴ According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

According to His pre-Adamic plan, all His redeemed children "should walk" in the good works of righteousness and holiness. That is, their entire lives should be devoted to righteousness as befit their status as His new creation in Jesus Christ, His Son. (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24).

Now, are we to suppose that, because He is reaching out to all peoples on the basis of His grace, God will throw out His ETERNAL PLAN to sanctify to Himself a righteous, holy people who conform to His righteous character? May it never be!

If anybody thinks that because grace has come, he can live his life in sin and in unholiness, in flagrant disregard of the scriptures' plain call to repentance, and still insist he's 'saved', then that person is living in a fool's paradise; he's deceiving himself! Such a person belongs to the class of those lawless 'believers' who have turned the grace of God into "a license for immorality" (NIV) and by so doing have disowned Jesus Christ as the Ruler or Lord of their lives (Jude 1:4).

Yet we have been called upon to "content for the faith [teachings/gospel] which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). This faith proclaims a consistent message: Repentance today as then.

To God's holy ones, redeemed from all iniquity (Ps. 130:8), shall the Redeemer come to reward with eternal life:

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD (Isa. 59:20).

The object of the everlasting gospel is to "turn many to righteousness" (Dan. 12:3). So that Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar would understand exactly what his call to repentance meant, the prophet Daniel urged the king, then facing imminent divine punishment to "break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor" (Dan. 4:27).

The message of repentance is a call to break off our sins by doing righteousness, a call to replace our life of sin with one of righteousness and holiness (Ez. 18:21; 33:14-16; Acts 26:18; Luke 15:7, 5:32). The basic nature of the message of repentance has not changed with time. It is the very gospel that has been preached since Adam.

Indeed, when the Lord Jesus launched His earthly ministry, repentance was His clarion call: "repent ye and believe the gospel", He cried (Mark 1:15; Matt. 4:17).

Meanwhile, John the Baptist had gone ahead of Him to prepare His way by preaching the same message of repentance with fiery fervour:

⁷But when he [John] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

⁸Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

⁹And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

¹⁰And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt 3:7-10).

On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost fell on the Church, repentance was again the pertinent message of the apostle Peter:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

The messages of all the prophets from Moses to Malachi to the New Testament apostles centre around the theme of repentance – held up and proclaimed as a necessary step to salvation (See Acts 11:18; 2 Cor. 7:10).

The one true gospel dating from the Garden of Eden – obedience to God’s commandments – is the foundational teaching on which the New Testament Church is built:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone (Eph. 2:19-20; see also 2 Pet. 3:2).

Christ is the Builder of the foundation and the principal cornerstone thereof (1 Cor. 3:11). As the Embodiment of God’s Truth and the Revealer of it (John 14:6), Christ was the One who revealed the knowledge of the Divine Will, as well as prophecies of His suffering and glorification, to the prophets of old (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Yes, He is the Holy Ghost (called the “Spirit of Christ” in 1 Pet. 1:11) Who moved holy men of God to speak (or write) as He directed. That is why scripture is not of private (personal) interpretation, but His Spirit must be present to give the sense and understanding to “know all things” (2 Pet. 1:20-21; John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:12-13; 1 John 2:20,27).

As a Revealer of God’s Eternal Truth (Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:24-25), Christ proclaims a consistent message:

⁷Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.
⁸Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth (1 John 2:7-8).

The apostle renames the “old commandment” a “new commandment” (in verse 8) because in our continued, daily walk with God, the old commandment never ages but is renewed in our lives as an evergreen commandment that never fades but abides forever!

Consider the freshness and sharpness Christ brings to the ‘old commandment’ against adultery:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:
But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:27-28).

In our daily life of obedience, the 'old commandment' forbidding adultery refuses to die off as we overcome lust, which would otherwise entice us into sexual immorality, by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:3-4, 10).

Thus in Christ the 'old commandment' finds a new and enriched vitality and in us a deeper and continued obedience in "newness of spirit" (Rom. 7:6). In proclaiming His everlasting gospel, Christ has indeed "magnified the law [the old commandment] and made it honourable" (Isa. 42:21). In His magnified code of the old commandment, styled 'new' to give expression to the new spiritual mode of obedience, hatred is murder (Matt. 5:21-22; 1 John 3:15).

Yeshua has magnified His Word above all His name (Ps. 138:2). He came therefore not "to destroy the law, or the prophets: "I am come not to destroy", He said, "but to fulfill [Gk. 'pleroo' – to complete, to fill to the brim; to expand the intent and application of]. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17-19; see also Luke 16:29-31).

Those who break "one of these least commandments" are those who do not keep the commandments in the right spirit – in 'newness of spirit' or de-emphasize some of the commandments as though they were not as important as the others. The warning message from Christ, the only Lawgiver (Jam. 4:12; Isa. 33:22) is that He came to fulfill, endorse and magnify ALL THE LAW! People are in danger of losing His kingdom if they disregard even the smallest letter (in Heb. "yodh" and in Gk "oita") of His law.

In a similar warning, the apostle James said:

...whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.
For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the [whole] law.
So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty (James 2:10-12).

Regarding the great Messianic Prophet to come, Moses (the presumed 'lawgiver') prophesied to ancient Israel:

"The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15; also Acts 3:22-23; John 1:21, 25).

And Jesus Himself admitted: "Moses...wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings [the Law], how shall ye believe My words?" (John 5:46-47).

The great truth of this scripture is that Moses' words do not contradict Christ's words. That is to say, the divine words proclaimed by Moses as the mouthpiece of God are the same proclaimed by Christ. To the point, the same gospel Christ preaches now was preached by Christ in the Old Testament through Moses!

We read in Heb. 4:2:

For unto us [New Testament believers] was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

A clear irrefutable statement! The gospel being preached now in the New Testament was the same gospel preached to the ancient Israelites. The only problem with most of the Israelites was that they received not the gospel with faith. That's why today God demands the obedience that comes from faith by which alone we are able to please God (Rom. 3:31; 16:26; Heb. 11:6).

Scripture states unequivocally that we are to regard the Israelites as "our fathers" in the faith (1 Cor. 10:1). Because both the Old Testament and New Testament people of God have been called to the same gospel and standard of behavior, the failings and transgressions of the former have been documented in the Bible to serve as warning examples to us New Testament believers:

⁵But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

⁶Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

⁷Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

⁸Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

⁹Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted [Christ], and were destroyed of serpents.

¹⁰Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

¹¹Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (1 Cor. 10:5-11).

Christ, the Saviour of the New Testament people of God, was the Deliverer of Israel; He's "the Rock that followed them" (1 Cor. 10:4). His values have existed as long as He has existed – eternal (Mal. 5:2; Rev. 1:8; Ps. 100:5; 111:7-8).

In every age, God seeks a people of faith and obedience. Abraham, the father of the faithful, epitomizes this ideal. He not only models for us the righteousness of faith but also the righteousness of obedience.

Six hundred years before Sinai, it is on the Biblical record that Abraham had obeyed God's commandments, His statutes and His laws (Gen. 26:5. Ref: *Halley's Bible Handbook* (NIV text), 25th ed. Pg. 84).

Abraham's children of all ages must do his "works": believe and obey (Gal. 3:29; John 8:39; Heb. 11:8; Jam. 2:21-23)! The basic message of the everlasting gospel, then, is that all have sinned and that salvation is only attainable through the faith of obedience.

This message of repentance and faith in Christ is the only message that contains a blessing for God's people, in that it is meant to reverse the curses that emanate from transgression. This was exactly the point Peter stressed in his message of repentance preached on the occasion of the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate. He told his audience:

Unto you [Jews] first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his "iniquities" (Acts 3:26).

The blessing flows from Jesus, but it will not be realized until we have turned from our iniquities. Christ, the "chief cornerstone" to those who believe in Him, is at the same time a "rock of offense" to the disobedient (1 Pet. 2:6-8).

The everlasting gospel is meant to make one righteous – turn him or her from a sinner into a saint, a keeper of God's commandments through faith in Christ (Rev. 14:12; Rom. 3:31; cp Ez. 33:13; Heb. 10:37-39; Jude 1:24). That is the long and short of it! At no time did Christ undermine the law of God. Neither did the apostles. Paul, in fact, considered love "the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:8-10).

Would the God of love destroy His law of love? Not when the everlasting gospel is preached which insists the law is in our hearts and minds under the New Covenant of grace (Heb. 8:10-12)!

The Everlasting Gospel Faces Rivalry

²...I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

³But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

⁴For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another [different] gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him (2 Cor. 11:2-4).

Note the reference to Eve. The 'different gospel' was first preached to Eve in the Garden of Eden by the "old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. 12:9).

It is a gospel manufactured in hell, and Satan has been uncloaked as its mastermind. The counterfeit gospel of Satan is a rival to God's everlasting gospel – they have been rivals since Eden. The sole purpose of the false gospel of Satan is to deceive people to break God's law, decree and commandments. Nothing more, nothing less! Satan's successful misleading of Eve remains a classic:

Gen. 3:1-7

¹...And he [the serpent] said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

²And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

³But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said [preaching His everlasting gospel], Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

⁴And the serpent said unto the woman [deceiving her], Ye shall not surely die [so disobey Him]:

⁵For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened [turning the truth of God into a lie; twisting His words], and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

⁶And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food [not a tool of death], and that it was pleasant to the eyes [not detestable], and a tree to be desired to make one wise [Satan's gospel fully accepted], she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat [in obedience to God], and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

⁷And the eyes of them both were opened [but not with the result Satan promised – their becoming like God], and they knew that they were naked [lost divine covering of glory/spiritual death/separation from God]; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Gen 3:1-7).

Satan won Eve over by deception, the effect of which is disobedience to God. His gospel of disobedience caters to the baser instincts of carnal man, lulling him into a false belief that righteous living is beyond mankind. Not surprisingly, it produces its own brand of religion with a veneer or “form of godliness” – but certainly without the redemptive power of Christ to transform people (2 Tim. 3:5).

Satan's gospel, using a strategy that has worked since Eden, appeals to man's evil lusts and self-interests and not what is right and good. That's why the carnal man, not regenerated by the Spirit of God, finds it naturally desirable and welcome. Hardened to the truth of God with a tendency to love darkness rather than light, Satan's counterfeit gospel of disobedience is music to their ears (John 3:19-20)!

We read in Isaiah 30:8-11:

⁸Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever:

⁹That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD:

¹⁰Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speaking unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits:

¹¹Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

In Jer. 5:30-31 the LORD complains, mourning His people:

A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;
The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

“The end thereof” is the danger associated with the counterfeit gospel of the old serpent. It will pander to your self-interest, making you feel good, but at ‘the end thereof’ deliver death!

Today, Satan, through the purveyors of his gospel, has turned the grace of God, by which God is showing mercy to sinful humanity, into “a license for immorality” (Jude 1:4 NIV). Plainly, masses are told that God’s grace has brought about the abolition of His law. Indeed, it’s said that the dispensation of the law has given way to the dispensation of grace.

If so, “how shall God judge the world?” The apostle Paul counters, in the strongest possible terms, the misconception that God’s grace is an open invitation to indulge in evil so that “good may come”, that is, attract more of God’s grace. Considering that God will judge sinners, he argues that, such a view is untenable. He states in Rom. 3:5-8:

⁵ But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

⁶ God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

⁷ For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

⁸ And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

The theological dilemma Paul addresses in the text is that if the unrighteousness and unfaithfulness of man serves to highlight the righteousness and faithfulness of God and indeed accentuate His glory (because He as a holy God does not punish sin but grants pardon), is it fair for God to avenge sin? And if it’s unfair for God to judge sin because sinful man (as a contrast to His perfect righteousness) makes His holiness stand out, how will God someday judge the world of sinners? The apostle exclaims, “God forbid”! This is an unthinkable thought! God could never be accused of unfairness for punishing sin, because the same righteousness of God demands that He not overlook (un-forsaken) sin but punish it. The point is that, not meting out punishment but granting pardon and favour to sinners not only reveals God as a holy God set apart from sin but also as One who does not repay evil with evil and thus shows Him to practice a ‘higher’ righteousness not natural to man. However, this does not mean that God will never punish sin (simply because He apparently uses sin to emphasize His own righteousness of mercy

and forgiveness) and therefore people should continually indulge in evil in return for more of His righteousness (“good”) in forgiving sin, as – some who misunderstand Paul’s teaching of justification by faith “slanderosly” report and affirm that he teaches! Paul purges himself, saying those who teach such error and erroneously attribute it to him will receive God’s just damnation! The apostle damns not only their adherents who end up as ‘habitual sinners in Christ’ but especially the teachers themselves for their erroneous, sin-entrenching teaching and, in all probability, for their own lives of sin stemming from their heretical creed!

Let’s not delude ourselves. God’s judgment is sure and “is according to truth” against those who commit such sins as murder, fornication, disobedience to parents, covetousness and others [enumerated in Rom. 1:23-32] (Rom. 2:2). No evil doer or transgressor of God’s law should ever delude himself that he will get away with transgression when God sits in judgment (Rom. 2:3). Because God’s grace is meant to lead us to repentance, the apostle Paul in an unmistakable scolding tone warns those who would misapply the grace of God for unrighteous ends to be mindful of God’s righteous judgment to be meted out to the wicked and the disobedient:

Rom 2:4-12

⁴ Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

⁵ But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself [God’s] wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

⁶ Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

⁷ To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

⁸ But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

⁹ Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

¹⁰ But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

¹¹ For there is no respect of persons with God.

¹² For as many as have sinned [transgressed God’s law] without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law (Rom 2:4-12).

The Judgment of God is according to truth: “the doers of the law shall be justified” (Rom. 2:13), and the transgressors shall be punished in eternal hell-fire (Isa. 66:24; 33:14).

No excuses will be entertained on the Day of Judgment. God’s grace leads us to repentance so that we will be declared righteous on the judgment day.

Justification by grace through faith is attained based on our faith in the blood of Christ as payment for our sins (Rom. 3: 24-25). What is attained by faith is, however, evidenced by our obedience to God's law of righteousness. Catch it? Faith without works is dead, "being alone" (Jam. 2:17-18).

In John 8:31, Christ told the "Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples."

So after faith has led us to Jesus to be freely justified by His grace, we are expected to do righteousness as living proof of the righteous ones we have become by faith (Rom. 3:31). This is borne out by the fact that all mankind regardless of their professed faith in Christ still await judgment based on God's law (Heb. 9:27; Jam. 2:12; 4:12). On the Day of Judgment, people will be judged not merely on the basis of what they believed but what they did after they believed (2 Cor. 5:10).

This is the truth Satan's counterfeit gospel is trying so hard to hide from the masses. Instead of the sound doctrine that preaches repentance and obedience to God's law as the logical outcome of faith, Satan, through his ministers (2 Cor. 11:13-15), preaches fables and myths (such as Christmas and other unbiblical practices) that indulge the lusts of those who hate God's truth and yet love to put on a show of religion (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

The righteous God says He will have none of such 'lawless religion' – a man shall reap what he sows (Gal. 6:7-8). He can't stand the hypocrisy of those who claim to know Him, "but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16).

In the above quoted scripture, the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the apostle Paul, has stated categorically that intellectual acceptance of Christ without a corresponding embrace of His holiness amounts to nothing! God cannot be deceived. The disobedient can't hide under the cloak of religion and think they have His favour forever. Nothing is hidden from Him (Heb. 4:13).

In a rather wry rebuke, He tells the disobedient pointedly:

¹⁶...What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth?

¹⁷Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest My words behind thee.

¹⁸When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.

¹⁹Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.

²⁰Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slenderest thine own mother's son.

²¹These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

²²Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.
²³Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God (Ps 50:16-23).

It's clearly set forth in the scripture of truth that God expects His saints to live a life as distinct from unbelievers as light is from darkness:

³But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;
⁴Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.
⁵For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.
⁶Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.
⁷Be not ye therefore partakers with them.
⁸For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:3-8).

The everlasting gospel of Christ creates us anew in "righteousness and true holiness", as by His grace we are empowered to forsake our "former lusts" (Eph. 4:22-24; 1 Pet. 1:14-16).

This very holiness is the pet hate of the counterfeit gospel of Satan. And his ministers specialize in courting people, who would otherwise obey the truth, back into unholiness through the promise of a false freedom.

Describing them as "natural brute beasts...who speak evil of things [God's law, etc.], that they understand not", the apostle Peter accuses these false ministers of "having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children" (2 Pet. 2:12-14). In verse 15, he says they have by their false teachings "forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. But was rebuked for his iniquity [lawlessness]: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet" (v 16. See Num. 22:28-30 and compare Jude 1:10-11).

Balaam's way was so perverse even the ass didn't want to go her master's way (Num. 22:23, 32-33)! How tragic then is it to find many professing ministers, described as "wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest", follow in his footsteps (v 17)! But even more tragic is the fate of their followers! They follow them hoping to be refreshed by the water of life, peace and restoration promised them but rather find empty wells! The disappointment is comparable to the sore disappointment a mirage causes the wearied, thirsty traveller! Like tempest-blown

clouds which, for all their howling winds, fail to send down rain, the false ministers make great impression but fail to deliver on their claims. (See Jude 1:12-13).

What these false teachers have in common with Balaam is that, like him, they have deliberately refused to obey God out of covetousness and teach others to do the same by promising them a false liberty. The promised liberty is false in the sense that “freedom from obedience” to God’s commandments (because ‘we are under grace’) is no freedom at all, but rather bondage again to sin.

The apostle Peter, in righteous indignation, thunders on:

¹⁸For when they [the false ministers] speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

¹⁹While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

²⁰For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

²¹For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

²²But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (vv. 18-22).

The counterfeit gospel of Satan represents a rejection of all that God’s Word stands for! Those who embrace it commit spiritual adultery, as is true of all apostate churches. Isaiah wrote prophetically of this end-time terrible apostasy in which churches are followers of Christ in name only, not in deeds:

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach (Isa 4:1).

In Rev. 17, the mother of all apostate churches is unveiled:

⁴And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication [spiritual adultery]:

⁵And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH (vv. 4-5).

This mother church, situated on the seven hills of ‘imperial’ Rome (vv. 9 and 18), is the key to “the mystery of iniquity [lawlessness]” at work in Christianity, even from apostolic times. In the

final 3½-year rule of the antichrist, apostasy will reach its apogee, and “the son of perdition, that wicked one” will be fully revealed to all (2 Thess. 2:3-4, 7-8).

In 1 Tim. 4, the apostle Paul wrote to warn of the rise of the “doctrines of devils” in the “latter times” especially, and in his own time too:

¹Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

²Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

³Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

⁴For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving;

⁵For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (vv. 1-5).

The prophetic word is clear enough: “in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of the devils.”

But how ironic this scripture is twisted by some to make God’s true ministers seem like false teachers! What a tragedy that this scripture is used to turn the truth of God on its head!

By their distorted interpretation, apostate ministers claim that ministers of the gospel who teach abstinence from scripturally prescribed unclean foods are the false teachers mentioned in the text!

To set the records straight, God’s law of clean and unclean did not emerge in the “latter times” as a doctrine of demons. It is a Biblical teaching first revealed in the days of Noah which was then passed on to Moses for us (Gen. 7; Lev. 11/Deut. 14; Deut. 29:29).

To get the context of 1Tim 4:1-5 right, we need to note carefully what those who adhere to the doctrines of devils do:

- a) They forbid marriage
- b) They command abstinence from foods which God created to be received by those who “believe and know the truth” to know those foods which have been set apart (for consumption) by the word of God. And then received with prayer of thanks.

It’s a package! Those who forbid marrying will also command abstinence from scripturally prescribed foods. Both are false doctrines. Just as it’s a false doctrine to forbid marriage which God ordained for men, so it’s equally a false doctrine to command (as doctrine) abstinence from foods which God created to be received by His truth-keeping people. The point is about going against what God has ordained; it’s about opposing divine ordinance!

To do what God says does not amount to a false doctrine! Foods which God's people may eat are qualified by the fact that they were specifically created so by Him for His people. For identification purposes, these were set apart by the word of God (e.g. Lev. 11) from things which God did not create for food. At mealtime, the prayer of thanks crowns it all.

The phrase "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused" (v. 4) does not suggest believers may eat all things!

While "every creature of God" is indeed good (Gen. 1:31), the incontrovertible truth is that God did not create every creature for food. Neither is a creature good solely because it may be eaten! A creature is good as long as it's used for that which it was purposely created! (See Rom. 1:25 for an example of the wrong use of God's creation).

Thus effectively 1 Tim 4:4-5 says, "every creature of God" created for food "is good" and none of them should be refused. Rather each one of them should be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified as food by the word of God and prayer.

To interpret 1 Tim 4:4 as permitting the eating of all things will make even cannibalism acceptable, as would poisonous snakes, rats, worms, spiders, etc. However, this is not what Paul is saying. He says it's heresy to command abstinence from foods approved by the word of God as permissible to eat. By "the word of God's", Paul refers to the accepted canon of the Old Testament scriptures being the only codified "word of God" at that time. Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are the portions of the word of God which list the meats God approves for human consumption.

From the context, therefore, the apostle Paul is far from condemning God's law of food, for it is not part of the doctrines of demons. Instead, he is condemning the false teaching that will forbid marriage and at the same time impose abstinence from meats.

The picture fits the Church of Rome perfectly. Catholic priests are forbidden by canon law to marry, while on Fridays and during Lent Catholics are supposed to refrain from eating meats, the clean not excepted!

But Paul was also addressing a contemporary concern of the early apostles, circa 67 AD: The incipient heresy of Gnosticism, a branch of which emphasized asceticism – physical abstinence such as from marriage and meats (enforced vegetarianism as a religious practice), even of those God created to be received with thanksgiving by believers! The good use of scripturally approved meats as nourishment for godly training is discussed in verses 6-10 in contrast to the false teachings that promote celibacy and unscriptural asceticism in verses 1-5.

In a similar vein, Paul strongly condemns this same Gnostic asceticism (deliberate denial of every form of physical engagement because all 'matter is evil') in Col. 2:20-23, calling it "the commandments of men", not God's commandments. As verse 23 clearly shows, this gnostic teaching led to "the neglecting of the body" (KJV) through the deliberate denial of its (proper) nourishment – supposedly to control sinful desires. But Paul argued that such harsh treatment of the body was, in reality, valueless in reigning in the lusts of the flesh:

²⁰Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules:

²¹ 'Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!'

²²These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.

²³Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence" (Col. 2:20-23 NIV).

Instead of walking in the spirit so that they would not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16), some of the Colossian brethren were observing the strictest form of asceticism to keep off the sinful desires of the flesh!

Again, the commandments of men were the issue under discussion. This is what is presented throughout the scriptures as promoting false (vain) worship:

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt 15:9).

So then, we should steer clear of all man-made commandments and follow only what God commands! Interestingly God also commands separation from things in the New Testaments dispensation, not because He upholds asceticism but because His word defines them as unclean:

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 Cor. 6:17-18. See Acts 15:19-21, 28-29; 16:4-5).

God has called us to holiness, and it's only proper and right that He warns us to keep away from anything that defiles us spiritually and physically, so that we might attain perfect holiness in the fear of God (1 Thess. 4:7; 2 Cor. 7:1). Remember, we shouldn't behave like "the sow that was washed [but returned] to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:22).

The basic nature of that mire-loving sow never underwent transformation! So it is with people who, after being washed by the blood of Jesus, continue to indulge their former lusts. (See 1 Pet. 1:14; 4:2-3).

This sad anticlimax is what naturally results from observing the counterfeit gospel of Satan. Indeed, his false religion (Babylon the great) cherishes all that God labels as unclean, claiming all things are now clean:

And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird (Rev 18:2).

The rivalry ends in Babylon's fall! The gospel from Jerusalem prevails (Luke 24:47-49; Acts 1:4, 8):

²And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

³And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isa 2:2-3).

There's nothing that can be done against the truth (2 Cor. 13:8).

The Rise of 'Godless Christianity'

The juxtaposition of Christianity and ungodliness shouldn't happen! The very idea of it violently jars on the nerves of every true believer. But isn't it an apt description, when a section of Christianity has become a sanctuary for such vile sinful practices as sodomy?

Just before the return of Christ, the Word predicts a great apostasy to hit Christianity, and it's virtually contemporaneous with the unveiling of the "man of sin" – one of the last events of the closing age:

¹Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him,

²That 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.

³Let 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 (2Thess. 2:1-3).

From the text, we don't get a sense of isolated cases of heresy here and there but of *a major departure from the truth in the same prophetic time period the antichrist is expected to ascend to power and demand worship as though he were god*, "so that he as god sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is god" (v. 4).

This great "falling away" from the faith as a *prelude* to the antichrist's last world rule has occurred. In the worldly churches of today, righteousness has been thrown overboard and the

altar of immorality erected in its place. Wickedness abound not only in the world but also in the church (Jer. 23:11). And it's the type of wickedness that harks back to Sodom and Gomorrah!

The prophet Isaiah was dead accurate when he prophesied of our time:

Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah (Isa 1:9).

What the prophet spoke about the world is also true of the church! In 21st century Christianity, little Sodoms and Gomorrah's thrive – churches that bless same-sex marriages and ordain homosexual ministers! As goes the world, so goes the church; the apostate church has gone 'gay' with the world!

In today's Christianity, God's Word no longer counts; what counts is 'political correctness' and the feelings of men. Obedience to God's commandments is out of the question. What matters is the gratification of the self, the carnal unregenerate self!

That is the preoccupation of the postmodern church: A church that accommodates all kinds of behaviour, the good, the bad and the ugly, all in the name of 'love'!

In the introduction of his book *Pagans in the Pews*, author and theologian Peter Jones quotes New Age author Ken Carey as advising his readers: "Associate only with congregations whose atmosphere encourages love...enjoy the rich diversity of truth's multiple expressions'. In other words, comments Jones, "appropriate churches are those that have rejected biblical ethics, scriptural demands for holiness and the Christian doctrine of redemption in a space/time incarnation of the eternal Son" (p 19).

These are the churches that have taken apostasy to a new level. They unashamedly approve of homosexuality, abortion and pagan practices, and still consider themselves Christian! Like the ancient people of Sodom and Gomorrah, they thumb their nose at heaven; they flaunt their sin and still call themselves Christian:

The show of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves (Isa 3:9).

It's not strange, then, that today whole denominations convene formal assemblies to decide on questions as basic as whether the church should continue to recognize only heterosexual marriage (i.e. that between a man and a woman), or it should also extend formal recognition to so-called same-sex marriage and even the 'marital' relationships of bisexual and transgendered members!

In August 2009, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), at a national convention in the city of Minneapolis, approved by a two-thirds majority a sexuality statement affirming that

practicing homosexuals could be ministers of the church. The vote did not take place without drama, however. Just as God rained down fire on Sodom and Gomorrah to show His disapproval of sodomy, so heaven sent its 'protest vote' in a tornado at the exact time the debate was to begin!

In an article titled "ELCA Assembly: Was God in Either Whirlwind?" *Christianity Today* reported on its website:

Most reports from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) assembly today attempt to tie together the denomination's vote to adopt a sexuality statement and the tornado strike on the Minneapolis Convention Centre where the Lutherans were meeting.

While supporters of the statement blasphemously "typified the storm as a mighty wind of the Holy Spirit and as a positive message", some WordAlone Network members ('a renewable group within the ELCA') "heard a different message, a warning of God's anger at the ELCA in the wind." (www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/augustweb-only/133.41.0.html).

But so far the most apposite interpretation came from an eyewitness, John Piper, a minister. Writing in his blog, John Piper recalled:

I saw the fast-moving, misshapen, unusually-wide funnel over downtown Minneapolis from Seven Corners. I said to Kevin Dau, 'That looks serious'

It was serious in more ways than one. A friend who drove down to see the damage wrote, 'On a day when no severe weather was predicted or expected...a tornado forms, baffling the weather experts – most saying they have never seen anything like it. It happens right in the city. The city: Minneapolis. 'The tornado happens on a Wednesday...during the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America's national convention in the Minneapolis Convention Center. The convention is using Central Lutheran across the street as its church. The church has set up tents around its building for this purpose.' (Emphasis mine)

And it's the timing of the tornado strike that points up an unmistakable element of the supernatural. Isn't God's hand to be seen in the 'coincidence'?

Piper continues his account:

According to the ELCA's printed convention schedule, at 2 PM on Wednesday, August 19, the 5th session of the convention was to begin. The main item of the session: 'Consideration: Proposed Social Statement on Human Sexuality.' The issue is whether practicing homosexuality is a behavior that should disqualify a person from the pastoral ministry.

The eyewitness of the damage continues:

'This curious tornado touches down just south of downtown and follows 35W straight towards the city center. It crosses I94. It is now downtown.

'The time: 2PM.

'The first buildings on the downtown side of 194 are the Minneapolis Convention Center and Central Lutheran. The tornado severely damages the convention center roof, shreds the tents, breaks off the steeple of Central Lutheran, splits what's left of the steeple in two...and then lifts.'" (www.desiringgod.org/Blog/1965-the-tornado-the-lutherans-and-).

Divine warning delivered in a whirlwind with precision! But did the Sodomites in the ELCA take heed? They did not. In fact, as a follow-up to the sexuality statement, "the ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted to allow 'publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church'" (www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/augustweb-only/133.41.0.html).

Apostasy gone out of hand! The ELCA refused to return, having made "their faces harder than the rock" to divine warning:

³O LORD, are not Thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

⁴Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the LORD, nor the judgment of their God (Jer. 5:3-4).

So, what was the theological basis for the ELCA decision, if any at all?

The *Christianity Today* article analyzes excerpts of their sexuality statement. The quoted section of the statement begins:

'We do not have agreement on whether this church should honor these [same-sex] relationships, uplift, shelter and protect them, or on precisely how it is appropriate to do so. In response, this church draws on the foundational Lutheran understanding that the baptized are called to discern God's love in service to the neighbor.

'In our Christian freedom, we therefore seek responsible actions that serve others and do so with humility and deep respect for the conscience-bound beliefs of others. We understand that, in this discernment about ethics and church practice, faithful people can and will come to different conclusions about the meaning of Scripture and about what constitutes responsible action. We further believe that this church, on the basis of "the bound conscience", will include these different understandings and practices within its life as it seeks to live out its mission and ministry in the world.'

Note the statement's tone of prevarication. The statement rests on no solid foundation of Biblical truth. In a footnote comment, the statement cautions: "The difference between interpreters should not be understood as a conflict between those who seek to be 'true to Scripture' and those who seek to 'twist the Bible' to their own liking. The disagreements are genuine."

In other words, the Bible must not be made to speak! The ELCA rejects scripture as its frame of reference in formulating its policy on sexuality. Its utmost concern is respect for the sensibilities (feelings) of its members, not God's unalterable Word!

The statement continues, going on as if grace is antithetical to morality:

When the clear word of God's saving action by grace through faith is at stake, Christian conscience becomes as adamant as Paul, who opposed those who insisted upon circumcision. However, when the question is about morality or church practice, the Pauline and Lutheran witness is less adamant and believes we may be called to respect the bound conscience of the neighbor. That is, if salvation is not at stake in a particular question [which the homosexual question is assumed to be], Christians are free to give priority to the neighbor's well-being and will protect the conscience of the neighbor who may well view the same question in such a way as to affect faith itself. For example, Paul was confident that Christian freedom meant the Gospel of Jesus Christ was not at stake in questions of meat sacrificed to idols or the rituals of holy days. Yet he insisted that, if a brother or sister did not understand this freedom and saw eating this meat as idolatry to a pagan god, the Christian was obligated to 'walk in love' by eating just vegetables for the neighbor's sake!

The ELCA position misses the point of the apostle's instruction in Rom. 14 – ¹“As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions (ESV) or, as the NKJV puts it, “over doubtful things”. ² “One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him”.

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) had already resolved with the approval of the Holy Spirit that believers abstain from meats offered to idols (vv. 19-20, 28-29). But, in Rom. 14, some had gone further to argue for abstinence from meats altogether since some of the meat sold at the market could have been sacrificed to an idol and therefore defiled. This is where Paul calls for respect for the views and sensitivities of such brethren he calls “the weak” lest they be offended by the meat eating of “the strong”. He recommended a posture of love and understanding over mere differences of opinion or “doubtful things”, not over a clear Biblical teaching relating to Christian morality or godliness. When it comes to such matters, Paul is inflexible in his pro-godly stance and enforcement of church discipline: “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat” (1 Cor. 5:11).

The apostle Paul cannot be made to endorse the perverted theology of the ELCA; neither can the scripture of truth. Taken to its logical conclusion, the logic of the ELCA statement is that if a person believes that his Christian freedom allows him to murder, we will be just as obligated to “walk in love” out of respect for his “bound conscience.” The gospel of Christ has been turned upside down – distorted, twisted and perverted! Christ demands that everyone who confesses

His holy Name depart from iniquity [lawlessness] (2 Tim. 2:19) which as He defines it in His word includes homosexuality!

This is where the ELCA pro-homosexual policy terribly falls short with deadly consequences! It tries to marry things that don't belong. The Saviour warned: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24).

We only identify with Christ by keeping His commandments, not by indulging our sinful lusts under the 'aegis of grace' or condoning plain sin and unrighteousness in the name of 'Christian love':

And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4 Emphasis mine).

And Christ expressly forbids homosexual relations throughout scripture (Gen. 13:13, 18:20-21, 19:5; Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26-28). In an unequivocal warning, the apostle Paul put it to the Corinthians:

⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

¹⁰nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.

¹¹And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11 NAS).

When God sits in judgment, homosexuality will be a salvation issue. Homosexuals will not be saved into the Kingdom of God but will be thrown into the inferno outside the city, together with others who work abomination (Rev. 21:27, 22:15; Isa. 66:24).

The judgment of God is according to truth as revealed in His infallible word. This is the fact to which the ELCA statement is oblivious! The *Christianity Today* article points out:

The problem is that the statement focuses on conscience where it should focus on God's commandments in the moral ordering of the Christian life; three dissenting members of the ELCA task force on sexuality said earlier this year:

'By focusing on trust, freedom, and love of neighbor, the social statement...strains forward to see what God might be doing anew within the community of faith, particularly in regards to conduct of persons who are homosexual, rather than building on the foundation depicted in the creation accounts of Genesis. The concept of freedom of the Christian, while helpful in our understanding of salvation by faith alone, cannot be the justification for a lifestyle and behavior contrary to the biblical witness and the moral tradition...By centering on justification by faith,

the social statement minimizes [actually repudiates] the role of the Law in Christian life, contrary to Luther's exposition of the Christian life in the catechisms, and is at odds with the Lutheran Confessions" (emphasis mine).

How the concept of Christian freedom has been perverted! The freedom is freedom to do God's will, not to reject it! (See Rom. 8:2; Jam. 1:25). Galatians 5:13 admonishes: "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love" [which is "the fulfilling of the law" – Rom. 13:8-10 and Gal. 5:14]" (NIV).

At long last, the disregard for God's commandments ostensibly based on the doctrine of salvation by 'faith alone' is beginning to kick in! But as in the days of Elijah, when God reserved for Himself seven thousand men who did not bow to Baal, not all in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have bowed to the altar of immorality. At this present time of unspeakable apostasy, God still has "a remnant chosen by grace" (Rom. 11:2-5 NIV).

A reform group in the ELCA, "Lutheran CORE (Coalition for Reform) decried the document: 'we mourn the decision by the Churchwide Assembly to reject the clear teaching of the Bible that God's intention for marriage is the relationship of one man and one woman. It is tragic that such a large number of ELCA members were willing to overturn the clear teaching of the Bible as it has been believed and confessed by Christians for nearly 2000 years.'

In his blog, John Piper issued this reprimand: "...official church pronouncements that condone the very sins that keep people out of the Kingdom of God are evil. They dishonor God, contradict Scripture, and implicitly promote damnation where salvation is freely offered".

In his conclusion, he wrote:

The tornado in Minneapolis was a gentle but firm warning to the ELCA and all of us: Turn from the approval of sin. Turn from the promotion of behaviors that lead to destruction. Reaffirm the great Lutheran heritage of allegiance to the truth and authority of Scripture ['sola scriptura']. Turn back from distorting the grace of God into sensuality. Rejoice in the pardon of the cross of Christ and its power to transform left and right wing sinners.

But gain, would they pay heed? If a tornado failed to dissuade them, would the feeble warning of a concerned brother do?

Don't bank on it! Even greater abominations are now entertained in the church:

He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel [apostate Christianity today] committeth here, that I should go far off from My sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see GREATER ABOMINATIONS (Ezek. 8:6).

What are some of these "greater abominations" being committed right in His sanctuary?

A look at the following headlines will suffice to show the extent of the rot in the 'postmodern' church:

"Upcoming Film Follows a Transsexual's Ordination Journey." Subhead: "The journey of a transsexual woman seeking ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been documented on film, which is set to release next year."

What is the gist of the story? A person who has changed from a man ('Steve') to a woman ('Sara'), by "marring the sacred image of maleness and femaleness" through a surgical procedure, seeks ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). And the shocking part is that Steve now 'Sara' "Herwig is on the road to becoming a minister in the PC (USA), after having been approved as a candidate for ministry by Boston Presbytery in 2002" (www.christianpost.com/article/20091004 Sun, Oct 4 2009).

A person who has judged God wrong in making him a man and has changed his sex accordingly is on the road to becoming a 'minister' of the gospel of Christ! What outrage! What an affront to the Christ of the Bible! As if that was not enough, the murder of unborn babies is also sanctioned in Christendom! An article by LifeNews.com editor Steven Ertelt is headlined: "Baptist, Brethren, Lutheran, Methodist Clergy Promote Abortion in New Letter."

Here goes the story:

A coalition of mainline Protestant church clergy have authored a letter promoting abortion. The group sponsoring it intends it to make a statement on abortion funding as members of Congress consider health care bills that fund abortions.

The letter comes from a group of church clergy who have long advocated the pro-abortion position. Under the umbrella of the Religious Institute, the more than 1,100 pastors and church staff from the denominations endorsed the letter. The letter calls abortion a 'morally justifiable decision' and opposed any amendments to the House and Senate bills, which current [sic] contain massive abortion funding, to strike that taxpayer-financing (www.lifeneews.com Posted: October 2, 2009, updated October 3, 2009).

Abortion, a "morally justifiable decision"? And that from persons who call themselves ministers of the gospel?

In comparison, some heathens may be saints! How can religious ministers advocate at the highest levels of government the systematic, state-funded murder of unborn humans created in the image of God? Obviously, it's not the Creator God they serve but "the god of this world", Satan, the devil, who "came to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (2 Cor. 4:4; John 10:10).

The Creator of life does not even take lightly miscarriage caused through reckless accident, let alone the deliberate killing of unborn babies in the womb. He issues this warning in Ex. 21:22-23:

And if men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she has a miscarriage, yet there is no further injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him; and he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges decide.

But if there is any further injury [such as the death of the mother], then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life (NASB).

In Amos 1:13, God thunders through the prophet:

Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border.

A clear 'pro-life' stance! But instead of defending the sanctity of life, some who call themselves Christian leaders advocate irreverent disregard for life by lobbying for mass abortion with state funding! (See Gen. 9:6).

The wine of false teachings has clouded the thinking of the religious leaders, stupefied and dulled their collective conscience, as if "seared with a hot iron." The Lord inspired the prophet Isaiah to write of these "perilous times" of widespread apostasy:

But they [the apostate ministers] also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

For all tables [i.e. all altars] are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean (Isa. 28:7-8).

The Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has been driven out of the apostate church, because all their tables/altars are "full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean" for Him.

Yet there exists even now "a remnant according to the election of grace" in end time Christianity (Rom. 11:5 KJV). These are the holy people of God who have received grace to live right in His sight, just as Noah found grace to walk with God in righteousness (Gen. 6:8-9).

In this sense, judgment has already begun in the house of God. God is separating the 'sheep from the goats' right in His church. We read in 1 Peter 4:17-18:

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

The scriptures affirm that true believers will not be brought to judgment before the “great white throne” which follows the millennial reign of Christ with the saints (Rev. 20:5-6, 11-15). If that’s the case, how will God judge His people, since, of necessity, “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27)?

God judges His people in absentia, in the course of their Christian life. Those He finds Faithful He gives them His seal of election in their foreheads. Christ tells us in Matt. 10:32-33:

Whosoever therefore shall confess Me [and My Way/Truth] before men, him will I confess [his faithfulness] also before My Father which is in heaven.

But whosoever shall deny Me [and My Way] before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.

The outcome of this judgment in absentia will be manifested on the day of Christ’s return. True believers, both the dead and the living, will be translated and caught up to “meet the Lord in the air” when “He shall come to be glorified in His saints” (1 Thess. 4:15-17; 2 Thess. 1:10).

That’s why again He cautions us in Mark 8:38:

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words [teachings] in this adulterous [i.e. faithless] and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. (See I John 2:28; 4:17).

The judgment of believers is ongoing – in this gospel age! After the seventy disciples of Christ returned from their missionary tour of Israel, He told them joyfully: “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20).

If no judgment or evaluation had taken place, how could they have qualified to have their names written in the Lamb’s book of life kept in heaven? (See Rev. 2:27; 20:15; Ex. 32:32).

The judgment of believers is on, and it begins at His sanctuary now being defiled with false doctrines:

⁴ And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, 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.

⁵ 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:

⁶ Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come 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 (Ezek. 9:4-6).

During the 3½-year rule of the antichrist – at a time when all the world will have been deceived to receive the 666 ‘mark of the beast’ (Rev. 12:9; 13:8, 16-18) – God will seal His faithful people in their foreheads with His Name and Law (Rev. 7:3; 9:4, 14-1-5; Isa. 8:16).

The 666 global rule of the antichrist will mark the climax of apostasy, or as the prophet Daniel put it, consummate apostasy when “the consummation...determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (Dan. 9:27).

The very sanctuary of the rebuilt Jerusalem Temple will be desecrated with both the image and ‘defied’ person of the beast (antichrist) who will sit in the temple of God, “showing himself that he is god” (2 Thess. 2:2-4; Rev. 13:14-15; 14:11).

Christ call this consummate sacrilege “the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet” in chapters 9:27 and 11:31 of his book (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14. See Luke 21:20).

Dual in fulfillment, Matt. 24:15 was initially fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans, in their destruction of Jerusalem, sacrificed to the pagan god Jupiter within the sacred walls of the Jerusalem Temple. The primary or forerunner fulfillment, however, took place during the reign of the Greek Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Boiling with rage at the Jews for refusing to Hellenize (adopt Greek culture), Antiochus came against Jerusalem and desecrated the Temple by offering a pig on its altar, in addition to erecting an altar to the Greek god Zeus (called Jupiter by the Romans) (Dan. 8:10-11). Antiochus, by his political intrigue and mode of religious persecution, typified the last antichrist to come at the end of the age (See Dan. 8:23-25). This end-time antichrist will usher in the final form of the “abomination of desolation” when Jerusalem is again “trodden down of the Gentiles” for 42 months (Rev. 11:1-2; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; compare Luke 21:24).

Prior to the 42-month rule of the antichrist over all, God will give power to His “two witnesses” to proclaim His truth and to warn against the excesses and wickedness of the day. The work of the two witnesses (sent in the spirit of Moses and Elijah – Mal. 4:4-6) will take place during the first three-and-half years of the last seven years of this present age. (Rev. 11:7; 13:1; 17:8).

The power behind the spirit of apostasy at work in Christianity will be fully exposed at the time of the global rule of the antichrist. The Spirit/Power of God that now restrains the antichrist from coming to power will give way, as the dragon (Satan) gives the antichrist or beast “his power, and his seat, and great authority” (2 Thess. 2:6-8; Rev. 13:1-2).

But as the ‘God challenger’ Antiochus Epiphanes was “broken without [human] hand” (Dan. 8:25), so the antichrist will be destroyed with the spirit (breath) of the mouth of the conquering Messiah and with “the brightness of His coming” (2 Thess. 2:8).

Apostasy will be rooted out by Christ, the Truth (Rev. 19:20; 20:10).

The Remnant Church

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32).

The "little flock" is the true church, the church that holds on to the true teachings of Jesus, the Messiah. This is the church made up of "true worshippers" who worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

The creed of the true church is "the everlasting gospel" observed and lived out. It is "the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3). The Bible reveals this creed of God's saints as anchored in obedience and faith:

And the dragon was wroth with the woman [the true church], and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev 12:17).

This is the plain truth! The saints of God are those who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12)—the commandments of God Christ calls "life everlasting" (John 12:50; Matt. 19:17-19).

Here's a description of the original apostolic commandment-keeping church set up in Jerusalem. This pristine church, disciplined by Christ for 3 years and inaugurated on the day of Pentecost, understood that obedience was of cardinal importance to receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Peter urged his audience on the day the Holy Ghost fell on the church:

...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

In his defence before the Sanhedrin the second time, the apostle again testified:

And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him (Acts 5:32).

This is the church over which Paul exults in Philippians 3:3: "we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

The true church is spiritually circumcised – she keeps God's law out of a sincere and willing heart (Rom. 2:25-29; Deut. 30:6).

She is the chaste virgin of Christ (Eph. 5:27; 2Cor. 11:2; Titus 2:14). Unlike the seven unfaithful women of Isaiah 4, the chaste virgin of Christ dabbles in no spiritual adultery by accepting

beliefs and practices that go against the one true creed identified and described in the Bible. Her children (members) are the ones who through the preaching of the gospel have been “granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

Sainthood comes from the power of the gospel of Christ which opens the eyes of the spiritually blind and turns them from “darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me” (Acts 26:18).

This is the path to sainthood. It is not by might nor power; it is God Himself who works in us “both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13; 4:13). Yes, the Word works effectively in all those who believe the true gospel – they are truly transformed unlike followers of the false gospel who merely have “a form of godliness” but don’t show its life-transforming power by their character (1 Thess.2:13; 2 Tim. 3:5).

The true church has been chosen by the foreknowledge of God through the sanctifying work of the Spirit to obedience (1 Pet. 1:2); she is the willing sheep of Christ (John 10:27-28).

The faithful church is affectionately called “the daughter of Zion” in scripture, and she dwells with “the daughter of Babylon”, the apostate church:

Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon (Zech. 2:7).

However the daughter of Zion need not worry nor sorrow; her King and Husband is in her midst:

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD.

And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be My people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent Me unto thee (vv. 10-11).

The daughter of Zion, the virtuous bride of Christ, need only be careful to avoid being contaminated with the false, pagan teachings of the daughter of Babylon who lives side by side with her in the world. The ultimate victory belongs to her:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass (Zech. 9:9).

Christ is the King of the daughter of Zion:

Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt (John 12:15; also Matt. 21:4-5).

The King of Zion has never abandoned His bride. At His, ascension, He promised her: “lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20. Compare Mark 16:20).

⁷ Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

⁸ For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but My righteousness shall be for ever, and My salvation from generation to generation.

⁹ Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?

¹⁰ Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?

¹¹ Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away (Isa 51:7-11).

“Thy God reigneth!” These are the comforting words to say to Zion. God’s ministers who preach His salvation spread the fragrance of His truth wherever they proclaim the true gospel (2 Cor. 2:14-16):

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion [i.e. return to Zion] (Isa 52:7-8).

Yes, when the King of Zion returns “every eye will see Him, ...and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him” (Rev. 1:7 RSV; cp Matt. 24:30). But the daughter of Zion will “rejoice greatly” for her Lord and King will come to be glorified in her (Zech. 9:9; Ps. 102:16; 2 Thess. 1:10). He eyes only for her: “The LORD hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it” (Ps. 132:13-14).

Even now the King dwells with her in the spirit, in fulfillment of His promise. John the Revelator brings us an eyewitness’ report observed while he was in the spirit (See Rev. 1:10):

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle (Rev 1:12-13).

In verse 20, Christ explains the mystery of the seven stars and of the seven golden candlesticks to John:

The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Since the number seven denotes completeness, the seven churches represent Christ's true universal church (the daughter of Zion) of all time. And yet they also refer to seven actual churches that existed in Asia Minor during the time of John the Revelator. With the exception of the church of Philadelphia and to some extent the church in Smyrna, the churches had flaws and errors against which Christ warned them to effect repentance and correction.

For example, Christ warned the church in Pergamos against the eating of abominations:

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth (Rev 2:14-16).

To the church in Thyatira Christ sent this warning message:

²⁰ Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

²¹ And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

²² Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

²³ And I will kill her children [followers] with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Rev 2:20-23).

Christ, the head of the church, expressly forbids women from usurping the teaching position of men in the church (1 Tim. 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 14:34-37). Yet the church in Thyatira had allowed a false prophetess, whom Christ likened to the Jezebel of the Old Testament, to teach the church. Worse, the woman's teachings not only promoted fornication in the church but also enticed some of the members to eat foods sacrificed to idols, both forbidden in the sacred word (Acts 15: 27-29; 1 Cor. 10:20-22).

But the 'fornication' also implied spiritual harlotry, being the abandonment of Christ's true teachings for false doctrines emanating from Satan! Hence Christ warned: "Behold, I will throw her on a sickbed, and those who commit [spiritual] adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of their doings" (Rev. 2:23 RSV of 1 Cor. 11:28-32).

In His warning message to the church in Sardis, Christ upbraided them for having not found their works perfect before God (Rev. 3:1-3). Nevertheless, He said:

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels” (Rev 3:4-5).

This is the standard to which the Lord has called us. He wants us to walk with Him in white. The daughter of Zion has to put on her beautiful garments of righteousness for her Lord and Husband (Isa. 52:1).

Revelation 16:15 warns:

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

The daughter of Zion is in the world but is not of the world (John 17:16; Num. 23:9).

Throughout history the daughter of Babylon (described in Rev. 17) has persecuted the daughter of Zion (described in Rev. 12), but she survives to this day (Matt. 16:18).

On the day of her glorification in the presence of her King, the daughter of Zion will no longer feel as if she were an outcast or barren; her children will be uncountable in the Kingdom of God:

Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD (Isa 54:1).

The daughter of Zion, now “left as a cottage in a vineyard” (Isa. 1:8) and as a “little flock”, will stand before the Throne and before the Lamb with an innumerable multitude of her children from all nations:

After this [He sealing of the 144,000 of the tribes of Israel] I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands (Rev. 7:9).

This is a reference to the “many nations [that] shall be joined to the LORD in that day” when the LORD returns to Zion (Zech. 2:10-11; Matt. 8:11).

On that day, the Lord will organize a great wedding feast in heaven for His bride but not before the daughter of Babylon has been justly judged for her unfaithfulness:

Rev. 18:4-5, 8

⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

⁵ For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

⁸ Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

Rev. 19:1-2, 7-9

¹ And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

² For true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand.

⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.

⁸ And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

⁹ And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God” (Rev 19:1-2, 7-9).

The daughter of Zion readies herself for the heavenly wedding feast with Christ, her Husband, by keeping righteousness and being filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30; Rom. 8:11; Acts 2:16-21).

It’s a divine promise on oath: “the marriage supper of the Lamb” will happen! “These are the true sayings of God.” HalleluYAH!

“Every Word of God is Pure”

The words of the living God are not empty words. According to the Saviour, “they are spirit and they are life” (John 6:63).

The words that proceed from the Almighty save. And they save when we receive them with meekness in their unadulterated, pure state.

We read in Proverb 30:5:

Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him [through faith in His word].

The “word of God” is a “He”—Christ, and He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him!

John 1:1-3, 14

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² The same was in the beginning with God.

³ All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.

¹⁴ And the Word was made 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.

Rev 19:11-13

¹¹ And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war.

¹² His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself.

¹³ And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God.

“Every word of God is pure” because God has specially and meticulously communicated His words to contain power and truth to serve the best interests of His people; His words have been refined and purified in His laboratory of Truth seven times:

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried [refined] in a furnace of earth, purified seven times (Ps 12:6).

“Seven times”, of course, means the words of the LORD have been perfected seven times over – that is, subjected to a refinement and perfection test as thoroughly as God considers thoroughness to be! These are not words to subtract from, add to or fiddle with in any way!

Hence we are admonished in the very next verse after Prov. 30:5: “Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and then be found a liar” (Prov. 30:6).

As Moses recapitulated God’s covenant with the children of Israel and summoned them to sincere obedience to Him, he charged the Israelites:

You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you (Deut. 4:2 RSV. See 12:32).

In Revelation, the last book of the Bible, the warning comes complete with the punishment that will be inflicted on those who mishandle the word of God. Signing off, the apostle John issued this stern warning:

...I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the [divine] words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev 22:18-19).

To twist, distort or to misrepresent the word of God is to temper with the efficacy of His word which is “living and powerful” (Heb. 4:12). God sends every word of His for a specific purpose,

and we must faithfully believe and obey it for the fulfillment of its mission of blessing in our lives. The LORD assures us in Isa. 55:10-11:

...as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

So shall My word be that goeth 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.

The word of God works effectively in all those who receive it as it is – the pure undiluted word of God. The apostle Paul wrote to commend the believers in Thessalonica:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, **BUT AS IT IN TRUTH, THE WORD OF GOD**, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (I Thess. 2:13, Emphasis mine).

The word of the gospel which is being preached (1 Pet. 1:23-25; Titus 1:3) is really what it claims to be – the very Word of God, His ‘breathed’ message! Like its Author, the word is not yes and no; all its promises are true (2 Cor. 1:18-20; Ps. 119:86). Recounting the story of Cornelius’ vision and subsequent conversion to the Jerusalem Church, the apostle Peter mentioned how in his vision Cornelius was instructed to send for him (Peter) “who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:13-14).

The word of God – believed and obeyed – save. That is why James 1:21 urges us to “put away all filthiness and rank growth of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (RSV).

The pure word preached to us is a seed planted in us (See Luke 8:4-15 for the ‘Parable of the Sower’). For the seed to germinate and bear fruit, it’s important to clear all weeds that might choke and cause it to die. That’s why 1 Peter 2 as a continuation of chapter 1:23-25 opens the way it does:

¹ So put away all malice, and all guile and insincerity and envy and all evil slander.

² Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation.

³ For you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

⁴ Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God’s sight chosen and precious;

⁵ and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

⁶ For it stands in scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame’.

⁷ To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe, ‘The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.’

⁸ and a 'A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall; for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

¹⁰ Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now have received mercy.

¹¹ Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that **WAGE WAR AGAINST THE SOUL**" (vv. 1-11).

When we get rid of all malice and indeed every form of evil (1 Thess. 5:22), the word planted in us bears fruit. We attain spiritual growth to salvation; we come to Christ, the Living Stone, to be built into a spiritual house as living stones ourselves. Because we obey the word, we don't stumble; Christ becomes the cornerstone of our spiritual house. We now become a race chosen by God, a royal priesthood and a holy nation; a people who have obtained His mercy. No longer do we indulge in carnal passions that kill the soul. We obey the word of life that saves.

This is the saving word in which we stand and which secures our salvation if we hold it fast, letting it not slip our minds (1 Cor. 15:1-2; Heb. 2:1-4). Prov. 4:13 exhorts us: "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life" (Read Prov. 6:20-23).

The word of God does good to the upright, i.e. those who have purified themselves by their obedience to the pure word (Micah 2:7; 1 Pet. 1:22; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 2:20-21). The word is self-validating. Christ invites all to test the truth of the Word for themselves:

Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me.

If any man will do His will, He shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself (John 7:16-17).

A wonderful discovery awaits all those who receive the Word as it is in truth – the very word of God. They become supernatural beings!

When some Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy because He is one with the Father (John 10:30), He answered them:

³⁴ Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

³⁵ If He called them gods [supernatural beings], UNTO WHOM THE WORD OF GOD CAME, and the scripture [concerning this truth in Ps. 82:6] cannot be broken;

³⁶ Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

³⁷ If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not.

³⁸ But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (VV. 34-38).

By what process do recipients of the PURE WORD become 'gods'? God dwells in us by His word planted in us, and He performs the supernatural works through us. In response to a question from Philip, 'Lord, show us the Father' (John 14:8), the Lord Jesus said:

¹⁰ Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.

¹¹ Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake.

¹² Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me [through the Word that has come to him], the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father (John 14:10-12).

Believers to whom the word of God has come are 'gods' or sons of God! And this fact is borne out by the supernatural works we do, works only supernatural beings can do! But it's the indwelling Father Who does them! (See John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:9).

Christ tells us in John 14:23:

If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.

Obedience, then, is the most important thing. The receptive, willing attitude of the noble Jews of Berea is certainly worthy of emulation:

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night [from Thessalonica] unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so (Acts 17:10-11).

We must be doers of the word so that the ultimate goal of the word will be fulfilled. All scripture is GOD-BREATHED and is designed to transform us. It is for our teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). If any minister insists believing in Christ does not entail behavioural change, he is preaching a false gospel. It's a denial of what God's word, by its own testimony, says it stands for!

The Bible we hold in our hands is for our instruction in righteousness so that we might be equipped for every good work (v. 17). For this reason, we must be doers of the word. A person who merely hears the word but does not do it is like a man who views himself in a mirror and forgets what he looked like a moment ago. The Bible is a reflection of what we should be!

As a foil for our carnal human nature, the moral law of God points us to the kind of life we should live in conformity with God's righteous character. It reflects the ideal life God expects of us.

In James 1:22-25, the apostle James uses the analogy of the dressing mirror to terrific effect. He compares the character-reforming function of God's law to how a mirror reflects a person's natural looks showing them clearly how they look.

Similarly, when we hear the law of God, it portrays or tells us the righteous life we should live; it reflects how we should live. That image reflected by the law is, however, forgotten when we disobey it – just like how a person forgets what his image was in a mirror a short while ago.

The person who obeys is the one who retains his reflected image in the mirror of God's law through obedience.

The apostle wrote:

²² But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

²³ For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass [mirror]:

²⁴ For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightaway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

²⁵ But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Halleluiah!

In another mirror analogy, the apostle Paul wrote:

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the LORD, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

Our reflected image in the 'mirror of the Spirit' is "the glory of the Lord" into which we will ultimately be changed as promised in 1 John 3:1-2 and Philippians 3:21. It's a spiritual reality soon to be made visible to all – as we move "from glory to glory." The 'blessing' of James 1:25 is therefore the glory of the Lord which believers will assume at His appearance.

The pure word of God has come to purify us (1 Pet. 1:22; John 15:3; Ps. 119:9) and to make us Christ-like and God-like (Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 1:4) through our obedience.

What about those who disobey the word or distort its plain meaning? They make the word of God "of none effect" (Matt. 5:6; 1 Cor. 1:17; 2:4-5); they blunt the power and truth of it! Worst of all, they make God, Who cannot lie (Titus 1:2), a liar:

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself [that God has given us eternal life through His Son]: he that believeth not God [s word] hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son (1 John 5:10-11).

Straightaway, to disbelieve God's testimony that He has given us eternal life through His Son is to choose eternal damnation! Since scripture cannot be broken or nullified, disobedience to God's word is a disservice we do to ourselves.

Isaiah 34:16 challenges us to find out for ourselves the infallibility of God's word:

Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for My mouth it hath commanded, and His spirit it hath gathered them.

So we must obey. In fact, a curse is on all those who deliberately disobey God's word. God will treat us as we treat His word!

He states in Ps. 18:25-27:

²⁵ With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful; with an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright;

²⁶ With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the froward [crooked] Thou wilt show Thyself forward [astute].

²⁷ For Thou wilt save the afflicted [humble] people; but wilt bring down high looks."

In Lev. 26:14-16, He gives this dire warning:

¹⁴ But if ye will not hearken unto Me, and will not do all these commandments;

¹⁵ And if ye shall despise My statutes, or if your soul abhor My judgments, so that ye will not do all My commandments, but that ye break My covenant:

¹⁶ I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it."

God's word is a two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12). The willing and the obedient "shall eat the good of the land." But the rebellious and the disobedient "shall be devoured with the sword" (Isa. 1:19-20).

Playing with God's word is like playing with fire! (See Jer. 23:29). But who cares "in this adulterous and sinful generation"?

Today, the most pernicious attack on God's Holy Word are those 'per-versions' of the Bible palmed off as modern translations. Modern translators don't just 'twist' the Word through misinterpretation; they get into the text and revise it to say things God didn't intend! They have no qualms about diluting and adulterating the eternal word of God with their liberal leaven!

But notice what the apostle Peter had to say about those who distorted the writings of the apostle Paul to give them a different meaning:

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction (2 Peter 3:15-16).

Many of the English versions of the Bible that have come after the King James Version (KJV) are guilty of “handling the word of God deceitfully” (2 Cor. 4:2). In many instances, the role of the blood of Jesus in man’s salvation as well as that of the law of God and righteousness is downplayed to reflect the liberal biases of the translators.

Ray S. Pringle, Sr, a minister of the gospel of Christ, documents in his book *Per-Versions of the Bible* numerous examples where passages of divine truth as found in the KJV have been reworded to mean differently in the newer English versions or left out completely. He writes in the foreword of his book: “The true word of God as we now have it in the King James Version of the Bible teaches Holiness and a life of Purity, with the threat of God’s judgments to one and all who rebel against His True Word. These liberals and modernists have changed that in these perverted versions of the Bible” (Ray S. Pringle, Sr, *Per-Versions of the Bible*, Fourth edition, June 1987).

The result is that the gospel of Christ has been robbed of its essential element of truth which frees men from the bondage of sin.

To be on the safer side, it’s best to stick to the tried and tested standard – the good old King James Version translated from the ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Of course, for comparative analysis or clarity of language, a different version may be used but only if the basic structure and meaning of the quoted passage agrees with the KJV!

Be that as it may, the revisionist liberal rephrasing of the Holy Writ in the modern translations is only a tip of the iceberg! There is now a new generation of Bibles that completely overhauls and bastardizes the sacred text to read and sound ‘politically correct’!

Under the headline “German Scholars Unveil ‘politically correct’ Bible”, *Catholic World News* reported on its website on November 9, 2006:

A group of 52 biblical ‘specialists’ have released a new version of the Bible in which inclusive language and “political correctness” have replaced some “divisive” teachings of Christianity in order to present a “more just language” for groups such as feminists and homosexuals.

The report continued:

According to the AFP news agency, the new version of the Sacred Scriptures was presented at a book fair in Frankfurt.

Entitled, *The Bible in a More Just Language*, the translation has Jesus no longer referring to God as “Father”, but as “our Mother and Father who are in heaven.” Likewise, Jesus is no longer referred to as the “Son” but rather as the “child” of God. The title “Lord” is replaced with “God” or “the Eternal One.” The devil, however, is still referred to with masculine pronouns.

A Bible for feminists and homosexuals! The bottom line is a Bible that has no bite because the so-called bible itself accommodates, advocates and glamorizes sin! *The Bible in a More Just [more aptly Unrighteous] Language* is a deadly blow to the human soul. It does not convict sinners of sin; it rather strengthens the hands of evil doers (Jer. 23:14).

In an attempt to sound gender neutral, the essence of God as Giver (Father) is blurred and denied, just as Jesus as Son is also denied along with the “sure word of prophecy” that predicted so (Isa. 9:6; 2 Pet. 1:19).

But wait until you hear about the bible I call the complete gospel denier! The *Catholic World News* report concludes:

Last December, Martin Dreyer, pastor and founder of the sect ‘Jesus Freaks’, published the *Volksbibel* (The People’s Bible), in a supposed attempt to make the message of Christianity more ‘accessible’. [In it] Jesus ‘returns’ instead of resurrects, and multiplies ‘hamburgers’ instead of fish and loaves. In the parable of the prodigal son, the younger son squanders his inheritance at dance clubs and ends up ‘cleaning bathrooms at McDonalds’ (www.cwnews.com/news/viewstory.cfm?recnum=47556).

The sacred facts of scriptures have been reduced to contemporary myths! The carnal mind that shuts itself off from the light of God’s Truth cannot conceive of the Resurrection; to it, it’s an unthinkable phenomenon! (See Rom. 8:5-7; 1 Cor. 2:14; Acts 26:8).

The Lord Jesus Christ hit the nail on the head when He rebuked the resurrection-denying Sadducees: “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matt. 22:29).

In the foregoing scripture, Christ identified the root of all error: Lack of the knowledge of the scriptures and of the power of God to do all things.

To deny the Resurrection is to deny the Gospel. The Resurrection is at the heart of the Christian faith; a denial of it unravels everything; it takes away the hope and power of the Christian. The apostle Paul wrote:

¹³ But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

¹⁴ And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain [worthless].

¹⁵ Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: Whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

¹⁶ For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

¹⁷ And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins [because He was raised for our justification, Rom. 4:25].

¹⁸ Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished (1 Cor. 15:13-18).

While the true gospel enjoins us to know Christ and “the power of His resurrection” (Php. 3:10), *The People’s Bible* conceals this knowledge by substituting ‘return’ for resurrection!

All scripture is God-breathed, for “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21).

Today, Satan uses unholy men filled with his unclean spirit of error to rewrite the Bible from his ungodly perspective so that masses will perish!

It’s a sad, sad situation. Satan’s attack on the Bible is getting ever insidious and deadly. Nowadays he doesn’t instigate the burning of the Bibles as he did during the dark ages. He simply makes sure he has his false gospel of damnation out there in his own corrupted ‘versions’ of the Bible.

We look at two *Christian Post* articles posted on the Internet. The first article posted on Friday, March 28, 2008 is headlined, “Popular Bible Stories Re-Written, Include Alcoholic Goliath.”

The article reports:

Some of the most popular stories in the Bible were recently re-written by a British Anglican vicar, including the story of Goliath, who in the retelling is a celebrity binge drinker.

In [the Rev. Robert] Harrison’s book, *The Must Know Stories*, the tale of David and Goliath is retold from the perspective of Goliath, who is portrayed as a ‘depressed alcoholic’ who is hung over on the day of battle with David, according to the U-K-based *Telegraph* newspaper.

Meanwhile, the well-known story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is twisted so that Adam expresses his obsession with Eve’s naked body. The nativity story is also changed so as to have Jesus born in an overcrowded house instead of a manger, amid family tension stirred by Joseph’s aunt who is upset that Mary and Joseph are not married (www.christianpost.com).

This is a devilish mockery of what the true Biblical facts are! If Goliath was a ‘depressed alcoholic’ suffering from a hangover on the day of battle, why attribute David’s victory to divine intervention?

The point of the story as rewritten by “Rev.” Harrison is that Goliath fell by a stone shot from the sling of David because he had a hangover from his drinking binge the previous day! Who on reading such a sordid parody of the David and Goliath story will trust God to fight his battles for him?

Meanwhile, you can trust the sly old serpent to clean up his infamous act in the Garden of Eden by attributing the Fall to Adam's "obsession with Eve's naked body." Thankfully, Vicar Harrison doesn't pretend to promote Christianity. According to the *Christian Post*, "he said his purpose in rewriting the stories is to make them more accessible, and not to promote Christianity."

In the *Post's* second article, posted on Monday, August 11, 2008, with the headline "New Indian Bible Draws Fire over Hindu References", it is paganism accommodated in the hallowed pages of the "Christian" Bible!

The story:

A new Indian version of the Bible, recently published by the Catholic Church, has run into controversy over its inclusion of verses from the Bhagavad Gita, a form of Hindu chant, and references to the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

An illustration in the new version, *New Community Bible*, depicts Jesus, Mary and Joseph as poor Indian villagers. Mary wears a simple sari and has a bindi [spot of red] on her forehead alongside Joseph in a turban and loincloth.

According to the 30 Indian biblical scholars who worked for more than 15 years on the new edition, the Bible draws on 'the rich cultural and religious heritage of India' (www.christian/post.com/article/print/200808/1/new-indian-bible-draws-fire-over-hindu).

As an example of "the rich cultural and religious heritage of India" enshrined in the new bible, "Jesus' words about storing 'treasures in heaven' in the Gospel of Matthew are compared [in the commentary notes] to the Bhagavadgita's teaching that 'work alone is your proper business, never the fruits it may produce.'"

In the new Indian bible, the reality of heaven is denied, yet the Catholic Bishops Conference of India has approved it. And the blind masses love it: "It has proved to be extremely popular among the Christian community with over 15,000 copies sold out within barely 10 days", the editor of the New Community Bible, Dr. Augustine Kanachikuzhy, says. "Now it has gone for a reprint", he added.

Lord, now is the time for Thee to act, "for they have made void Thy law [word]" (Ps. 119:126).

However hard Satan tries to dilute God's word, pervert or mutilate it, we can be sure of one thing: God's pure Word shall never pass away (Matt. 24:35)! We have His word for it:

As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever (Isa 59:21).

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight.

All things are delivered to Me of My Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him (Luke 10:21-22).

For ever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven (Ps 119:89). Amen!

Who will Stand in the Gap?

Considering how far whole denominations and ministers have strayed from the truth of the scriptures, is there hope for the future? How many can withstand the engulfing tide of apostasy?

The situation can be saved if the Elijahs of today will cry out against sin and transgression in modern-day "Jacob" as God commands in Isa. 58:1:

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

But again, where are the end-time Elijahs? There is an appalling shortage of God's true ministers who 'rightly divide the word of truth'.

The Lord complains:

²⁶ Her priests have violated My law, and have profaned Mine holy things: THEY HAVE PUT NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE HOLY AND PROFANE, NEITHER HAVE THEY SHOWED DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE UNCLEAN AND THE CLEAN, AND HAVE HID THEIR EYES FROM MY SABBATHS, and I am profaned among them.

²⁷ Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravaging the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

²⁸ And her prophets have daubed them [the wicked princes] with untempered mortar [whitewash], seeing vanity, and DIVINING LIES UNTO THEM, SAYING THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD, WHEN THE LORD HATH NOT SPOKEN.

²⁹ The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

³⁰ And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and STAND IN THE GAP BEFORE ME FOR THE LAND, that I should not destroy it: but I FOUND NONE.

³¹ Therefore have I poured out Mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD" (Ezek. 22:26-31. Capitals mine).

The prophetic time in which Satan has sent his agents as false ministers of righteousness to deceive salvation seekers is now (2 Cor. 11:13-15). These are the ministers who perpetrate

wickedness and lawlessness in the house of the LORD; “...they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto Me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah” (Jer. 23:11, 14).

To His people the LORD directs this warning:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the [false] prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.

They say still unto them that despise Me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you” (vv.16-17).

But the Lord asks those false prophets who have taken it upon themselves to prophesy in His name if they have ever been privy to the deliberations of His heavenly council:

¹⁸ For who [among the false prophets] hath stood in the counsel of the LORD [held with My holy angels – I Kings 22:19; Ps. 89:6-7], and hath perceived and heard His word? who hath marked His word, and heard it?

²¹ “I have not sent these prophets”, “yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

²² “But if they had stood in My council [and understood My mind], then they would have proclaimed My words to My people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings” (Jer. 23:18, 21 KJV, 22 RSV).

For leading His people astray, God has vowed to punish all the false prophets:

Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall [bitterness]: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness [ungodliness] gone forth into all the land (Jer. 23:15).

Dreading the doom decreed against the false prophets, Jeremiah, a true prophet of God, laments:

Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, **BECAUSE OF THE LORD, AND BECAUSE OF THE WORDS OF HIS HOLINESS** (Jer. 23:9 Emphasis mine).

However, our Loving Father has not left His flock to the mercies of the false ministers, who destroy, but not tend, the sheep of His pasture:

¹ Woe be unto the pastors [shepherds] that destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! saith the LORD.

² Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed My people; Ye have scattered My flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.

³ And I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries [apostate churches, etc.] whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

⁴ And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD” (Jer. 23:1-4).

The righteous shepherds who shall feed God’s people with His life-giving truth will serve directly under Christ, the “Righteous Branch” of the dynasty of David (v. 5):

In His days [as the millennial, universal King] Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS [‘Yahweh Tzadekenu’] (v. 6. See Ez. 34:23-24).

Even now, in the face of widespread apostasy, there is a remnant of God’s true ministers “according to the election of grace”. These will never bow down to the altar of compromise and false teachings.

As the apostle Paul charged Timothy, God’s true ministers, aflame with His righteousness, will continue to “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:1-2). They will “rightly divide the word of truth”, that is ‘cut straight’ to the truth”, not take crooked paths to it (2 Tim. 2:15)! They will teach the word accurately!

God’s true servants will not see the ministry as a means of financial gain, but will teach the “wholesome words” of Christ in accordance with His doctrine of godliness. In all this, unhealthy theological debates and polemics are to be avoided (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

In short, God’s chosen ministers must preach nothing but the oracles of God as revealed in scripture:

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:11).

In Acts 7:37-38, Stephen identified “the [lively] oracles of God” as the commandments of God given through Moses for “us” New Covenant people of God. (See Deut. 29:29; Rom. 3:1-2). The mystery of the gospel revealed in this New Testament time summons all nations to “the obedience of faith” (Rom. 16:25-26).

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). Paul, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, worshipped God and preached Christ “believing all things which are written in the

law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14; 26:22-23). In all his work as a minister, Paul sought not glory for himself “save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world [with its lusts which go against God’s law] is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14).

Faith in Christ, the redemption of His cross, repentance, and obedience – this is the pattern of the sound doctrine - Bro. Paul passed on to Timothy and to all others:

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim 1:13).

It’s the duty-call of the true minister of Christ:

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (2 Tim 2:2).

The minister who heeds the call to teach and to disseminate the truth – and the truth only – will “stand in the gap” and close the breach between God and His errant children. Amen!

Red Flags – How to Spot a False Prophet!

To help us avoid the spiritual predators on the prowl hunting for precious souls in ‘sheep’s clothing’, God has given us certain tell-tale signs to look for in identifying a false prophet:

- The prophet whose predictions fail to come to pass (Deut. 18:20-22).
- The prophet whose prediction or sign comes to pass but seduces people to follow pagan gods (Deut. 13:1-5).
- The prophet who doesn’t teach obedience to God’s law but instead subverts souls by encouraging the practice of necromancy, etc. (Isa. 8:19-20; Lev. 20:27; Deut. 18:10-11).
- The prophet who puts no difference between the clean and the unclean (Ez. 22:26; Lev. 20:25; 2 Cor. 6:17; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Rev. 2:14-16).
- The prophet who performs miracles, signs and wonders but is himself a transgressor of God’s law (Matt. 7:21-23; 5:19; Isa. 8:20).
- The prophet who denies the divinity of Christ (1 Tim. 3:16; John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:8; 1 John 2:22-23; 2 John 1:9-10). Or that Christ did not come into the world as “flesh and blood” – a complete human being divested of His divinity for the suffering of death and yet without sin (John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:9, 14-17; 4:15; 1 John 4:1-4).
- The prophet who teaches salvation through any other means apart from Christ, the ONLY NAME “given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12; John 14:6; 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Tim. 2:5-6, Heb. 5:9).
- The prophet who denies the efficacy and all-sufficiency of the Cross (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:2; Heb. 7: 27; 9:24-26; 10:12, 14; Eph. 1:7).

- The prophet who denies the bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead (1 Cor. 15:12-18; John 11:25-26). To deny the Resurrection is to believe that we are still in our sins since the resurrection of Christ is the proof that we have been justified by God through faith in His blood. The resurrection is the evidence that the sentence of death issued against us, and for which Christ died in our place has been cancelled, that we now have eternal life (Rom. 3:24-25; 4:25; 5:9; 1 Cor. 15:20-22).
- The prophet who speaks contrary to “the oracles of God”, that is, against scripture and sound doctrine, and instead preaches his own ideas and worldly philosophies – “the enticing words of men” (1 Pet. 4:11; Col. 2:8; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 1 Tim. 6:3-5). The apostle Paul warned in Gal. 1:8-9:
 "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.
 “As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”
- The prophet who turns the grace of God into a licence for immorality (Jude 1:4; Titus 2:11-12).
- The prophet who pursues worldly adulation and riches and so doesn't speak against sin (Matt. 23:5-7; 6:24; Isa. 56:10-11; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; cf. Luke 6:26; 21:7; Gal. 4:16).
- “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:20). A false prophet will not produce the fruit of righteousness but the fruit of unrighteousness (Matt. 7:15-18). A true prophet or minister of God possesses knowledge of the truth which leads to a life of godliness (Titus 1:1). He holds fast “the faithful word” which is the “sound doctrine” based on the grace of grace which brings salvation and teaches us to forsake “ungodliness and worldly lusts” and to live “soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world”, as the redeemed people of Christ “Zealous of good works” (Titus 1:9; 2:1-15). Like Simon of Samaria, the sorcerer, almost every false prophet claims to believe in Christ and yet remains unrepentant at heart: “Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done” (Acts 8:13). When he attempted to purchase the Holy Ghost with money, the apostle Peter rebuked him: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter [Holy Spirit baptism]: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (vv. 20-23). The story of Simon, the Sorcerer, shows that it is wholly possible for a person to ‘believe’ without being saved if he refuses to forsake his evil ways. Genuine faith goes with repentance that leads to salvation (2 Cor. 7:10). This is what the LORD says: “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have

transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 18:31). To all who would come to Christ, the call is clear: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). A false prophet will not show "fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8) but will be a wolf in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15).

- The prophet who teaches against the LITERAL VISIBLE RETURN OF CHRIST and instead believes in a so-called secret return of Christ for the church. The "sign of the Son of man" (Christ) shall appear in the sky "immediately after" the great tribulation..."and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." It's at this point that the saints shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air – all at the sounding of "the seventh trumpet", namely "the last trump", "the trump of God" (Matt. 24:29-31; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 11:15). Rev. 1:7 announces: "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen."

Conclusion

There has been only one gospel preached from eternity. This is the gospel Satan disobeyed when, unlike the loyal angels of God who keep His commandments, iniquity (sin, lawlessness) was found in him (Ezek. 28:15; John 8:44; Ps. 103:20).

And the scriptures testify that this is the gospel God preached to Abraham:

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed (Gal 3:8).

The 'everlasting gospel' has at its core a call to righteousness through faith, for "in every nation he that feareth Him [God], and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:35).

It is the gospel whose consummate truth is revealed in and through Jesus Christ Who is "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). "For in Him dwelleth ALL THE FULNESS of the GODHEAD bodily. And ye are COMPLETE IN HIM, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col 2:9-10).

Since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, God has consistently and progressively implemented and moved forward His plan of redemption. The 'redemption trail of the Lamb' beginning from Genesis to Revelation is one illustration of this glorious truth!

Redemption was promised as soon as man fell:

And the LORD God said unto the serpent, 'Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life':

And I will put enmity between thee [the serpent representing Satan] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen 3:14-15).

In Genesis 4, the idea of a 'Lamb of God' finally taking on Himself the sins of mankind was represented in crude form in Abel's offering of a lamb to God which He "had respect unto" (Gen. 4:1-4).

In Genesis 22, the Lamb appears as the ram sacrificed by Abraham in place of his son Isaac (vv. 1-3). In Exodus 12, this Lamb is the Passover lamb "without blemish", whose blood keeps off the destroyer from the homes of the Israelites (vv. 1-4, 23).

Under the Old Testament sacrificial system of the Levitical priesthood, various sacrifices of the Lamb were made (Ex. 29:39-41; 29:4, 15; Lev. 14:12 etc.) until in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, the prophet gives us our first hint of the Lamb as a man "wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isa. 53:5, 7).

With the dawn of the New Testament, shadow gave way to reality and type to antitype. The Lamb emerges in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ:

The next day John [the Baptist] seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Indeed, Christ is our Passover Lamb sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7).

In Revelation 5, the slain yet victorious Lamb is eulogized:

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

"Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev 5:9-13).

In the war of Armageddon, the Lamb shall wage war to secure the redemption of His blood-bought people: "...and the Lamb shall overcome them [as the armies of Egypt were overcome following Israel's redemption by blood]: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev 17:14). Halleluia!

What a glorious story God's redemption plan is! Inspiring! Exhilarating! A wonderful witness to His ETERNAL POWER! Halleluia!

Lest I forget—An Emergent Apostasy!

Before I sign off, I would like to warn of a new pernicious apostate movement on the religious, Christian scene – the 'Emergent Church'. Although the movement professes faith in Christ, it's not a movement to be trusted. It believes there are multiple paths to truth. Proponents of the movement believe that scripture and reason alone are not sufficient in themselves to provide answers to life's questions.

Therefore, Christianity needs to be reinvented for the postmodern generation and that "experience" (not Biblical truth) is the key to encountering spiritual reality. (See book by Emergent Church leader Chuck Smith Jr. titled, *There is a Season*, p. 106).

This 'experience' may entail the use of icons as prayer aids to increase the powers of concentration – a practice borrowed from Eastern Orthodox mysticism among other unbiblical beliefs and practices.

The Emergent Church movement may be the latest innovation in Christianity, but, in reality, it's 'Old Nick' back to his old tricks under a catchy new name!

God's Truth (concerning His plan of Redemption, Righteousness, Law, Grace and Mercy) "endureth to all generations" (Ps. 100:5).

Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father (1 John 2:24).

Again, "believe not every spirit, but try [test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

So let us test all doctrines and religious movements by the infallible truth of the Word of God and "hold fast that which is good"/true (1 Thess. 5:21).

As I conclude, may the prayer of Christ to the Father be fulfilled in us even as His Spirit of truth guides us into "all truth":

I have given unto them THE WORDS WHICH THOU GAVEST ME; AND THEY HAVE RECEIVED THEM, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me.

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. (John 17:8-9). Amen!