

Part I

SPIRITUAL MASQUERADING

You are welcome to this edition of Light in the Evening time, we are continuing in our study on God's pattern church. And as we mentioned in the last edition, we will be applying the tools we have gathered in our meditation on spiritual leadership: God's pattern I and II. Accordingly, we will be doing a lot of scripture reading. If you will turn with me to Isaiah 28:9 we will be taking the first reading and going ahead in our meditation. Isaiah 28:9

“...Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts....”

Isaiah 28:1-8: that precedes the above verse ends on a very sad note. The people of God have wholly departed from the ways of God, not only the generality of people, but also even their leadership. And here in verse 9, we find an offset, God reacting to the spiritual decay by raising up something, a body of people for the outworking of his purpose, for God cannot abandon his work of redemption. So turn with me to verses 7 and 8 of this same chapter that you might best appreciate what the prophet is crying out for in verse 9. Isaiah 28:7, 8

“...But they also have erred through wine and through strong drink are out of the way...”

... Out of the narrow way that leads to life. The wine of illicit pleasure, the strong drink of materialism and worldliness - these have an effect on the Lord's people just the same way alcoholic drink affects the drunkard (remember what is said in verse 1 and 3: the drunkards of Ephraim, drunk with the pleasures of this world). So, the prophet continues;

“...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 (that is in the operations of the gifts of the Spirit what they see is not what God has given), they stumble in Judgement (that is, in the teaching of God’s word).

For all tables are full of vomit...”

Peter says when a man begins to do things he once renounced, which things are moral vices, which he once repented from, he is as a dog that has returned back to its vomit (II Peter 2:22). And so, certain things that dead orthodoxy has thrown upon the church world which were sometimes rejected have now been embraced by unfaithful pentecostalism. And here we are told that all tables are full of vomit *and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.*

And so, God cries out in verse 9,

“...Who shall God teach knowledge? (the knowledge of God and the knowledge of his will) and whom shall he make to understand doctrine?. ...” (the principles of God’s word that governs moral behaviour and ministerial labour)

Now, the mere fact that this question is asked shows that majority of God’s people are not in the right condition to be taught knowledge and made to understand doctrine. And so, the prophet gives the answer to the question in the next part of verse 9. He says... *them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.*

Now, the word translated milk here is the Hebrew word *chalab*. Three English words can interpret it: either milk as here given or cheese or sucking. The reference here is to sucking; being the way a child that has no teeth draws food from the mother’s breast. So, we can talk of the child that has been weaned as the one that is no longer sucking.

Thus, the emphasis here is that these persons must be weaned from sucking, not the milk of the word, for, the milk of the word will always be relevant. Even at the time of the end when time appears to be running out (Revelation 10:6), it is always God’s way to turn the minds of the people to the way things were at the beginning, so that certain things may be corrected, and so that God’s people might grow unto fullness. The sincere milk of the word will always be relevant. When the deep things of God are being shared, God will intermix it with things that govern the primary

beginnings of salvation. Thus, the sincere milk of the word will always be needed, but then, the individual believer is expected to grow to a point where he is delivered from sucking.

Then, the next thing is that the people must be drawn from breasts. The word “*drawn*” as here used very forceful in the original. It speaks of a forceful break from a habit. Now, in the natural, in the first two years of a child, it is best that much of the food the child takes comes through the mother’s breast. But, after the age of two, three, four, if the child is still desirous of sucking and will not eat solid food, a concerned mother will have to take drastic steps to stop the child from infancy. One of the things done is that the mother may go into a dry fast of seventy-two hours, and all of the fibre will dry up and the supply of milk to the breast will be no more. So, after few feverish attempts of the child to suck and there is nothing coming, he beaks off. That is forcefully stopping a child that is over-aged from sucking breasts.

The reference of the prophet Isaiah in this second consideration is therefore to *adult spiritual babies*. They are adults in the sense that by reason of the number of years they have been saved, they ought to be able to feed on the solid meat of God’s word, but rather, they have choose to remain babies.

Whenever the teaching of God’s word gets serious, when God’s servants begin to get into the deep things of God, most adult spiritual babies sleep off or begin to complain or murmur. And some persons put their minds at home when they go to church. Men who are successful in business and run their homes and offices very well, enter into a blackout when they get to church, they abandon the faculties of reasoning and intelligence. Thus ministries who operate their selfish agenda in opposition to the will of God lead them into bondage very easily.

We now come to this two classes of believers- the spiritual babies who are such because they have just given their lives to Christ, and the adult spiritual babies who ought to be fathers and mothers in the Lord but are still clutching to their Sunday-school materials etc and are not capable of independent reasoning. They clutch to such things as they are taught, whether or not it agrees with God’s word.

The church world today consists of mostly these two categories of believers: spiritual babies and adults who have not filled their times. Isaiah in the closing chapter of his work speaks of an ancient that has not filled his days, a child of hundred years (Isaiah 65:20) speaking of adults who have always being there in the church (fifteen years, twenty years, twenty-five years) but have not

come to a knowledge of God beyond the very basics. And even in the basic principles of Christ, they are confused.

When the Lord begins to do a work, while the spiritual babies cry out that their feeding bottles are being taken away from them, the adult spiritual babies become name callers, “*oh that man is a false prophet, he is this, he is that*”. They begin to call names. But God by the power of his word and the power of his Spirit will deliver his people from that which characterise the church world of our day.

We come to verse 10. Here we are shown that even though the Lord will teach knowledge and make his people to understand doctrine, he will suit the method of delivery to the general condition of the people. It says

“...For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:...”

We will read verses 11 and 12 so that we can better appreciate the force of what is said in verse 10

“...For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, this is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: Yet they would not hear. ...”

One of the things that will characterise the close of the church age is that God will give unto his servants (ministers) another tongue. The word *stammering lips* in verse 11 is a misnomer; and if you check other translations apart from the *KJV*, it is rendered another tongue. And in I Corinthians 14 where Paul quotes from this passage, he said, “*with men of strange language and another lips will I speak unto this people*” (I Corinthians 14: 21).

Here we are shown that when God begins to open up his word again (through his servants) it will look like something strange to God’s people. This is so because the people have become married to things, which are taught in the city of religion. In the visible church world thing taught are only mixtures of man’s idea with sprinkles of the principles of God’s word.

He says, *“precepts must be upon precept”*. Normally, when you teach children, you introduce one concept at a time, and you stay with that concept. Then, you introduce another concept, and this second concept must be related to the first. In this last hour, the church that is two thousand years old must be taught like a baby, because for all her physical age, she is still at best only an adult spiritual baby.

Now, come with me to Hebrews 5 and you will see where Paul laments the same condition in the early church. Hebrews 5:11-14, Paul was talking about another level of priesthood, a new priesthood, much more glorious than the old testament priesthood, but says he couldn't say much say more about it for he was sure the people were not able to receive it.

“...Of whom (that is of Melchisedec), we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered. ...”

There are times when spiritual things are difficult to be uttered, not because God has not made known His will because the church out there are not in a ready state to receive. Remember Paul's words to the Corinthian church. He said, *“and I could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes”* (I Corinthians. 3:1). And that condition is still prevalent in the church today. Whereas many are claiming to be mighty men and women of God, we do not see the reflection of this assertion in the growth level of the church. So Paul says he has many things to say and hard to be uttered, seeing that the people are dull of hearing. He continues;

“...For when for the time (that ye have received the word of God, by now) ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principle of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat.

For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness for he is a babe....”

“...But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. ...”

We find these two distinctions. Adult spiritual babies fill the rank and file of the church today. But God must speak, and he will suit the method to the condition of the people. In Isaiah 28:10 we are told precept must be upon precept, a line drawn from a passage of scriptures compared with another line drawn from another passage of scriptures, here a little, there a little. This is God's method of speaking to his people. In this programme, we will be very deliberate, taking each topic, one at a time, touching on certain things that relate to the growth of the church so that we might deliver ourselves from our traditional clutching to denominational feeding bottles and being to think properly and act properly as it accords to our spiritual age.

The emphasis in verses 11 and 12 of Isaiah 28 is that the new tongue will lead the people into rest, into fullness of rest. Rest comes when there is no longer controversy between man and his God, when God has fully incorporated the nature and glory of Christ into the believer. When we have broken loose from the limitations of this world to the infinite dimensions that are reserved in God's word for full-grown sons, then we have come to rest. Here is a call to perfection; a mandate given us to grow up spiritually. And it says; yet the people will not hear.

I will go straight to the second aspect of this meditation. We take the reading again from Isaiah 28:13

“...But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken....”

By God's ordering there is no subject or theme of redemption in scriptures that is wholly covered by just one writer. This is so no matter how voluminous the writings are of that individual concerning that subject. God says, at the mouth of two or three witnesses, let every word be established. The witness of any other writer on the same doctrine must be taken into consideration before a proper view is reached on that subject matter. And, quite often, for adult spiritual babies, immediately something they hold dear (eventhough it is only a refuge of lies, eventhough it is a not true spiritual hope) is faulted, they begin to cry out and to call names.

But God says that he has this arrangement in place so that those who will not humble themselves to seek the face of God may have the misfortune of rejecting a true word. For many if a teaching does not agree with what is contained in their Sunday school manual, they do not even seek to prove its veracity against God's word. Invariably they become as the 14th verse of Isaiah 28 says,

“...Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men that rule this people, which is in Jerusalem

Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:...”

Take note of these two things: the *refuge of lies* and the *hiding place*. We find them again in verse 17. And they constitute the two divisions of spiritual decay we shall be addressing in forthcoming editions. Verse 16:

“...Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone...”

When God will measure his people, Christ is the measuring instrument used. Things must be assessed as they conform to the character image of Jesus Christ, his wisdom and spiritual knowledge. So, he says I lay in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste Verse 17:

“...Judgement also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet...”

This imagery is borrowed from the building industry. When a wall is set upon a foundation, by suitable instrument you can know whether the wall is vertical, whether the line is straight. When you read the plummet and there is a defect, then the supervisor will call for that portion of the wall to be pulled down. We are told that judgement (doctrinal teachings) shall be laid to the line and righteousness (moral and ministerial conducts and character) shall be laid to the plummet in order that the hail may sweep away the refuge of lies and the waters overflow the hiding place.

Now notice that in verse 14, the leadership of the Old Testament church were addressed, it says “*hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people*”. We shall be talking about the defects that constitute “*the hiding place*”. What is here meant by the phrase *hiding place*? In the Hebrew dictionary, the word “*hiding*” mean *masquerading*. Accordingly, we have titled this message “*spiritual masquerading*”. The reference is to the fact that under some guise, certain things are being perpetrated in the church world today that brings about spiritual corruption. The first reference is to this matter that we covered in the previous edition: leadership structure in the church.

We know that there was priesthood under the Old Testament with its laws of carnal commandments. We also know that under the New Testament, there is a different priesthood. But, there is a tendency in the church to revert to the Old Testament structure, to simulate things as they were during the time of Moses and Aaron and to seek to fulfil God's plan and purposes using a method that God more than two thousand years ago declared unprofitable. Let's take up the Levitical (Aaronic) priesthood and the Melchisedec (royal) priesthood. If you will turn with me to Hebrews 7, we will be doing quite some reading.

In Hebrews 5:6 and 6:20, we are told that Jesus Christ was ordained a priest after the order of Melchisedec. And in Hebrews 7:11 we read the following,

“...If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law, that is the old testament), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?...”

The first thing we are shown here is that the Levitical priesthood emphasises outward orders: garments, incense and the like ... We know that the Pentecostal church, of which I also am a member and could speak authoritatively about, has gone back into the old testament, raked up the dust, and is entrenching again the Levitical priesthood. We are told here that the goal of spiritual ministry is to bring about perfection. And God, not getting what he was looking for under the Old Testament, threw that order of things away and instituted a new order.

In order not to rush through this very important fact, I will allow the speed of delivery to be moderated by the reading of God's word with some comments where necessary. We have read verse 11, so we now take verse 12–14.

“...For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

For he of whom these things are spoken (that is the Lord Jesus Christ) pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. ...”

Under the Old Testament, you cannot be a priest except you are of a particular tribe: the tribe of Levi. That is not all, even if you come from Levi, you must be of a particular family lineage in the tribe of Levi. Only the lineage of Aaron's parents could be priests. So, no matter how much you loved God under the Old Testament, you could not be a priest if you come from a different tribe. And, only the priests accessed the deeper things of God, even the Levites (others from the tribe of Levi who were not from the family lineage of Aaron) were limited to worship in the outer court (the first of the three courts). So, things were limited by an outward setting. We are told that since Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, the fact of his priesthood is an indication that there has been a change in the priestly order. We complete the reading. Hebrews 7:14–17

“...For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

Who is made (constituted to be a priest serving the Lord's will), not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life....”

The distinctive qualification of ministry under the New Testament is the power of the endless life. Christ in us, the hope of glory. Any other distinctions are mere fallacy. The system of things that sets up officialdom in ministry is a gradual drifting into the Old Testament order. We will take that in a fuller consideration in the next edition. But now, we continue the reading verses 17 – 19.

“...For he testifieth, thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec....”

Follow verses 18 and 19 closely.

“...For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof ...”

The setting aside of the Levitical priesthood with all the routine services: animal sacrifices, garments, incense, blood and the like. The setting aside of all of that is that God did not get what he was looking for. That priestly order is said here to be weak and unprofitable: perfection could not come by that order. Verse 19.

“...For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by which we draw nigh unto God. ...”

The call to draw nigh unto God though limited to a select few under the Old Testament is, under the New Testament, not limited to persons who went to the Bible Schools or attended seminaries. Seminary and Bible School outputs are not necessarily tools that God must have to get his work done. All restrictions are taken out of the way and men can freely approach unto God and attain to the best in God without any prejudice.

The meaning and purpose of all of these things, we shall touch in the next edition. But turn with me to Hebrews 10. We are emphasising that perfection is what God desires, what he had in mind in setting up the New Testament priesthood. Growth is a mandate, for the church. She must grow to fullness of life in him. And, any system of things set up in the church that keeps the people in perpetual babyhood does so in order to be able to exploit the people. Men abandon their minds and support things that are contrary to God and his purpose all in the name of religion. No wonder somebody says, *“religion is the opium of the people”*. But, in this last hour, the great sword of Jehovah shall be spread over the ekklesiastical heavens, and all things that are not according to his will shall be destroyed. In Hebrew 10:1-2, we are told,

“...For (that system of things which once stood in the time of Moses called) the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the corners there unto perfect. ...”

Note that it says, *“it can never”*. And, the duly repetition of these sacrifices only suggests the weakness of that order of things. Patterning the leadership structure or ministerial order in the church according to the order found in the Old Testament only brings about spiritual death. It is a hiding place, a spiritual masquerading for the purpose of doing things that better serve self than God. The Lord bless you, in Jesus name.

Part II

SPIRITUAL MASQUERADING

The Lord bless you richly as you come with us into this edition of Light in the Evening time. We are continuing our teachings on God's Pattern Church, and, we will be taking the second part of what we ended with in the last edition: Spiritual Masquerading. Since that delivery was very fast we might need to establish two principal things that were brought out clearly in the last edition. First, Good is straightening the things in His church both as to conduct (character), practices and her belief system. Secondly, as God does this, it is accompanied by the release of judgements to flush out all errors some may stubbornly cling to.

We will be very deliberate in how we approach today's teaching. May God bring enlightenment to every hearts. Join us in this prayer as we continue in this meditation.

Let's begin with a little bit of recap of what we found in the last edition. We said that in the midst of that which is not according to God's mind (the spiritual decay and apostasy of the times), God cries out in Isaiah 28:9 "whom shall he teach knowledge?" And who shall he cause to understand doctrine? The two-fold answer speaks volume: "them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breast". And, we observed in the last edition that two categories of believers are shown here. First we have sucking babies: those of the Lord's people who have not been saved for a long time, and, who are only accustomed to taking food through sucking. To be weaned from the milk means weaned from sucking, that manner by which food is taken by a little child is the imagery used here.

Then the second "drawn from the breast", and we said this speaks of "adult spiritual babies", adult in the sense that they have been saved for quite a time (five, seven, ten years), yet, in

spiritual matters, they are still babies, and incapable of doing an independent study of God's word not benefiting from the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Apostle John tells us in 1 John 2:20, 21 and 27 that we have the anointing in us which can teach us all things. And yet, people can only relate to that, which they are taught in their Sunday school manual, still clutching to their denominational feeding bottles. But, in this last hour, God will teach the church the knowledge of himself and His will, and will highlight and impact principles of truth that enlightens the mind and so govern the moral and ministerial conduct of the people.

It is worthy to note that we have in the church sucking babies and adult spiritual babies, and we said these constitute the greater majority of God's people. Scarcely ten percent of believers today go to the Lord and seek his face concerning the things that pertain to the perfection of the church. And, God is reacting against that situation.

The next thing we found is that God will suit the method of teaching his people the knowledge of Himself and of His will to the condition of his people. He will give one truth at a time. That is why we have been taking these teachings in bits in order that our understanding may be fruitful. But, in spite of this, some are already getting agitated. And, we trust that the agitation, which is in the will of the Lord, will continue to great proportions. There would be loud cries. One of the things that we find is that adult spiritual babies are masters in name-calling. Something is taught which do not agree with what they have in their manuals, and they begin to scream "false prophets". But, wisdom shall be justified by her deeds. The Lord Jesus Christ told us how to identify the false prophets. He says, by their fruits, ye shall know them. The moral character of an individual tells us who he is. Beside, by the gifts of the spirit we can know. When we are not sure of anything and we seek the face of the Lord, by the many distributed workings of the Holy Spirit in revelatory gifts, he might make us know the character of the one ministering.

Thirdly, we can know by the word of God. For, no lie is of the truth. The truth has no lie in it. If what is spoken agrees with the scriptures, it is best to receive it as the word of God.

The prophet says precept must be upon precept, line upon line. The little child writes a, b, c, d and stops, and does that for a week. And, for the second week, he learns to write e, f, g, h. So, God will suit the method to all, and bit-by-bit, as we continue, you will find that a whole system of truth emerges. Not another truth necessarily, but the same truth, the meaning behind the same words, we have always read but never understood. And there will be a witness in our spirits that God is ordaining it.

That brings us to second point we mentioned in the last edition. In this last hour, God will speak to his people with another tongue. John the Baptist came forth; he had another tongue. What he was preaching and teaching was not what the people were used to. And that caused a stir. But, if you read the preaching and teachings of John the Baptist, you will wonder what other persons were teaching, for what he taught were the basic principles of righteousness. The Bible says in Luke 3 that John preached the baptism unto repentance. That was the summary of his message. Yet, it caused a stir, because the majority of the people were living in hypocrisy.

So also it was with the Lord Jesus Christ during the time of his first advent. He brought a new tongue. But when you read Mathew 5, 6, 7 and see the practical things brought forth in his teachings, and you read through the gospel you will wonder why the people fought against him. It was a new tongue, it wasn't teaching on things that were not in the scriptures, but opening the understanding of the people to what God sought for in the things that he caused his prophets of old to teach and to write. And it is a paradox that while David, looking at those animal sacrifices and the emptiness of that old testament order cried out "burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou wouldest not" and reached out in the spirit to the word of God's grace, we in the new testament age, two thousand years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are seeking to pattern our worship after the old testament order. We will be closing with that, but it is sufficient to note here that Jesus had a new tongue. Verse 11 of Isaiah 28 says.

**“...With stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.
...”**

And, we saw that the word stammering lips means a strange language, another tongue, another teaching, a teaching of another kind, drawn from the scriptures but different in spirit in the sense that it is serving God's purpose. All must admit that there has been a great mixture of men's ideas with sprinkles of God's word in what is now building the church systems of our day.

The apostles came with a new tongue; it was something distinctively different from what the people knew. In this last hour, God is going to open the scriptures as never before. Many fairy tales we have held as biblical hope will be swept away. The Bible in Isaiah 28:15, 17 calls them refuge of lies. Many pet doctrines will be swept away. All attempts to gather the broken pieces of these doctrines upon many altars shall fail, for the Lord's people shall be able to identify God's word, and the common people shall hear it gladly and turn their heart to Jesus.

And, he says with another tongue, with a new disposition of men that brings this word, will I speak to these people. Their emphasis will be “come to the rest, come to fullness, come to perfection, come to maturity”. For, even after two thousand years of the birth of the church, the church is still behaving like a baby, and, we expect the marriage of the bride to Christ will be soon. You don’t expect a thirty years old man to marry a two-year old girl. If he says it, we will not believe him. But if he sends a card, we will know that something is wrong somewhere. The church cannot be married to Jesus Christ in this state. As we look forward to our full union with Christ, we know that there is yet a tremendous work to be done in the midst of the church.

The apostles began to teach and preach the principles of God’s word that accord with the New Testament. It was a period of transition the taking away of the first with a view to establishing the second. Peter in II Peter 1:12 calls their message “the present truth”. Paul says he wrote and taught nothing but what was contained in the Old Testament. Their authority, the authority for their teaching and preaching was the scriptures. But to the people, because of their unfaithfulness and the darkness that has covered men’s eyes and deafened their ears on account of an age-long association with a system of things founded on error, it was a new tongue, a strange language, a strange thing.

We know that at this last hour, God shall remove every misconceptions and error crowding around about the truth, exposing the truth that men may behold Him and live. The Bible says that the path of the just is like a shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day (Proverbs 4:18). And we trust that God, who by his spirit and by his word has promised that he would so visit his church, will do so at this time and hour.

When we come to II Peter 1, the apostle begins to talk, from verse 3, of things that pertain to life and godliness, partaking of the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust. He began to build one block upon another until he comes to verse 7 where he speaks of charity. He said if we do all these things, we will have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Then, in verse 12, he says

“...Wherefore I will not be negligent to keep you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. ...”

Another tongue is the present truth. It will be in conformity with the scriptures, it is not going to be anything strange. But it will draw the carpet from the feet of hypocrisy, expose worldliness for what it is, deal with certain practices among God’s people and will expose the

errors in certain teachings. Our rest will consist in the true word of God appearing again in our land.

Now we come to the third thing we mentioned in the last edition. That has to do with one of the phrases we find in Isaiah 28:13, 15, which are expressions of the spiritual decay of our day. Isaiah 28: 13-15

But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

When certain statements are made, people are alarmed. But the proper attitude of the Lord's people to any word that comes is to go and seek the face of the Lord whether the word is true. This, the Berean Christian did. The apostles were not too excited about the church in Thessalonica; these ones never took out time to prove the Lord's word. But the church in Berea knew the character of the people teaching and ministering to them. They knew they were servants of God. But they needed to prove the word. If we develop such an attitude, God will confirm to our hearts things that are according to His will. When a word is spoken and there is no care to prove it, there may be such sharp reactions as switching off the television but all of God's word cannot be spoken once. When you follow the teachings, God will establish in your heart, whether these things are so or not. Verse 14

Whether hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men that rule this people, which is in Jerusalem.

Verses 15, 16 and 17 are addressed first to the leadership. The reason is because God's servants are an expression of God's glory. When God swore by himself that he would do certain things, it is that he will give the supply that makes possible the realisation of those promises. Rightly seen, parts of the description of the glory of Christ are his servants in his right hand. And, when spiritual leadership fails, the effect is usually catastrophic. We only need to take out a little time to examine the testful experiences that visited the children of Israel as they Journeyed through the wilderness. We will be able to see how any mistake in spiritual leadership brought about destruction upon themselves (the leaders) and the people.

The spiritual leadership is first addressed. Verse 15 of Isaiah 28 begins this way *“Because ye have said”*. Quite often, in spiritual parlance, certain things that are done are given to us as speeches. *“Actions speaks louder than voice”*, the people would say. And some people may say, *“at what time did we say this?”* Nay but the way a man acts shows what he is saying. And the prophets here says,

“...Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves...”

So, two things: the refuge of lies (doctrinal errors) and the hiding place of spiritual practices that are not in conformity with God’s word. And, the first of these we will be focusing on is the pattern of spiritual leadership in the visible church system. We call it spiritual masquerading because some thing is set up other than what God has in mind. In the last edition, we simply said that much of what we find in the practices of the visible church system is borrowing from the Old Testament. And, the authority for much of that is the Old Testament, as it relates to the Levitical priesthood. But, the Bible says, *“he taketh away the first that he might establish the second”*. There is a new arrangement, a new covenant. The first could not bring to God what he looked for, but the second shall fulfil that purpose.

In order for our minds to be fruitful, we will be going into the other aspect of this meditation in an indirect manner. We will say what things are wrong practices and them go into the scriptures to strengthen our under standing.

The first is the Clergy-laity distinction: officialdom and hierarchy in ministry so that there is a sustained order of things that distance the people from the ministry. The clergy-laity distinction, which is practiced in almost every place, is alien to the spirit of the New Testament. That is the first observation. We take some scriptures to back it up and strengthen this position further.

Turn with me to Revelation 2. Remember Revelation 2 and 3 is a manifestation of a typical day of judgement, Christ coming among his people after 65 years of his resurrection and showing them how they have fared, giving them their score sheets, drawing attention to things that must be repented from. By the eternal characteristic of God’s word, we know that those principles are still binding upon the church today. Those things the early churches were to repent of are still the same things the church today is to break loose from. Revelation 2:1-7 is a letter to the church in

Ephesus. Many things were commended and one thing was rebuked. But in verse 6, a particular grace was commended in that- church, which is what we want to bring out, Rev 2:6 says

“...But this thou hast that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ...”

Notice the strong emotion that the Lord expresses concerning this thing called the deeds of the Nicolaitans. What is it? It is introducing officialdom into spiritual ministry. Some are the official leaders, officially clothed, separately seated, and operating in such a form as to undermine the integrity of the followership. He says he hates it. It should be one church, we sit together, and spiritual ministry can flow through any person. Those who have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry minister the word in teaching and preaching. But there should also be the ministry of the body to itself, building up itself in love. Here it is simply the deeds of the Nicolaitans. But when we go to the Lord’s words to the church in Pergamos, we find this same element but in a form that tells us something important. Revelation 2: 15

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

He is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows because he loves righteousness and hates wickedness. This clergy-laity division, officialdom in ministry set up through certain arrangement that glorifies the ministry over and above the congregation, is what is referred to here. We are not saying there should not be respect for the ministries that God has revealed among his people. But, we are saying that in God’s house, the thin line between spiritual leadership and those who have not attained to that estate should be left as it is because men are always growing in grace. And, there are no fixed numbers of persons who can minister Christ to his people by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, what things constitute this masquerading? First, there is an understanding. In order to be a minister of God, you must go through the Bible school or through the seminary. Whereas, there have been few men of God who emerged through that means, in the main. Bible schools and seminaries never produce men of God. It is in the school of life (in our every day life), and in the environment of the local congregation that God raises up ministries. Bible school is an arrangement put in place with a view to securing an end. If you have a diploma from a Bible school, then you could open a church. Next is to carve out such an image for yourself: call yourself by some name. The distinction having been made, the people who do not have this qualification

will have to look to those having the qualification for spiritual help. And these say to the people, as it were, “*you be responsible for our care, because it is we that bring the word of life to you*”.

Although the scriptures provide for some to break free from secular employment, and to serve him in “*full time*” capacity, these are to live by faith, and are not to set up any system of things, any arrangement that draws their pay or salary from the congregation. A man’s gift makes room for him. If you are ministering life, people will identify with you. But, you have no business enforcing such an arrangement that ensures that your needs are met. There is no one engraced by God, ministering God’s life that will not be recognised for the services rendered. In any case, it is God who feeds the sparrows, who caused the ravens to feed Elijah. And, the same God is still at work in feeding his ministers today. Let this understanding sink into our hearts, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a hiding place it is a masquerading.

Now, if you drive through the streets of Benin during what time is called the Christmas, and the new year period, you will find some parsons parading as some gods in disguise; covering up themselves as masquerades. And when they come, children run and adults also are scared. And under the guise of being other than men, they make demands and get money. Sometimes they carry whip, and some attending to them will be menacing the people, attempting to whip them. And, because “*they are other than men*”, they have right to demand money from the people. When ministries make themselves other than the Lord’s word recommend, it is with a view to doing mischief. That is why we have titled this message “*spiritual masquerading*” drawing our inspiration from the Hebrew meaning of the word translated hiding in Isaiah 28:15 and 17. May the Lord help our understanding in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having seen that which the Lord Jesus Christ hates in Revelation 2, we will read some passages in Hebrews, perhaps closing with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Mathew 23, and that will be sufficient for the present purpose.

Turn with me then to Hebrews 7, we will just take one or two verse and go to Hebrews 10 to pick also some verses. In Hebrews 7, we are told the old arrangement, the old covenant, simply called the law, made nothing perfect.

The reason why we are going back to such things as who is the bishop? Who is the elder? What is the position of the five-fold ministries? The need for a humble carriage to be taken on by the servants of God is because of how far the church has veered off through entrenching erroneous principles, and, by the means of it, lording it over men.

Here, we are told that the law made nothing perfect, but, the bringing in of a better hope did by which all are encouraged to draw nigh unto God (Hebrews 7:28). Under the Old Testament, only few people could go in. They come to tell the people what God has said. There is an intermediary interposed between God and the people. Under, the New Testament, the only intermediary is the indwelling Christ. Christ in us, the hope of glory. And, that removes all the distinction; it is the priesthood of all believers, not of a tribe, not of Bible school or seminary products. Christ in us is the hope of glory, and as we yield ourselves in consecration, Christ who is no respecter of persons moves us onward in a greater appreciation of him. And, that is our qualification for spiritual ministry.

The Lord bless you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and do you good. The Lord make you to stand upright and respond to that which God is calling his people unto and be established in the principle of truth God is giving to his church in this last hour. Amen.