



5 Testing Experiences

Harden not your heart, as in the provocation,
and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness

Hope Ovwah

2 *Five Testing Experiences*

Five Testing Experiences

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INTRODUCTION

We have a burden of the Lord to share together with His people, some very vital thoughts drawn from a consideration of the experiences of the children of Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness to the Land of Promise. In particular, our meditation will focus on Apostle Paul's divinely inspired selected listing of selected events as contained in I Corinthian Chapter 10: 1-11.

Recall that the wilderness journey was for a period of forty years. A nation of between three to six million people kept in the barren wilderness for forty years. It is, without fear of any reasonable contradiction, a most unusual happening in human history. Certainly, the God of all creation was at work for a great purpose.

The Apostle Paul would have us know that those Israelites, in their persons and experiences, do represent the household of faith, in their persons and experiences. They are our examples. (1 Cor. 10:6). Their experiences, in the negative aspects, happened to them as an *example* and *warning* to us. Positively, they were written to *instruct* and *guide* us, and to *lead* us into a life *well pleasing* to God, in this closing hour of the age of all ages (1 Cor. 10: 1).

This being so, we are persuaded to believe that Paul's desire as expressed in the very first verse, is a measure of God's great heart of love towards us. Paul says, "*I would not that ye should be ignorant*" of the divine intentions in the wilderness journey of the Jews. He is saying, by implication, that there was so great an ignorance of these issues in the early church. We judge that this is the true picture today. God in His mercy and active goodwill towards us will correct this. We trust that the Holy Spirit will

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graciously lead us into an appreciative understanding of the Life-giving Truth set forth in this (1 Cor. 10) and other related Scriptural passages.

We would have as our leading text (1 Cor. 10:1-11), which is reproduced here for our convenience.

- 10:1 *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;*
- 10:2 *And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;*
- 10:3 *And did all eat the same spiritual meat;*
- 10:4 *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*
- 10:5 *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*
- 10:6 *Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*
- 10:7 *Neither 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.*
- 10:8 *Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.*
- 10:9 *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.*
- 10:10 *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*

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

We list below five main events which our meditation will revolve around, taken together with the Scriptural passages in the Old Testament covering them:

1. Lusting after evil things, verse 6. (Num. 11).
2. Idolatry vs. 7. (Exodus 32:1-31).
3. Fornication. vs. 8. (Num. 25:1-8)
4. Tempting Christ. Vs. 9. (Num. 21 :4-9)
5. Murmuring vs. 10 (Num. 13:26-14:24)

These events indicated above will be examined not as arranged in the typical history, but as found in our main text.

Background Consideration

It would prove useful for the earnest reader, at this point, to read through the first ten chapters of the book of 1st Corinthians or, at least, the 8th, 9th and 10th.

The Church to which this epistle was addressed had a lot of problems - morally and spiritually. It is revealing that Paul could say to this local assembly "*that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge*". He adds, "*ye come behind in no gift...*" and "*the testimony of Christ is confirmed among you*" (1 Cor. 1:5-7). This Church was evidently blessed with tremendous divine supplies, especially in the realm of the manifestation of the gifts of the spirit. Yet grievous things were happening among them - loose morals, strife, factions, unseparatedness from the world, gross carnality, disorderliness, uncaring, selfishness and petty jealousy. What a terrible mixture of

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the good and the bad! Greatly favoured but not reflecting this in their character and spiritual service.

Paul says of this people, that he could not just get the word of God preached among them. They were, after several years of conversion, not grown beyond spiritual infancy. It is a very sad condition to be in. They held tight to their feeding bottle with prideful satisfaction. Like physical babes, each man lived for himself, at the expense of God's purpose for His Church. Some few of them, thank God, began to be troubled about their condition and through letters intimated Paul with what was happening among them, desiring his help. They asked him several questions which were a puzzle to them. Paul's epistle, therefore, was written to deal with the issues raised.

The inspired approach Paul adopted was a practical application of principles of truth, drawing examples here and there from his own personal life. Paul was a man of great spiritual stature, a pattern disciple. *"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting"*. Paul says this of himself. (1 Tim. 1: 16). By the determinate counsel of God, we are shown in the life and ministry of Paul, what the Christian calling is; what exactly it means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus the Pattern Son.

When Paul's life is placed side by side with the testimony of the Corinthians we see the difference between life and death; between soul profit and loss of soul. Yes, as we keep examining them in a contrast, we see the difference between what makes for overcomership and what leads to being spued out of God's mouth. The letter to the Corinthians was a great spiritual bridge constructed to make possible for any to travel from the Corinthian waste land to the glorious land of Christ, flowing with *"milk and*

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honey".

Before we attempt an exposition of the choice verses in 1 Corinthians 10, let us look briefly at the verses concluding chapter 9. 1 Cor. 9: 24-27.

9:24 *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*

9:25 *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

9:26 *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:*

9:27 *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*

O that we might read through these verses again and again until the message thereof is perpetually written in our hearts. May the Lord graciously grant this unto us in Jesus name.

Here was a man who by God had such a great entrance into the truth of justification by faith and the riches of the covenant of grace. He had the confident assurance of making it to the throne; an assurance derived as it were, from a personal word from God. Yet, he was possessed of the great wisdom of living in the reverential fear of God; ever mindful of the danger of being a castaway. To him, the promise of a sure place on the throne is made; not to Paul, but to the believer who seeks God's face daily for the supply of grace. It is made to the believer who holds unto God to bring him to the mark for the throne prize, and who keeps fighting the good fight of faith to stay upon that mark perpetually. That believer could be you and me, if we lay hold on eternal life.

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Any man can be a castaway, even Moses. This is a solemn awareness. To be a castaway may not get into the terrible loss of missing the Kingdom of heaven. Castaways may just come short of making it to that place of honour with Christ, sitting with Him on His throne. Again, this is a sobering thought. O that we might cleave to Him who is our life; so that when He appears we might "*appear with Him in glory*" (Col. 3:1-4).

Word Study

There are three words in our passage which we need to look at closely. They are "*well pleased*"; "*overthrown*"; "*Examples*";

a. Well Pleased

The Greek word so translated is "*Eudokeo*" and it means: to think well of; approve; to be the good pleasure; well pleased. It's occurrence in Matthew 3:17, used in connection with the baptism of our Saviour, throws light upon Paul's usage of it.

And Jesus, when he was baptized went up straightway out of the water and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him:

3:17 *And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Thus we may say that Jesus was and is the Father's good pleasure. God craved to have this kind of satisfaction from the Church in the wilderness. He had the satisfaction in Joshua, Caleb, and Phinehas, during that eventful period. This desire remains steadfast towards His Church today. He has had it in Paul, John, Peter and some others throughout the Church age. God has earmarked this last hour for a great harvest, an ingathering of Sons and Daughters who give Him the fullest satisfaction. He has made

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available the full resources of His throne glory to secure this. He waits eagerly for it, the precious fruit of the earth. He will have it.

There shall not be lacking the presence and worthy examples of such persons in our time. Joshua, Caleb, Phinehas, Paul, John, and Peter lived among their people. Many drew inspiration from their lives and became overcomers also.

This is God's arrangement. And so shall it be among us, in Jesus Name. Amen.

b. Overthrow

This word in the Greek is "*Katastrounumi*". It means to be laid low, slain. It is what is done with something *unapproved*, undesirable, and unwanted. Its use in this passage carries the idea of "*taking out of the midst*" things which have come to a vile condition in order to keep their corrupting influences from the precious. The Old Testament account of the events under study strengthens this position taken. This separation of the precious from the vile (Jer. 15:19) is more suitably termed SIFTING

Thus the five events were occasions in which God carried out a *SIFTING* work of separating the precious from the vile. The vile were left in barren wilderness. Small and great names were among this lot; even Aaron their High Priest. May we allow the Lord to take away whatever is vile in us. Only the habitually disobedient and unyielding ones are sifted from among His own.

c. Ensample

The Greek word translating this word is "*Tupos*". It means a shape or resemblance: *type, figure, form, and pattern*. We may infer from the above that the Church in the wilderness is a prophetic figure of the Church of Jesus Christ. Fleshly Israel is a type of the Spiritual Israel; their history sets forth *typically* real experiences of God's children throughout this Gospel age.

But the real point in their history being penned down for us to read is so that we may not reproduce in our day *antitypical* fulfilments of their typical errors. Rather, we should be imitators of those who through faith and whole hearted separation unto God's purpose were well pleasing to Him.

TIMING

The good Lord is a God of measure. (2 Cor. 10: 12-1. Eph 4:13. Rev 11:1). (Quite often, men are eager to measure themselves by themselves. and comparing themselves among themselves some, in self conceit, drug themselves into a deep sleep because of how high they score in their own opinion. They are satisfied. Others as well hold them in high reputation. Nevertheless, God's measurements are final, and His Measuring Line is ever before Him).

From the parable of the tares and wheat, we learn that the work of sifting, being very decisive in nature, does not set in at the commencement of God's dealings with a body of people. This fact is brought out clearly in the book of Numbers. The book was especially written, among other things, to show by unmistakable acts, that God measures His people.

It will be noticed that Paul, in recounting Israel's experiences in the wilderness, *begins* with the incidence recorded in Numbers Chapter 11. One reason for this is because the first sifting was

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characteristic as we shall show later on. (That one event brings out all the precious lessons to be learnt in a nutshell. The other occasions highlighted some of these and provided more details. But the seed plot is there in the first sifting). However, we believe that one of the main reasons behind this approach adopted by the Holy Spirit is to draw our attention to the circumstances about God's people BEFORE He begins to measure their lives.

It is enlightening to consider all that God did to ENSURE success before the sifting began. Because of space we would simply identify these elements with brief comments only.

1. The Law Covenant was already ratified. That took place on Mount Sinai. (Exo. 19-24), three months after they left Egypt.
2. The Tabernacle was already built. (Exo. 40:2, 17). This took a further nine months.

The above two things correspond to a setting forth of the Vision before the people. The hope of any spiritual movement is in having clarity of understanding of God's burden for the hour. This end-time burden is the substance of the Present Truth which God has sent out into all the earth).

3. Population count. Before the record of sifting, the census of the people was taken (Num. 1: 2). Then after the last recorded sifting in Num. 25, another head count was taken (see Num. 26).
4. Organization of the children of Israel into family formations. (Num. 2: 1-2). (This answers to the presence of House Fellowships all over this Country. This has been brought about by divine hand. Each of these local expressions of the body of Christ consists of persons who have been delivered from

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babylonish church systems. Strictly autonomous, each House Fellowship administers her own affairs under the headship of Jesus Christ. They nevertheless, of their own volition seek fellowship with one another in keeping with the principles of the unity of the body).

5. The (gradual) emergence of God ordained spiritual leadership with definite instructions on how they are to function within their boundaries of authority. (Numbers. 4).
6. The consecration of the Priesthood (Lev. 8) and the extra consecration demanded of those who come under greater responsibilities. (Num. 6).
7. Bridal tests. The Israelites were shown how God brings His own under testing experiences to ascertain their fidelity. Numbers 5.
8. Organisation of His people into an army (Num. 3). Made able to respond to the trumpet sound (Num. 10, 1 Cor. 14:8) calling to battle.
9. Directed spiritual service; marching forward unto the Promised Land under the leadership of God. (Num. 9:15, 23, 10: 33-36). Take note of the Ark of Covenant; The cloud of glory; fiery pillars, Great rock.

All of these, God did for them corporately; that is towards the whole house of Israel. (We dare say that the presence of all these (in some measure) among us in this country is a sure sign that God means serious business. We too had better be more serious).

In addition to these institutional arrangements, God also brought each and every individual into personal experiences of His shepherdic care to ensure complete success. Paul lists these experiences in the first four verses of 1 Cor. 10.

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Common Spiritual Experiences

1. Under the Cloud

Each Israelite knew personally the power and presence of the shekinah glory. As it was then, so it is now. The great parousia of Christ is with the church today. It is evidenced by the diverse distribution of the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit in supernatural manifestations and guidance.

2. All Passed Through The Sea

"And were baptised unto Moses ...in the sea". This is where Pharaoh and his hosts were overthrown. It answers to our deliverance from the power of Satan and his wicked host; and of the deliverance from sin's guilt and power.

The truth of deliverance from Satan's power through Christ is greatly celebrated among us. None needs to be under the yoke of the enemy.

3. And Were Baptised Unto Moses In The Cloud

Each Israelite who received testimony of God at the mouth of Moses was treated to same favour as their nursing father. On the human side, each came through a baptism (a witness of acceptance of consecration to God as a way of life). On the divine side, each received an anointing from God to empower them to live consecratedly and to be fruitful in His service. Just so it is in our day. It is God's responsibility to give *"cloven tongues as of fire"*; yes, it is His to empower His people. He is faithful. Nevertheless, He does it *only* as we respond to the *call of consecration*.

It is an unwritten law much observed in the church: wherever there is evidence of consecration, the anointing abounds. In

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baptism we put on the same honour Christ has with God: Having the same commission, destined to the same throne; treated to the same favours. Hallelujah.

4. Same Spiritual Meat And Drink

"And did all eat the same spiritual meat"

And did *all* drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

God is no respecter of persons: all who believe share in the outpouring of His blessings. He "*divides*" the flames of fire for each to have a portion over him. His cloud is about us. He also makes available to us the ministry of the word relevant to His purposes in Christ Jesus: Meat in due season. Then the blessed times of refreshing from the presence of God; both in our closets and in the corporate meetings. The "*spiritual drink*" is the abiding refreshing of the Holy Spirit.

That Rock was Christ. Smitten once on Calvary, and upon resurrection and glorification outpoured the same spirit that was in Him upon the church. "*If any man thirst*" says our Rock, "*let him come to me and drink*". And we all do thirst every now and then. What a comfort to know that same spiritual Rock follows us not only corporately *but individually!*

The Rock, that is by us, who brought us out of spiritual Egypt (Babylon), says to every one who is thirsty "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it (Ps. 11: 10). The natural body calls for *water* daily, more forcefully than it calls for food. It is dangerous in the physical not to have tasted water for five days. Our New creation man demands spiritual water more forcefully than the natural. Let us day by day, and several times in a day ask for mighty infillings of the Holy Spirit. Go on being filled with the Spirit. (Eph. 5: 18).

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The "*spiritual meat*" is Manna. And rained down *manna* upon them to eat, and had given them of the *corn of heaven*. "*Everyone did eat the bread of the mighty: he sent them meat to the full*" (Ps. 78: 24-25). As it was then, so it is among us. Meat in due season ministered under the breath of the almighty is plenteously available in our day. And we all have been eating. And God continues to give this to strengthen and sustain us in this journey to fullness of union with Him.

We are to note, dear sons of God that the single element that informed how they were to individually respond to God has to do with their participation in the spiritual food. The meat and drink received faithfully prepares them to meet every test with sure hope of resounding success. All these blessings the Israelites knew both corporately and individually. Now God begins to administer the tests promotive of His purpose for calling them out of the religious order of the denominational (sectarian) set up. What has been said seem adequate enough to get us ready to "*launch in to the deep.*" May we go over the point just made in the last few pages.

God measures His people; he prepares them *well ahead of* time before seeking to gather in the fruit of His labours. None need fail in the midst of such great provisions. However, some fail. Sometimes it is the question of taking things for granted. Perhaps, it is the love of ease and pleasurable living. In such cases, unsuspectingly, death-bringing sleep sets in. Remember Amos 6: 1. Many times God has to jolt us up out of our folly by putting His finger upon where it hurts. He does it for our good.

"*But exhort one another daily*" is a counsel we need pay heed to. It is of great value to keep reminding ourselves of our responsibilities under the covenant of grace: "*provoking one another to love and good works*". However, nothing can take the

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place of individual responsibilities, each man applying himself diligently to his spiritual duties and devotions. It is danger sign when there is spiritual under-nourishment or should we say malnourishment? Which ever it is, there is the good word of the Lord available everywhere - Go for it.

CHAPTER ONE
THE FIRST TESTING
EXPERIENCE

The deliverance of the nation of Israel from Egypt and their desert journey to the land of promise is often treated as pre figuring the individual Christian experience. In this connection, Egypt stands for the world; and to be in Egypt is to be in the unregenerate condition. An individual is delivered from Egypt at the point of salvation: when he has received forgiveness of sins through a personal contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb.

And entering the promise land, what does it parallel in the Christian experience? Some say, a believer finally enters into the heavenly Canaan either at the end of his earthly pilgrimage, and upon death; or, when the "*Rapture*" takes place. Others, more definitely enlightened by God recognize that the land of promise fully possessed, answers to coming into the fullness of Christ here on earth - which experience, is the substance of the blessed hope those who eagerly look for Christ will receive from Him.

There is a great propriety in seeing Egypt as typifying the world. All ought to accept that willingly. However, looking at the Scriptures closely we find a more fitting picture emerging in the light of the present truth. We show shortly, that for the Church, the deliverance of the nation of Israel out of Egypt corresponds to her

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deliverance out of Spiritual Babylon. As this is not our main thrust, we would simply state some easy-to-prove facts and show their connection with our present burden. (We would serialize these for easy cross reference).

1. The nation of Israel had their beginning in Canaan, the land of promise (Exo. 1: 1, Gen. 37: 1. Heb 11:8. 9). They possessed only a little portion of the land, nevertheless they were in Canaan. They were already God's covenant people (Exo. 4:22, 23).
2. Then they came to Egypt; started out by "*living apart*" from the people not only physically (Goshen) but also in a religious separated-ness. (Gen. 43:31, 32, Gen. 45: to, Ex. 8:22). "*Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations*". (Num. 23:9).
3. After some time they got assimilated into the way of life of the Egyptians. It was a gradual process but in due course, there existed no longer any distinctiveness spiritually speaking. The nation soon became slaves in Egypt, or should we say, slaves to Egypt.
4. God sent deliverance to them in the course of time. The man Moses, of their stock, was drawn out of the evil waters (Egyptian condition) by the divine hand. Moses went into the wilderness, and there by Mount Sinai God revealed Himself to him. (Exodus 3). He was given a powerful commission: to go deliver the nation of Israel from Egypt.
5. Moses in a mighty demonstration of God's power delivered God's people out of Egypt physically, and they began the journey to the Promised Land.

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6. In the wilderness, God arranges to take '*Egypt*' out of them spiritually. For they must not bring Egypt into their land of inheritance (Canaan). There in the wilderness, He also purposed to build them up in godliness.
7. A further purpose of God was to bring them to the land of Canaan; cause them to fully inherit it, and complete their preparation for entering another phase in His plan.
8. Through Israel fitly processed, God begins the task of taking the nations of the earth unto Himself. For all the earth is His. (Exo. 19:5, 6 Ps. 24).

Now let's go over some of these eight points in few words, and by God's grace cause some precious truth to appear. (We would keep the same serialized order).

1. The nation of Israel typifies the Church of Jesus Christ. The Church on the day of Pentecost had her beginning in the LAND OF CHRIST. It was a first fruit portion of the Land. It was a precious beginning.
2. In the passage of time, the Church grew stronger under the ministry of the Apostles. They were possessing more and more of Christ. "*And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace*". (John 1: 16)

The Church was in the world but not part of it. (Acts 5:12-14). They lived and thrived in spiritual separatedness from the world. They were the "*called out*" (Ekklesia, Church) of the LORD; called out from the world. The Church was, at this time, the very glory of God in the earth.

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3. However, by the third century, there began such a terrible mingling of the holy people with the world. The Church soon lost her spiritual distinctiveness and glory, and became married to the world.

This situation of loss of distinctiveness and the consequent emergence of spiritual confusion (no sense of direction) is called Babylon. It is the importation of the ways (Spirit) of the world and the rule of the flesh into spiritual things. Becoming increasingly one with the world, she ceases to be the church in God's mind. The candlestick is taken away (Rev. 2: 5).

In this condition what was once called the city of God, now Babylon in essence, becomes spiritually referred to SODOM and EGYPT (Isaiah 1: 10, Rev. 11: 8). The word Babylon is used to depict her complete unsuitableness for divine usage because of her gross infidelity. The name Egypt stresses her identity with her new husband. The description SODOM points to the sure reward of harlotry: destruction.

Once in this shape, the faithful covenant people is seen by God to be actually treading under foot the Son of God (Heb. 10:29); crucifying to themselves the son of God afresh, putting Him to an open shame (Heb. 6:6, Rev. 11:8). It is a sour situation; grievous indeed to contemplate but it is a very familiar one. It is visibly seen to be the situation with the older denominations. But right now, in an open way, the Pentecostals are at it!

4. God has always reacted to this kind of ugly development. He must have a people on the earth, through whom certain promises made to Jesus would be fulfilled. (Psalm 110: 3, Romans 8:17-19, etc.) So God has raised, and has continued to raise all through the age, men and women through whom He seeks to recover the willing hearted to Himself and by them

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further His purposes. As with Moses, He begins by delivering them from the ugly hold of Babylon. He then brings them to a peculiar knowledge of Himself and His purpose in Christ Jesus.

5. He then empowers such ones to accomplish the task of calling His people out of Babylon. It is a first step; a vital one. "*Come out from among them, and be ye separate*", "*come out of her my people*" will continue to go forth in the power of the Spirit. A people must come out of Babylon and be fully separated from the world (Egypt).
6. In the wilderness journey God arranges to fully deliver His own from the sordid corruptions and gross defilements of Babylon. The hold of the world over their minds hearts and wills He seeks to break. He does this to fit His loved ones for the glorious things He has always kept for them. In each generation a few persons have gone all the way with Him. However, many grow impatient With Him and gradually settle for commonness.

Yes, it is in the "*sixth*" stage that there has always been great casualty. Many spiritual movements in the past have crashed out of being God's instruments, not yielding fully to divine processing. The Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Calvinist, Presbyterian, Adventist movements have long lost out. The outward forms remain, but O! What a pitiable sight.

The Pentecostal movement sprang up with great promise of a glorious outing. The age-long call went forth: "*COME OUT*." Many rushed out of the orthodox and equally dead evangelical denominations. It was a new day. God was definitely riding upon a new horse. But alas in the wilderness, they became restless and unpliant. From the Pentecostal movement, we are able to learn how her elder sisters became harlots; for we were in it. Rather greedily

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and in a swift swerve, they began to covert and adopt the strange ways of mystery Babylon, which once were uncompromisingly denounced. Search for cheap fame, filthy lucre, illicit sex, charismatic fraud, senseless pride, craze for worldly success and acclaim have fired up the zeal with which Pentecostalism rushes off to destruction. Pentecostalism is presently grievously sick, even unto death. As a movement, it cannot be healed (Jer. 51: 8, 9). Forsake her is the word of the LORD!

Will God abandon His purpose? No He will not. His resolve to establish the kingdom of his son in the earth is bound up with an oath. The strength of Israel will not lie. Nothing that has ever happened took him by surprise. The train of overcomers down through the church age adorns his true temple. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

With much joy and gratitude to God, the husbandman is again tending a noble vine that has begun to come forth. This time, the harvest of overcomers will be a great ingathering. In our country as in many parts of the earth, a new spiritual movement has been birthed. In our experience, it has been like a stone cut without hands; no great names involved. But that is of absolutely no importance. It is rather a great blessing in disguise. Over the last few years, God has brought this body of people to the "wilderness". The crucial "*sixth stage*" as it were has set in.

What lies ahead? What will the years ahead reveal? We do hear the Angel of the covenant speak to this body "*with good words and comfortable words*" (Zech. I: 13), and we say Amen. Hallelujah (Rev. 19: 1-4)

Having seen very dearly a purpose of God in the "*wilderness journey*", let us return to our examination of the typical history.

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FIRST SIFTING

The event which we are taking up is recorded in Number 11: 4-35. We believe a part reproduction of the passage will assist the reader. We are accordingly choosing for our text 1 Cor. 10: 5, 6; Num. 11:4-9

5. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness
6. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. (1Cor. 10:5, 6)

Numbers 11:4-9

4. *And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said who shall give us flesh to eat?*
5. *We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic.*
6. *But now our soul is dried away, there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes.*
7. *And the manna was as coriander seed, the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.*
8. *And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.*
9. *And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it. (Num. 11 :4-9)*

The above recorded incidence took place fifteen months after they left Egypt. God provided the host of well over three million

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souls with suitable food, manna. It rained upon wherever they were camping, each day for six days of the week. There was no manna on the Sabbath day. However they were required to gather twice what they needed on the sixth day so that there would be food for them on the seventh.

Manna had all they required for healthy living. It is significant to note that none of them took ill throughout the forty years (Ps 105:37). God's word testifies concerning the absolute wholesomeness of the meal in describing it as "*the corn of heaven*". Nevertheless the people grew weary of it, and began to loathe it.

Our passage says they began to complain terribly and talked gleefully about the "*mixed grill*" diet of Egypt. In effect they questioned the character of God, and doubted the wisdom of the Most High. It was not their first time of casting aspersion on the person of God. It had become habitual with them. The Scripture says they "*wept again*" (vs. 4) and they "*were as it were complainers*" (verse 1, margin). Discounting God in their hearts, they wondered: "*who shall give us flesh to eat?*" This was their ninth time of creating an evil scene in the wilderness.

Fourteen months before this time, "*they spake against God: they said, can God furnish a table in the wilderness?*" On this occasion, God endured with them, gave them "*flesh*" to eat for some time to demonstrate His almightiness before them. He did this to help build up their faith in Him. As His real plan for them was manna, he took away that supply. He gave them what was good for them, and was adequate to meet their real needs. He taught them in effect not to indulge in excesses. Self-denial, as a practice followers of Jesus must take on, is an essential element in the well known word: consecration.

But fourteen months with God in the school of life, confronted daily with the witness of supernatural manifestations and miracles

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of divine supplies ought to have delivered them from the folly of treating El Elyon with indignities. They lusted after "*evil things*" in preference to "*manna*", spiritual meat in due season. The result was decisive: they were laid low in the wilderness - the first of five siftings. (Num. 11: 31-35). Let us now apply the message to the Christian church, concentrating on the real issues involved and what lessons may be drawn there from.

The present blessings that are being ministered to us through whichever vessels have been used constitute the antitypical manna. We can all testify that the great Shepherd has been among us. The characteristics of manna as described in Exodus 16 and Numbers 11 reveal the nature of the word that has been coming to us and the life it produces in those who receive it indeed. We shall leave a consideration of this description to the next chapter.

The word of God comes to nourish our faith and to strengthen our use of the spirit of consecration. The ingredients of faith and consecration can grow to overcoming proportions as we daily exercise ourselves in their use. The root cause of failure in spiritual things is unbelief. Again, moral failure indicates spiritual inconsistencies. Spiritual beauty in a man's life will wane if he occasionally takes "*days off*" from watching over his soul.

The secret behind coming into overcoming grace is the active presence of faith and consecration in a believer's life. The first emphasizes our heart attitude to Christ's disclosure of Himself, His power and His Kingdom to us. "*With the heart man believeth*". Faith leads invariably to heart union with Christ. The second emphasizes the importance of separating oneself unto God with a view to knowing Him and doing His will. A man is a product of what he spends his time and resources doing.

Faith itself is a divine substance that becomes part of us when

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we habitually share fellowship with Him in His word and Spirit. Faith is spiritual understanding. It always produces the effect of imparting to us spiritual senses and we become acquainted with the voice of His spirit. Then it becomes easy to know His will and to do it. Love and obedience spring forth from a true knowledge of God.

This gives us inward strength and confidence in Him. But we cannot know someone with whom we hardly associate. The motivating power behind consecrated living is the deep desire to know Him and become like Him. God rewards diligence in seeking His face with an impartation of His nature. He removes our carnal nature which, in relation to spiritual things, is described as "*a heart of stone*". Thus faith and consecration prepare us to receive spiritual ministrations and to profit immensely from them.

The incidence of the first sifting reveals two things:

- (i) The elements of faith and consecration were lacking in many of the people. Thus they could not perceive the excellent riches of the "*manna*". Instead of praise and adoration for the goodness shown in the food He has so graciously supplied, they loathed the "*word*", the spiritual meat.
- (ii) A derived secondary consequence of the absence of these two vital elements was a terrible lack in spiritual leadership. The "*word*" received imparts leadership qualities. Wherever the river of the water of life is flowing it produces trees of life in those who drink of it (Rev. 22: 1-2). Again spiritual palm tree grows in the presence of living wells. (Exo. 15: 27). True spiritual leadership springing forth in a local assembly will be able to spot any evil trend while it is still in the early stage of growth. They then can "*root it out*" from among the people with the battle axe of the anointed word. Moses perceived

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rather very late, the need for persons to be raised up as leaders among them. In the midst of the crisis, he began to make desperate pleas unto God for help. Read Numbers 11:14, 15. It must have been a traumatic experience for him. It always is.

We can save ourselves much embarrassments and heart aches, if faithful to our responsibilities. Moses had been made to see the problem early enough. He had, in a human approach; hand picked about three thousand leaders a year before then (Exodus 18). But true leadership does not come that way. God-sent leadership must be perseveringly sought for in prayers. Then God graciously gives and manifests true spiritual leadership. There is practical wisdom in making unceasing prayers unto God for the "*thrusting*" out of more and more true labourers into His vineyard. God will give and keep giving "*men and women*" as gifts to His Church in response to believing prayers. In answer to Moses belated prayers, God in mercy blessed the body with seventy anointed servants. They proved more useful than the confused lot he had assembled earlier on.

Unhelpful Attitudes Symbolised

It is important to consider what the people lusted for Numbers 11:5. They desired fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, garlic and flesh (quail); what a list! Now, what do these things symbolise? The Hebrew dictionary and Scriptures provide the needed assistance to begin, let us realise that "*to eat*" in spiritual parlance means "*to accept*", "*to participate in*", "*to eat in*", "*appropriate*" and the like. Essentially, we would be dealing with unwise attitudes which the people adopted in preference to qualities of life the word of God commends.

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(i) Fish (Strong's No 1710, 1672).

Fish represents unbridled anxiety; fear of insecurity; fear of death; sorrow; restlessness; unsettledness; taking thought. These things speak of one who is swimming in the muddy waters of unbelief. Hireling shepherds love doing "*fishing business*" in such waters. Fear makes a man easily submit himself to bondage. (Heb. 2: 15).

The habit of living in fear and worrisomeness has produced a condition so many capitalise on. That is why certain ministries in the unfaithful house labour *only* to minister to the fleshly necessities of men. With the "*fishing hooks*" of purpose made sermons, emotions are merely stirred up; hopes raised which, are rarely truly realised. Isaiah chapter 19 shows that it would be a snare for any of His servants to get addicted to this kind of "*fishing business*". Such gain fast popularity and fat purses, but divine judgments disown this kind of labour

Let it be said very plainly, Christ's death is first and foremost to meet God's needs. God has needs. As God's needs are ministered to and His rule embraced; then men's needs are truly met. The saving compassions of our God; His miracles of healing, deliverances, life's supplies are known in Zion. They are daily experienced among those who love Him. But they gather in God's worship not first for these blessings. We are called to seek Him for the fulfilments of His glorious purposes in our lives and in the earth. Remember John 6. There are those who think their problems should be made the focus of the body every time we gather together for fellowship. They are impatient to learn the ways of faith that lead to permanent enjoyment of God's favours in granting breakthroughs, victories and blessings. They would rather troop to Egypt in search of one miracle or the other. Such always end up

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there.

The Lord's counsel in Matt. 6: 19-34 should be seriously taken by all. Any who aligns himself with the principles taught in this passage will live in victory over fear and worry.

(ii) **Cucumber** (Strong's No. 7180, 4750).

Primarily it speaks of unsoftened heart condition. Then it connotes ground left fallow. It calls for vigorous "tilling" of the heart (Hosea 10: 12).

There are those among God's people who rather than apply themselves to godliness have developed a strange attitude of itching for "*revelations*". They always want to bear something new. Paul writes concerning this in 2 Tim. 4:3, 4. Note particularly that they turn away their ears from truth, while tuning in to fables. They seem always to have at their command certain high sounding phrases that dwell alongside the present truth. This storage of words is cucumber.

Well, to "*turn away the ear*" from truth does not necessarily mean not listening to it. But because of the carefree attitude they just cannot endure the discipline sound doctrine demands (vs. 3). Ultimately they have an assorted storage in their spiritual stomach of undigested truth and confused fables. This leads to spiritual indigestion.

In the natural, cucumber is used to help indigestion. However in the spiritual (Isaiah 1: 8) it conceals nakedness, barrenness and a murky heart condition. It is easy to understand why such persons resort to private murmurings and grumbling. They are not in a condition to receive God's word. But they think the problem is with "*manna*" itself. It is most difficult helping this class of persons because they have "*cucumber*" to show as evidence that all is well

with them.

(iii) Onions. (Strong's No. 1211, 4178, 48 (3))

Primarily, it speaks of "*plucking of hairs*". It symbolises spiritual baldheadedness. Secondly, it refers to "*obstinacy*", "*independent attitude*", "*polished*", and rash. Onion eaters' usually have an excellent beginning, spiritually polished, but at some point they take up the weird attitude of "*walking alone*". They believe, strange enough, that they can overcome all by themselves and would not submit to the truth of the body. Lone rangers!

God's word expressly teaches that the body is the instrument for expressing divine life. The body of Christ is the nuclear concept in New Testament revelation. Man can magnify himself above the body and continue safe for long. Well, it does not take too long before the evil one begins his work of "hair plucking". Colossians 1: 24 makes it clear that the covenant of sacrifice (consecration) is more appropriately fulfilled when there is a passion for God's people.

But persons who have anointed their eyes with onions hardly notice what is taking place on their heads until they become spiritually baldheaded. Thus stripped of consecration and the possession of godly fear that is a fruit of it, they very easily become moral failures.

(iv) Leeks (Strong's No. 2682)

This speaks of dead works. Dead works could spring from seeking to do God's work in the energies of the flesh. Showmanship pays in Babylon. It agrees with the entertainment spirit which pervades that order. Leeks eaters grow impatient with those who seek to walk in the spirit. The way of the Spirit is certainly burdensome to the flesh.

Dead works also spring from trying to do the Lord's work

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when the "*vision*" is blurred; not having a working understanding of the truth. Quite often, people mistake the open liberty with which Zion conducts her affair as signifying democracy. They always want to rush forward to "*minister*". "*Leeks*" primarily speaks of grass, hay, stubble. Now grass is usually green in its' natural abode. Green would seem to indicate a prosperous outing. However we are expressly shown in 1 Cor. 3: 12-15 that "grassy" works cannot abide the fire of this Day of Judgment. Kingdom work calls for great spiritual discipline.

(v) **Garlic** (Strong No. 7762).

One can easily know the presence of garlic in a place by its rank odour. But then we are told manna was as coriander seed (Num. 11:7). The sweet fragrance of coriander seed makes us know that manna had pleasant aroma. What a contrast. The bread of Egypt compared to the bread of Zion.

Garlic eaters are a very interesting class. In a sense they are opposites of the same kind with cucumber eaters. The one hold back from proving a word (a teaching) before rejecting it. The other in a contrast has appetite for wild injurious, diet. Garlic is bread. But it is the bread of the old order. Not just that it is stale, it does represent the creeds and doctrines of Babylon which are in complete variance with God's word. The trouble with this class of people is that they are sluggards. It takes diligence to prove the truth or otherwise of a teaching. The sluggard feels that there is a lion (error, violence) in the streets (of truth). Read (Prov. 22: 13, 26: 13. Also, Rev 22: 1-2). Note that the water of life stands, for the sum total of redemptive truth streaming forth from the Living one. The Street of this river speaks of the same thing, but now as ministered among men).

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No one can make real progress in the things of the Kingdom who out of fear (sluggards always fear. Matt. 25: 25.26), keep themselves from the Bread of Life. God's people have unction of the Holy One, and are able as they diligently apply themselves to know the sound of their Master's voice; Truth is not for folks who love ease. Truth people will never eat the bread of idleness (Prov. 31:27). For in the essential matters of the Kingdom, Babylon creeds are nothing but idle dreams. Talk about an escape flight to heaven! Interestingly enough, garlic attitude makes a man think he is treading wisely. They are very hard to convince. The Bible declares. "*The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than SEVEN MEN that can render a REASON*" (Proverbs. 26: 16).

(iv) Quail (7958.7951)

This is an evil quest for materialism. It is extended to include such things as over indulgence in food and social mailers. To be overtly given to these things robs one of the attention Kingdom matters call for. Three things which "*quail*" hunger seeks to satisfy are Security, Success, and safety. In fact, the Hebrew word for quail means these three things; also, the word connotes "*sluggishness*". "*Slow flights*". The message is clear.

A sluggish spirit is the outcome of "*quail*" seeking. Then slow flights, inability to run the race that is set before us with any appreciable speed. "*Quail*" makes a man dull of hearing. One of the things "*prosperity*" message as preached in the denominations has produced is the widely accepted conviction that material possession and riches are signs of divine approval. The soul must be thoroughly purged from this unbalanced emphasis. The knowledge of the Most High, an eager longing for the King's appearing and Christ-like disposition constitute the true riches that will not fail in this last hour.

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We have a covenant with God. He is faithful to bless. Life blessings are assured to him who lives by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.

What is needful of this present life, God will give His own but He counsels us to set our affections upon "*things that are above*".

Unconsecration makes one despise the food God has given for the exaltation of the Church to the place of honour and glory.

A true possession of heavens light must be seen in our being employed in the service of the King. "*Son go work today in my vineyard*" is to command the level of obedience to which will determine final placing in the house of sons.

"*And there went forth a wind from the Lord...*" Num. 11: 31. The wind brought quails in answer to the carnal lusts of "*success*" and material acquisition. But we must watch it. Things may come from God in answers to prayers. Nevertheless, they may be instruments of judgment. At least on this occasion the people got what they wanted, but destruction came on the heels of it.

Sad Testimony of Lusters

Read verse 6. "*But now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes*". The word "*dried*" primarily means to be "*ashamed*", "*confused*" and "*disappointed*". What a state for man's soul to be in, even when it has gained the whole world! These three words "*ashamed*", "*confused*" and "*disappointed*" may be taken as a checklist.

Any man who is not having real fulfilment in his spiritual life had better begin to seriously look inward. The problem is not outside of him. Such need not search too long before seeing one or the other of the unhelpful attitudes we have just discussed. Should a man be clear within himself that none of these attitudes

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are to be found with him, he should take out time to seek God's face for a time of refreshing.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT!

Manna, the wilderness food that God gave to the Israelites, was so named because of a question asked when they first saw it. What! What is this! They said. And God graciously allowed this expression of His people's puzzle concerning this "*bread from heaven*" to become its name.

When the Lord Jesus Christ began proclaiming the new arrangement on which His Kingdom is being founded, it stirred up a great questioning in the hearts of the Jews of His day. "*And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, what is this! What new doctrine is this?*" Mk. 1: 27.

True to type, this is the same reaction among God's people today concerning the appearing again of the "*Word of Life*" that He has sent forth for the full redemption of His Church. We say there is an appearing again of the "*Word of Life*" in this final hour of the Church age because the substance of the "*Present Truth*" which God is ministering to His own today, is the same Gospel the Apostles proclaimed by Word and Life.

It was totally eclipsed in the dark ages under the custody of what has now become the Roman Catholic institution. (Whenever the Spirit of unfaithfulness takes a hold of anybody of people

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manifesting themselves to the world as the pillar and support of the truth of Jesus, the bright shining of the divine oracles begins to dim among them. Thank God, after well over 400 years of the gradual emergence of the word of Truth, from the days of Martin Luther until now, we are seeing in our day the great arising of the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. The healing rays flowing forth from His active presence are in growing degrees healing not only to the eyes of our understanding but our souls).

The term the "*Present Truth*" is taken from 2 Peter 1: 12. "*Wherefore, I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the Present Truth*". Here, Peter was saying in effect that God in taking away the first covenant and in establishing the second, there was put in place a *new arrangement* for the redemption of man based upon *better provisions* (Heb. 8: 6). These provisions *called promises*, which apply to all who accept the new arrangement (secured in Christ's death and resurrection entered into through personal faith in the Saviour) and vital to Christian growth.

Partaking fully of the redemption of the seed is by this arrangement, based upon one being blessed with the ministration of these promises. So we read in the opening verses of this same book. "*Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto Life and godliness through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the DIVINE NATURE, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through LUST*". The substance of this "*Present Truth*" is given to us in the New Testament writings and witnessed to by the "*LAW AND THE PROPHETS*" - the Old Testament Scriptures.

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Secondly, we call it the "WORD OF LIFE" as John puts it in his first epistle because it is the revelation of the LIVING ONE, the Lord Jesus Christ. *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the WORD OF LIFE: For the LIFE was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us"* 1 John 1: 1-2.

The "*Present Truth*" is not merely doctrine or Sunday school materials, but as it is in deed, THE TRUTH with us. We are called to be established, rooted and grounded, in JESUS who is THE TRUTH with us. Yes, the One of whom the Apostles preached, and of whom His Church now testifies, is WITH US, as He was WITH THEM - empowering His testimony. The written word reveals the truth, and it is when the revealed word is proclaimed in the power and presence of the LIVING WORD that men become like Him. That is the purpose of the written word: It testifies of Jesus, for His testimony is the LIFE of prophecy. (John 5: 39, 40; Rev. 19: 10).

Now hear this: God has sworn in an oath to honour HIS SON and to multiply Him in the earth. Wherever the LIFE of HIS SON is manifested and ENLARGED, there GOD is at work. God is under no obligation to certify men's opinions no matter how highly celebrated they are in the outer courts of religion and politics. TRUTH pertains to Life and godliness: any evidence of another kind does not portray truth. This observation makes it easy for anyone to identify what is of TRUTH, and what is not.

The Lord Jesus said, *"Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS. Do men gather GRAPES of thorns, or FIGS of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth*

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forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree CANNOT bring forth evil fruit neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit". (Mt. 7: 15-18).

It becomes necessary therefore for each person involved in some way with the Kingdom of heaven to take seriously the word of Jesus Christ. An honest heart and an open eye will be able to prove the character of any work being done in His Name. TRUTH seeking hearts will be blessed with their earnest desires.

Then truth will brighten and flood our being when once we begin to live by it. There lies the way to obtaining God's answers to man's puzzle: What is this?

We must be ready to yield all grounds to God. All who make a whole hearted decision to follow the Lamb of God withersoever He goeth, will come to see that it is costly. But the glory in view is worth all the surrender.

Many stand in opposition to Truth not on account of what is preached but because of the far reaching implications of coming to an honest conviction of the truth of the message. May we receive of the Lord a heart to truly cleave to Him and do His will. Amen.

Descriptive Symbols of Manna Examined

A. An overview of the significance of manna

Recall what was seen in our discussions on the first testing experience. We found out that manna was the central subject in that crisis. The Lusters' preferences were examined in the light of Scriptures. We were then able to identify some unhelpful attitudes which must be put away if the CROWN is truly in view.

We certainly would be blessed by taking a close look at the meaning of the symbols used to describe "*manna*". But we would do this in the light of God's overall purpose for giving the people,

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Manna.

We find Deuteronomy Chapter 8 very useful in this regard. Let us take out some verses relevant for our immediate interest. Deut. 8:1-8, 16.

1. *All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your Fathers.*
2. *And thou shall remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandment, or not.*
3. *And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.*
4. *Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forth years.*
5. *Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man Chasteneth his Son, so the Lord thy God Chasteneth thee.*
6. *Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in His way and to fear Him*
7. *For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valley and hills.*
8. *A land of wheat, and barley and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates, a land of oil olive, and honey.*
16. *Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers*

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knew not, that He might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end!

Our first observation may be summarised in two parts:

Firstly, the purpose of God in the wilderness journey was to provide the Children of Israel with

Training in Humility. (Man is essentially proud, and the ways of Egypt and Babylon encourage it).

Training in unselfish love and obedience. (This is opposite to man's nature that is basically selfish and disobedient. The course of this world is filled with the Children of disobedience. (Eph. 2:2).

Training in FAITH and CONSECRATION. (The rule of Life for those who would please God. Heb. 11: 6. Diligence in seeking God is consecration. Faith, because it expresses itself in consecration, is what brings VICTORY).

Secondly, the wilderness journey through the instrumental agency of the manna was:

- (1) To impart hunger. (Looks strange?). We would discuss it shortly.
- (2) For the testing of the Lord's people. (The word "*prove*" which implies '*testing*' carries the added positive thought of blessing the faithful).

For now, we would concentrate on the second aspects of the purpose of the wilderness journey: namely to impart "*hunger*" and to test the Lord's people. It would be useful to look at the following Scriptures: Exodus 16:8, 16-19; Ps. 78: 24-25.

8. "And Moses said, this shall be, when the Lord shall give you in the evening flesh to it, and in the morning bread to the full.
16. This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded; **Gather** of

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it every man ACCORDING TO HIS EATING, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in His tents.

17. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered some more some less.
18. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gather much had nothing over, and he that" gather little had no lack; they gathered EVERY MAN according to his eating.
19. And Moses said, let no man leave of it till morning". And from the passage in Ps 78 we read.
24. "And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.
25. Man did eat angel's food, he sent them meat to the FULL".

Quite evidently, the children of Israel were given food as much as each man thought he needed. So abundant was the provision that they did not need to be "*warming*" left-over food!

They had bread to the full, the very corn of heaven, the food of the mighty (angel's food).

Why then does God tell us in Deut. 8: 3 that He made them to hunger? Does it not seem a contradiction? No, it is not. We strike a beautiful imagery of an eternal principle in God's dealings with His church.

There was no limitation in the '*manna*' relative to what man may sincerely desire either as to quantity or quality. It met the requirements for healthy living. (See Deut. 8: 4). The "*manna*" however testified to the realities of the all surpassing excellence of the Land of promise. It was a glorious present experience pointing to a "*far more exceeding weight of glory*" awaiting them in the

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future just ahead of them.

Those who truly participated in the blessedness of the manna not just physically (for temporal benefits) but more so, spiritually (abidingly) GREATLY HUNGERED for the unlimited possibilities and glories of the land of promise. As it was then, so it is now. Only those who make full use of the word of God that they have received truly hunger for more of His glory.

But someone may ask, why then the tests? The tests were applied to encourage all to desire, receive and manifest the qualities of LIFE without which none can be invested with the glory, honour and abounding sufficiency associated with the Land of Promise. Look at Deut. 8:16 again. "*Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He may HUMBLE thee and that He may PROVE thee, TO DO THEE GOOD AT THY LATTER END*".

Clearly, the tests were needed to prepare those who POSITIVELY endure the wilderness training to receive "*GOOD AT THY LATTER END*". Well, many of them fought relentlessly against God and His plans for them. The many loving corrections God administered stirred them up to more rebellion, murmuring and grumbling. Needless to say they have no hunger for being "*glorified together with Him IF SO BE that we suffer with Him...*" And that was because they did not have the vital experience of what God has freely given unto them.

"*My Spirit shall not always strive with man*", God decreed long time ago. "*They do always err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways*", God discovered upon applying the tests. "*So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest*", God concluded. So it was then, and it is written for our admonition that it might not be so with us now.

The appalling spiritual state prevailing even among spirit filled

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believers today is a clear proof that the basic ministrations of the word of life is not being received. Truth has sanctifying power and permanently delivers the soul that finds it. Truth empowers the soul to be lifted up above the limitless hindrances that abound in the earth realm. (John 8: 31-34).

We may summarize the points just made in our first observation of Deut. 8 briefly as follows:

- (i) God took them through the wilderness experiences, giving them manna, to make them hunger for the glories of the Land of Promise.
- (ii) The tests were to reveal those who were worthy to receive "*God at thy latter end*".

In essence, He simply says to them, only those who receive my nature shall be given my glory. There is one more line of thought coming from the passage we are discussing. Let us take a look at verses seven and eight.

- 7. For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains, and of depths that spring out of valleys and hills,
- 8. A land of wheat, and barley and vines, and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of oil olive, and honey.

Here we find, in these two verses, a description of the beauty and glory of the *Land of Promise* - their full inheritance. The brooks of water, wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, oil olive and honey constitute the *goodness* of the *Land of Promise*.

The hunger which the '*manna*' imparted was to be taken away only when they enter into the Land of Promise. The expectation of

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many years was to be realized in the exceeding joyfulness of coming into their glorious inheritance.

What is the specific relatedness of '*manna*' to the '*goodness*' of the Land of Promise? One may ask! Since the Old Testament is revealed in the New, we would answer by appealing to the scriptures. Let us consider three short scriptural passages.

*"Now, He that has wrought us for this self same thing is God who also hath given us the EARNEST of the Spirit. (2 Cor. 5: 5).
"... in whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance" (Eph 1: 13, 14).*

"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the spirit do groan," (Rom. 8: 23).

When these three passages are read and considered together we come to an understanding briefly summarized below.

- (i) The abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in us is a guarantee that what the Father promised would be realized by the obedient. The Holy Spirit is the agency through which the promise is being fulfilled.
- (ii) What we have already reaped of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in this regard, described by Paul as our having the first fruits, being only a measure of all the Father has promised us, is called the EARNEST, a down payment.
- (iii) This EARNEST is actually a partial possession of the Holy Spirit's nature. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the exalted Christ. He is putting upon us the imprint of His nature, progressively "*sealing*" us.
- (iv) This work of the Holy Spirit in progressively ministering to us His nature, the nature of CHRIST, is carried out in the medium of the revealed word of God as we open up to Him.

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That is, more of the Holy Spirit work in a man comes with more of the revelation of Jesus to that individual through the WORD.

- (v) When He has concluded this work in us, the Church would have become FULL GROWN CHRIST - possessing His image and likeness in every sense.

Thus the Church is now called Christ (1 Cor. 12: 12) and would become CHRIST IN HIS Fullness (1Cor. 15: 23) when perfected. What we have actually experienced of Him is only a measure of all the Father has promised us. His plan is that we would become CHRIST in His fullness. There is a song we sing which expresses this vital truth very simply.

To be like Him, (2ce)

All I ask,

Is to be like Him,

Not in a measure

But in His fullness

All I ask

Is to be like Him.

Thus the EARNEST AND THE FULLNESS is all of the same - CHRIST. This is the relatedness of the '*Manna*' to the '*goodness*' of the Land of Promise. Through the '*manna*' they were expected to receive the earnest, so to speak. In the ministration of the '*goodness*' of the land they were to receive their full inheritance. However, the '*manna*' and the '*goodness*' of the land are all of the same - CHRIST TYPIFIED.

Now all Spirit filled believers walking in fellowship with Christ have experienced a measure of Him, though the extent varies with

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individuals. But these several measures of the CHRIST LIFE, differing from one person to another, are expected to be brought up to a CERTAIN ESTATE. This ESTATE OF LIFE, which is amply described in God's word, is the FULL MEASURE OF THE EARNEST. To possess this estate of life is to be counted worthy by God to be given the FULLNESS OF CHRIST. Note this.

When through submission to the workings of the Holy Spirit, a believer is brought to this ESTATE OF LIFE, his hunger for the fullness will begin to produce in him certain experiences and create in him a disposition, which ensure his coming to that fullness. What this disposition is and what these experiences are may best be described by reference to Scriptures which reveal them. Carefully go through the following passages in your Bible. 2 Cor. 5: 1-15, Romans 8: 17, 18, 23. John 3: 1-3. Philippians 3:7-15. Heb. 9: 28.

These Scriptures speak powerfully of those experiences associated with the full measure of the earnest. To attempt to expound them will attract a volume. All we would do for now is to take out some few words and group them together for further consideration by the reader.

Burdened; groan; earnestly desiring; do groan, being burdened, besides ourselves; sober; constrained by love; not live unto self; live unto Him who died (for you).

Groan within ourselves; suffer with Him; longing for adoption; looking for Him; purifieth himself; looking for that blessed hope;

That I may win Christ; counting all things but dung; that I may know Him; fellowship of His sufferings; I am apprehended of Christ; this one thing I do; pressing toward the mark.

When the earnest fully sets in, the believer would know all of the above experientially and continually. Ah, brethren, in the natural, hunger have caused men to do many unusual things,

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sometimes even terrible things.

But the above collection of phrases speaks of a disposition; they talk about experiences which spiritual hunger gives. Go through them again. True "*hunger pangs*"! They come with the earnest. Hallelujah.

May God speedily bring us into this blessed experience as we yield to Him. Amen. Paul in speaking of things we have just touched uses the word "*We*". May each one of us have our names written within those two words, "*We*".

Let us conclude this chapter with an examination of the symbols describing Manna, followed by looking into what the "*goodness*" of the Promised Land is like.

B. These Symbols Listed and Examined

From Exodus 16 and Numbers 11 we can gather the symbols used to describe manna.

(1) Coriander seed (2) White (3) Round (4) Small
(5) Hour post (6) Honey (7) Bdelium (8) Fresh Oil.

The qualities these symbols speak of is another description of THAT ESTATE OF LIFE called the EARNEST. It is so simply given that no one can be in doubt as to what God requires to be called an overcomer.

(1) CORIANDER SEED

This seed is of a very pleasant smell. It speaks of how God viewed the whole-hearted and complete surrender of Jesus unto Him. Jesus was and is of a sweet smelling savour to God.

It also speaks of how Jesus is to us when He is revealed to us through the SPIRIT OF THE WORD. The fragrance of the revealed word makes us desirous of feasting on it.

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Leviticus Chapter 1 teaches on whole burnt sacrifice. This sacrifice is so called because every part of it is UNRESERVEDLY offered to God on the fire of the Altar.

Verse 9 of this Chapter says, it is "*an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD*". Paul says we should be imitators of Christ who gave himself for us "*an offering, and a sacrifice to God for a SWEET SMELLING SAVOUR*", (Eph. 5: 2).

Paul admonishes us in Romans 12: 1 to take on this total abandonment to the Father's will. Paul in Phil. 2: 17 says he was such a sacrifice. Then at the close of his ministry, we see him still a "*sacrifice*" unto the LORD (2 Tim. 4:6). In Ezekiel 20: 41, God promises to make us a sacrifice unto Himself if we allow Him. "*I will accept you with your sweet savour when I bring you out from the people and gather you out of the countries and I will be SANCTIFIED IN YOU...*".

Simply put it means complete and unreserved submission to God. The first practical Step towards this is AVAILABILITY TO GOD AND HIS PURPOSE. We can be as a coriander seed by the grace of God, if we receive His grace not in vain (2 Cor. 6: 1). It is an element in the EARNEST.

(2) WHITE

This speaks of JESUS. It speaks of His purity of Life. He is *Holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate* from sinners and made higher than heaven. This nature comes to us as we feed on Him - His flesh and His blood which are ministered to us through His word. If we are truly feasting on Him, then He is surely making us holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.

He prays for us saying "*Sanctify them by thy word, thy word is truth*". (John 17: 19). Paul talks about sanctification that the believer experiences having been cleansed by the washing of the

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water by the WORD. The believer experiencing this cleansing and sanctification has his hopes secured.

Christ's present day ministry is intensifying this experience among those whom HE IS PRESENTING TO HIMSELF. Do we have this hope? It is an element in the earnest. God is RESTORING PURITY TO HIS Church. The ones made WHITE are completely harmless and undefiled too. Glory be to God.

(3) ROUND

This reveals the balanced personality of Christ; head and body. The word of God received imparts a smooth, round, loveable personality. Same roundness - whether in the home, at the office, at school or in the business environment. The tongue is the instrument that reveals to what extent our sharp edges have been beaten into shape.

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt that ye may know how to answer every man" Colossians 4: 6. Rashness, bad tempers, outbursts of anger, intemperate moods reveal a square shape; or perhaps an undefined, crooked, shape. It is certainly not round.

Roundness leaves men as men; and women as women. A man with visible feminine tendencies has a queer shape; a woman with marked masculine tendencies is disfigured. And a man who cannot stand up to God given masculine responsibilities needs help. An extremely feeble gait does not befit a spirit. The Bible says *"There was none feeble amongst them"*. We need not wonder about how we can become 'round'. All we need to do is to feast on the antitypical manna, JESUS.

(4) SMALL

"I am meek and lowly in heart", says the Lord Jesus Christ

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Himself.

God's word truly received imparts humility. True humility makes a man understand his place in the body: just one of the many; nothing more. None is exclusively gifted.

If all believers have opened themselves to the counsel of Christ to become like Him, the many little "*Vatican cities*" multiplied all over the country will not be there. The craze for 'Kingdom building' is the ruin of Pentecostalism. God's servants would simply just be members of the body not "*Presidents and Founders*" of this or that ministries.

Humility makes a man recognize himself as a servant. A servant serves. A serving son is a delight to the Father. Christ took on the form of a servant (Phil. 2). Humility enables one to so serve God as to both encourage and allow others to do the same. Standing aloof or being unemployed in the matters of the Kingdom is a revelation of grievous pride.

Since service must be done in God's way and in the power of His enabling grace, true humility will make a man seek diligently, in the place of prayers and devotion, how to serve God acceptably. Staying under the Authority of Christ, either directly or as expressed through those fitted by Him to function in leadership capacities calls for humility.

The manna was just a "*small, round thing, as small as a hoar frost, on the ground*". Exodus 16: 14. No wonder all had access to it. God has placed in the body men and women of different stages of growth spiritually whom He can use to correct us. God arranged this in love (Heb 12: 6, Rev. 3: 19). If we so conduct ourselves as to scare any of God's children from bringing a word of correction as needed, it is a revelation of pride. The human ego has an enormous size, as big and fearful as a wild beast, a monster.

But manna is small, and he who receives it, is small. When a

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man is small he very readily develops *faith* in the great and almighty God. Unbelief is a reasoned belief in self. Unbelief says "*it always depends on me. If I am able, fine. If I am not able, too bad*". Faith says "*I know myself I am not able; am so small. But God is able and near I will call upon Him*".

God accepted men's doubt concerning "*manna*" to express its' name. It didn't change the qualities of "*manna*" any how. Criticism is a must; very often criticism is factual to whatever small or great degree. But quite often too, criticism is a misdirected judgment. However, whether factual or only in the imagination, all criticisms hurt the human ego. If criticism is received in a loving disposition then such has the firstfruit of the Spirit, the earnest. The highest expression of humility is to so regard God and His word as to impel you to seek a life of unbroken obedience and submission.

(5) HOAR FROST

This reveals freshness. It also speaks of spiritual wetness. The manna always had the dew upon it. The dew is a manifestation of heaven's presence.

That is why in our passage it is called dew of heaven. This implies living not only in a vital daily contact with the Living One, but also to be in a condition to radiate that same heavenly atmosphere.

God's goodness to His own ensures that His breath always accompanies the revealed word.

(6) HONEY

Goodness, whether human or divine is very often symbolised as honey in Scriptures. God says in Leviticus concerning the sacrificial offerings that no honey should be added. The reference is to mere

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human goodness. Goodness flowing from man if not sourced in God is useless. It is an abomination. No matter what benefits come from it, God regards it with distaste. (See 1 Cor. 13: 3).

Divine goodness is high and heavenly. He ministers it to us through our feasting upon His Son. The anointed word imparts Divine goodness. Divine goodness reveals itself in giving us the wisdom to choose the right and reject the wrong. It reveals maturity. (Heb. 5:12-14, Isaiah 7:14, 15). *"Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His Name Immanuel. Butter and HONEY shall he eat, THAT HE MAY KNOW TO REFUSE THE EVIL, AND CHOOSE THE GOOD"*.

How we need this today! It comes through the WORD WITH THE SPIRIT'S BREATHE ON IT. The world today is full of terrible mixtures. Ungodliness abounds. It is so easy for the enemy to make men corrupt themselves with the filth of the world. We need "honey" to be able to possess the gates of our enemies. This reveals "Christ seed" in us. It is a requirement that is seen in the EARNEST.

In the Lord's temptations, as recorded in Mt. 4, He won the victory over Satan because God's 'honey' was available to Him. (Ps. 119: 103). He invites us to experience the goodness of God; the 'honey'. *"Take my yoke upon you and learn of me"*. Mt. 11: 29 (as a particular translation puts it. It is consistent with the Greek). We need 'honey' to war successfully. Our eyes are brightened to see clearly what is good and what is evil.

God's goodness teaches us the secret of deep repentance when once He convicts us of sin. The minimum requirement to be honoured with a place on the throne includes you winning the victory over sin, flesh, the world, Satan, and such other things brought into focus by these evil four. Honey from God strengthens

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us with the grace to stand in overcomership. There is a land where honey flows. That much will be needed for DIVINE WARFARE.

However the measure of '*honey*' available to us in the EARNEST is sufficient to help us win the victory in our personal spiritual warfare against our adversary. Only such can be called unto God's army to fight God's battles who have won their personal battles in the power of His goodness.

(7) BDELLIUM

This reveals a characteristic of the Christ, Head and Body. Bdelium is a precious stone. It reveals an open heaven; diverse distribution of the Holy Spirit in gifts and spiritual ministries. We are enabled by these to profit ourselves and others. The word "*Bdelium*" comes from a root word which primarily, means to DIVIDE.

These spiritual abilities come and keep coming to us through the anointed word and in the place of prayers and worship. "*Flames of fire*" from the father is "*parted*" upon us; divided to His own severally as He wills. (1 Cor. 12:4-11, Heb. 2:5). Then we are made flames of fire as we continue receiving the "*flames*" in parts. That fully equips us for the battle. (Heb. 1:7). We are then able to battle against the enemy, win the victory, and minister God's blessings to His people. Then as "*flames of fire*", under God we are made able to minister this glorious flaming fire to others, in a measure. This is all part of the earnest. And all of God's children can enter into possessing bit by bit spiritual Bdelium.

Bdelium in its natural occurrence comes in "*bits*" and pieces. It is the same spiritually. To gather much, we must live with God. We need this precious pearl today; desperately too. May we with all importunity continue to call upon God for these blessings by

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prayers, by praise, and by the word.

Psalm 29 summarises this aspect beautifully. Read it all through. It is powerful. The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. *The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire* (vs. 4, 5, 7).

The voice of the Lord is a person: JESUS. (Rev. 1: 12, 13). God will burn off all the scales in our eyes, and the waxes in our ears, and the mucus in our nostrils as we keep fellowship with Him and His people. Then we can see clearly, even into the mystery of His will. Then we can hear clearly and be full of faith and instruction; and finally, our powers of discernment will be sharp and reliably accurate. We would then be able to call good, good, and evil, evil.

(8) FRESH OIL

This is the anointing. It abides ever fresh; it is the seal of divine approval. It is this anointing that gives the working strength to all other seven elements discussed. In the type, the manna comes clothed with oil which the Heavenly Dew imparts. The anointing is Clothing. We can be wrapped over and over with it. This is a much needed situation in our lives.

In the fullness, the land of promise we meet the anointing in a full grown proportion of the **TREE ITSELF**. But we can know now the joy of the precious ointment permeating the whole of our being, and coming all over us. We are told in God's word that manna was gathered everyday. They were expected to gather **DOUBLE PORTION** on the sixth day. We are in the "*sixth day*" already, by God's count.

Let us be obedient to His command and ensure we gather daily the

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PRECIOUS MANNA despised by the unconsecrated but prized by all who know its values.

C. THE SYMBOLS OF THE “GOODNESS” EXAMINED BRIEFLY

The symbolic garden of the Lord, over which He keeps great watch, as the Husband man, has eight special characteristics.

1. Wheat
2. Barley
3. Vines
4. Fig Trees
5. Pomegranates
6. Oil Olive
7. Honey
8. The good land.

Please note that none can tell with experiential knowledge the glories of the "goodness" of the land. But we humbly look unto God to assist us, in searching, in part, the good land. It is a good report. We would be helped further to respond to the voice of our "*hunger pangs*" until they become birth pangs). We discuss all but the seventh, which we consider as adequately treated already in "*manna*".

1. A LAND OF WHEAT

In John 12:23, Jesus refers to Himself as a WHEAT SEED. This is a compound revelation - two broad aspects of the unveiling of Himself in one phrase. Let us first look at Him as a SEED. Luke 8: 11 tells us the seed is the word of God. John 1: 1 tells us "*In the beginning was the WORD, the WORD was with God, and the WORD was GOD*". Then in John 1: 4 we are told: "*In Him was life*".

From these Scriptures we learn a vital truth: The seed which is JESUS, has LIFE within IT. So gloriously full is this LIFE that it does not speak of a mere existence, but of LIFE ITSELF. Now, SEED expresses generation and points to a SOURCE possessed of

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the SAME LIFE from which it sprang. (Gen. 1: 11, 12 refers). Then, SEED implies the power to reproduce its exact kind. Thus JESUS CHRIST in referring to Himself as SEED, is in that vein showing Himself to be the SON of GOD, and of being capable of birthing SONS possessed of His unique life. John 12:23 read in context implies that He was not to abide alone, in His all-inclusive uniqueness, as the ONLY BEGOTTEN SON. He desires to have and is already having many sons possessed of the SAME LIFE.

Secondly, in John 6:35, He refers to Himself as the BREAD OF LIFE, life-giving BREAD. Now we know that bread is made from several grains of wheat ground to fine flour, and placed under intense fire. For there to be a continuous supply of bread there has to be a WHEAT FIELD. The Land of Promise contains a WHEAT FIELD. The Lord Jesus, in referring to Himself as the LIFE - giving BREAD is teaching us how He reproduces Himself; The SEED is the LIVING WORD OF GOD, and the WHEAT FIELD the full revelation of Himself drawn from the WRITTEN WORD. Bread expresses the form in which the revealed word comes to give HIS LIFE to those who feast on it.

We are promised a full revelation of Himself through HIS WORD AND SPIRIT. He sowed Himself in atoning death; resurrected unto HIS present GLORY, imparting HIS LIFE to all who receive Him. He takes from HIS WHEAT FIELD, and by HIS Spirit processes it into Living Bread and ministers HIS LIFE by means of it to men. The revelation and the fulfilment of God's purpose in bringing many Children of His to the glory of the SON OF GOD is the main thrust of the present day ministry of our LORD Jesus Christ. It is His one focal mission in this Church age. (Heb. 2: 9-13).

We are to believe that there are some in His Church today who have been brought into the WHEAT FIELD. Certainly, these would

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not have been able to see the whole expanse of it yet. Much of the WHEAT FIELD is still in the '*dark*' figuratively speaking, but they are feasting already. They are come to an earnest and are moving on beyond that measure. The strength derived from the earnest give enlightenment to their eyes to behold more of the WHEAT FIELD. This is the path all prospective sons must take: getting more and more strength to have more and more light to see the WHEAT FIELD and to feast on Him until His full LIFE is possessed. Amen.

All such ones who have pressed through to possessing a fullness of HIS LIFE constitute the kingdom of Heaven. As stars in that Heaven, they differ from each other in placing (Glory). Gal 4: 1-8; John 8: 31-36. Romans 8:1-39 set out in simple form the primary beginning of the word of Sonship. We give a brief insight here:

- (1) All who believe in Jesus Christ are Children of God; coming to a basic relationship with Him which does not change so long as saving faith is possessed. Saving faith is a living thing and involves deepening heart reliance upon Christ for more and more of His Life.
- (2) However, Sonship is prospective, that is, it is something we grow into. Not all attain to a placement as Sons of God.
- (3) Simply put, Sonship is vocational, and one must be titled (trained) for it. There is a great service in view for which this is an age of preparation.
- (4) The Kingdom of Heaven is the governmental arm of the Kingdom of God. Only such are made members who have been proven and found faithful. The precious fruit of the earth.
- (5) The limitations of Childhood are compared to the estate of

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'hired' servants. (Gal. 4: 1). As by the Lord Jesus we know that servants do not have a permanent abiding in the Household of Sons (John 8: 35), so, those who do not get beyond the limitations of Childhood are not given governmental powers which being in the Kingdom of Heaven implies.

However, all true believers who do not overcome, but are possessed of saving faith and enjoy the peace of Justification with God, even though nominally, have a share in the vaster Kingdom of God.

- (6) A basic measure of what it takes to remain in the house of sons is true HEART PURITY which comes by the Sanctifying power of truth (John 8:34-36).
- (7) We add this seventh point. The word of God reveals that there are some though now are unbelievers, who upon being saved would yet make it to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The challenge in this statement is that; let no man think he has come late to the Kingdom (Heb. 4: 2). The journey to life is not as long as it has taken till this time. This is an opportune hour. God, in a two-fold sense, is doing a quick and a short work, hastening all things. Let Zion awake to His call.

2. LAND OF BARLEY

The barley bread is of a lesser quality than that of wheat. It is associated with judgment and Warfare. The broad spectrum of revealed truth constitutes the wheat field. There is a division of revealed truth which deals specifically with JUDGMENT and WARFARE. It is a vital sphere of truth. We are explicitly taught in God's word that all His works are consistent with the divine attributes. Judgment and Warfare being one of them, is shown to

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be carried out in righteousness.

"*In righteousness He doth judge and make war*" (Rev. 19: 11). However, the manifestation of judgment and warfare is by God reckoned not to be as contributive to the development of the sons of God as those of wisdom and love.

We may infer this from several scriptures, but a brief comment will suffice.

- (a) In John 5: 22 we read "*The Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son*". Then in John 12: 46-48, the Lord Jesus says His word rather He will judge men in the last day. This observation is instructive.
- (b) Redemptive truth pertaining to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus is usually typified by silver and gold. Brass, a metal of lesser quality is more often associated with judgment.
- (c) Whenever judgment is discussed in God's word and the development of the Sons of God is not in view, gold is used. Of special interest is that which leads to the overthrow of the Kingdoms of this world. (Rev. 15 and 16).
- (d) James 2: 12, 13 declare that mercy glories over judgment. The division of God's word which deals with matters of judgment and warfare constitute the Barley field.

Numbers 5 discusses the periodic judgments of local expressions of the body of Christ. It is significant to note that the procedure specifies the use of Barley meal.

Barley flour is never used in the meat offerings of God. In fact, it is never burnt on the Altar except on this occasion of judgment. In contrast wheat flour is what is used in all meat offerings.

In Gideon's battle against the Midianites, Amalekites and the

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Children of the east, the sword of Gideon (his word of battle) are described as "*a cake of barley bread*".

Now, the Barley grain also has a signification. It represents lesser than the Wheat grain. However, the barley and the wheat are part of the inheritance of the Land of Promise.

God's plan for the called-out ones is to give them the highest good: to lead them to share in His divinity. However they do not all manifest the same degree of faithfulness and not all who come into the Kingdom of Heaven come to the Highest God has planned for him.

Scores of Scriptures reveal that the Kingdom of Heaven is thoroughly ordered; that is, stratified. There are several distinct classes within it. But by the figure of the wheat grain and the barley grain these distinctions thin out into two broad classifications.

(3) LAND OF VINES

All four fruit yielding trees in the land of promise are description of special qualities found in the Christ, both Head and Body. The Lord Jesus Christ is the true Vine and we, His church, are the branches. (John 15). The vine in the figure of its grape represents qualities of character. In abiding in the true vine we share in His moral likeness. When the believer has his heart turned into the "*good land*" condition, he is least fitted to receive and manifest the moral glory of the Lord Jesus.

The grapes of the true Vine represent the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The grapes upon receiving all of God's nourishment mature and ripen to the delight of the Father, the Husband man. The rains of heaven - of the word and of the spirit - coming upon the good land impart the life of Christ. The nine fruit of the Holy Spirit would be fully developed in His sons in this last hour.

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We may talk of the grapes and the wine made from the juice. The principal grapes of the true vine speak of the life of Christ in His moral aspects; His character and holiness. The wine from these principal grapes represents Jesus' blood. This is the wine of the New Testament. His blood is drink indeed! (John 6: 55).

It is instructive to note that the first fruit tree mentioned in the list is the vine. Character is of the greatest importance to God, and this He brings first to develop in His people. Meat offering, made from wheat flour ultimately represents a people whose character has been fully purified (see Mal 3: 3, 4). Thus as we have already stated, the vine tree represents in a complete figure, the character of God's Wheat, His sons, as it is developed to maturity.

Drink offering, which is always associated with meal offering, consists of wine made from grape juice. The drink offering in this connection represents the joy that the revealed word brings to the soul. Thus, wine, when it speaks of revelation in a passage, stresses the fact that the secrets of the kingdom are only given to the consecrated.

Recalling the figure of the true vine of John 15, we might in all propriety look at each branch of the vine as in essence a vine planted in the Lord's garden, wholly of a right seed. (Jer. 21:21). All that are to be found in Christ Jesus would be developed in the Vine-Branches as they abide in Him. Keeping close to the treatment of the subject in Jeremiah chapter 2, we may say that unfaithfulness transforms a vine - branch into a degenerate plant (Jer. 2: 21). It then becomes of the false vine, the vine of the earth. (Rev. 14: 18-20)

The false vine; the vine of the earth will be harvested in the great day of the wrath of God which fully sets in after the church is perfected. The grapes from this false vine typify the character of the

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wicked. The wine from these grapes, referred to as the "*blood of grapes*" in Joel 3: 12, 13, speaks of the wickedness of men. The complete destruction of the vine of the earth is the fulfilment of the following prophecies among others: Gen. 49: 11, Isaiah. 63:1-3, Rev. 14: 18-20 and Rev. 19: 11-21.

But how fulfilling to know that the faithful church will upon perfection bring great delight to the heart of our Redeemer. When He spoke of the wine of the New Testament, His blood, He promised that the same holiness of life will be reproduced in us. In the very night of His arrest as the events of the next few hours came upon His mind. He brightened up with thoughts of the glory that will be revealed in the church.

"For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Mt. 26:28, 29; Luke 22:18).

The vine tree winds itself around other trees in the garden. This it might be said that the vine and its grapes adorn every other tree. So is the fruit of character in relation to every other virtue in the kingdom.

(4) FIG TREE

This fruit tree principally *represents* the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of Man, the Servant of Jehovah. The term "*Son of Man*" refers to His complete identification with the human race. It also signifies corporate consciousness that is, properly discerning and identifying with the body of Christ. As Man, He is come as the last Adam to terminate the evil career of sin and death; and to usher in peace and prosperity to the human race (Luke 19: 10). As the prophet of God, He has come as the second Man, the Lord of Heaven, a Life giving spirit to lift men up to the true and proper

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worship of God.

The fig tree also represents the Lord's people in their call to serve the most High God. The service of the church is along the two lines of the ministry of our Redeemer: ministering the glad tidings to restore the obedient and faithful to peace and prosperity, and to minister prophetically to God's people concerning the divine purposes. Physically, Israel was God's first fig tree, just as it was His first vine. When as a nation she failed in her responsibilities to develop character she never fully enjoyed peace and prosperity.

"Every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree" promised in different scriptures never had abiding fulfilment in physical Israel. These promises pass on to the spiritual Israel, the church. The cursing of the fig tree in Mt. 21: 19, the judgment of the House of Israel in Mt. 23: 38 and the taking away of the kingdom of God from physical Israel referred to in Mt. 21: 43 are all related and interpret one another.

That fig tree bore no fruit, but the fig tree which the church is, is by the same prophecy in Mt. 21:43 destined to bear fruit and has been bearing fruit. Nevertheless, the church has not attained to the estate of the ministry of the Redeemer, the great prophet of Jehovah. The ministry of the church as a fig tree is essentially prophetic. And the faithful Husband man has been tending this tree until its fruit is fully realized in the manifestation of the sons of God.

The church must first come to the fullness of her fig tree ministry before she can be installed and reign as kings over the earth. She reigns with the king of kings as king when her time sets in. However, there are some who have begun to reign before time, which had their beginnings in Christ. The figs on such fig - trees are untimely and these run the risk of losing their place in the

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kingdom of heaven. There is coming a time of judgment which will sweep out of God's church those who stubbornly neglect God's counsel. Rev. 6: 12, 13 shows the overthrow of such who court the favours of the political state of the world at the expense of kingdom affairs.

There is a priestly work which the true church to the extent of the development of her fig-tree characteristics, must engage in. This is particularly discussed in Mt. 21: 13 read in the light of Isaiah 56. The house within the house; The Emergent church is required by her Lord to bear ministry towards the unfaithful house. This simply put, is an aspect of the harvest work which has to do with sounding out the message: "*Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, come out of her my people*". It is first and foremost a ministry in strong intercessory prayers for their brethren in the systems of men. This is followed by the ministry of the word going forth as swords (speaking) and spears (writing).

As the glorious rain of heaven continues to fall on this tender fig tree (the emergent church), she will awaken to her responsibility. The principal fig tree shall direct our hearts, minds and wills to this noble ministry as we look unto Him. It is interesting to note that Isaiah 56: 7 which speaks of God's house as being a house of prayers unto all people is principally referring to the "*gathering of the outcasts of (Spiritual) Israel*" (Isaiah 56: 8). We are persuaded of the Lord to say that a great time of harvest is just ahead. The fig tree, as she continues to feed upon God's life, will soon arise to fruitfully labour. The promises in Isaiah 56: 8e and Rev. 3: 8 shall be wholly fulfilled. "*Yet will I gather others to Him. Besides those that are gathered unto Him*" and "*Behold, I set before you an open door ...*"

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(5) POMEGRANATE TREE

This is the third tree mentioned in relation to the all round beauty and glory associated with the Promised Land. The land is Christ in His fullness. The pomegranate Tree represents Christ as possessed of all attributes of God which together with divine character constitute fullness of divine nature. The attributes of God which are typified by the fruit of this tree are discussed in Isaiah 11: 2-3: Wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, might, perfect discernment, and reverence. These attributes reveal the royal dignity of Christ the Head. They were not only fully developed in our Lord but also made available for the work of redemption. The presence and faithful employment of these virtues in the service of God bring observations as flowing from the typical figure of the pomegranates can be shown from scriptures but this is left to the reader.

The church also typified by the pomegranate tree clearly teaches that these seven fold attributes are part of the inheritance with which we have been blessed in the heavenly places. When once the heart burns with deep affection for God, these glorious graces will begin to appear in response to believing prayers. The Lord will visit the "*good land*" creating in it the desire for the glories of the heavenly life. "*Thou visiteth the earth and waterest it*" is a principle of divine action set out in Ps. 65: 9. God visits us with the light of the word and creates a deep desire for the revealed blessings. His people begin to call upon Him stirred up by their legitimate desires. God rejoices to "*water*" such as seek Him; who by perseverance confirm how highly they esteem the treasures of heaven.

The sevenfold anointing of divine attributes is particularly

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needed in the building of the temple. These graces would always accompany the services of such who deeply appreciate the fact that kingdom glories are obtained "*not by power nor by might but by my spirit*". (Zech. 4: 6)

(6) OIL OLIVE

This speaks of the unlimited anointing that rests upon our Lord Jesus Christ. The olive tree typifying Jesus, would also speak of an overflowing abundance of the anointing, sourcing the supplies to His Church but NEVER diminishing. The Bible speaks of Jesus Christ as being "*anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power and went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil for God was with Him*". The anointing has to do with empowerment for service: the authority act and the abilities required for service.

Whereas the fig tree pictures Christ as God's prophet who has "*come to seek and to save that which was lost*". The oil olive sets Him forth as the mediator between God and men; The Lord's High Priest. The Priestly ministry of The Lord Jesus Christ is revealed as being after the "*order of Melchizedek*". By this we understand that He is a kingly-Priest. This reveals Him as having unlimited authority and power to execute His holy office. The olive tree is the first tree of choice when kingly honours are to be symbolised. The glorious estate of the oil olive is available to the Church as an integral aspect of her inheritance. The various stages of the development of a tree until it becomes fruit bearing represent the gradual growth of the church in her priestly and kingly characteristics.

Romans 11 shows each believer as being potentially a branch in God's great *Olive Tree* now growing in the "*good land*", God's garden. The richness and fatness of this olive tree in which each

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faithful believer partakes comes from the anointed High Priest. This is most appropriately conveyed to us in Zechariah chapter 4. Zachariah was given a vision of a candlestick all of gold fed with oil from two olive trees. The candlestick stands for the church corporately and individually in her light bearing capacity. Revelation chapter 11 pictures each branch of the great olive tree as being trees themselves. This stresses the fact that what is true corporately applies in the same way to every individual that is vitally associated with the body.

The much the believer knows of the estate of the oil olive in his wilderness journey can best be described as being a tender plant, a young twig. The more favourable conditions of the Promised Land would speed up the growth of the young twig until it becomes a full grown fruit yielding tree. The believer is then confirmed before the Lord as a member indeed of the Melchizedek priesthood. We may draw a parallel for the church's experiences in this regard by making reference to our Lord. The prophet Isaiah wrote concerning Him. "*He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground*". When the Heavenly Dove came upon Him on the day of baptism, His roots were taken out of the dry ground, figuratively speaking, and planted on a very fruitful Hill. The Spirit came upon Him as a divine approval of His years as a tender plant, as a root in a dry ground. "*This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased*". The Lord God Almighty was speaking concerning His faithfulness in the thirty years of living under the dry land condition of the Old Testament. (He was born of a woman confirmed to be the seed by living true to all obligations under the old covenant. Gal. 4: 4)

Jesus consecrated Himself fully to the LORD and wholly absorbed the blessings resident in the anointing He has just

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received. Coming out from those forty days of fasting and praying, He appeared as the olive tree and gave testimony concerning His ministry (Luke 4: 18, 19, Isaiah 61: 1-2). In like manner when by the earnest of our inheritance we attain to the standing as a tender plant, the Lord delivers our roots from the dry ground condition of the wilderness and brings us into the "*good land*" that drinks water of the rain of heaven. And as the Lord Jesus yielded all His human powers to the influences of the Holy Spirit in those 40 days of communion with the Father, so a believer's entrance into the "*good land*" condition will reveal itself in being empowered to live a highly consecrated life. The birthing of the man-child life develops under these circumstances.

(7) THE GOOD LAND

The "*goodness*" of the land of promise consists also in its being able to retain for use the rains of heaven divinely sent to water it. (Deut. 8: 7, 11: 10-14, James 5: 7, 8). God's input to the land is stored in "*springing depths and fountains flowing brooks*". The output of the land; the good land reveal a hundred fold use of the resources given to it. The yield of wheat, barley grapes, figs, pomegranates oil and honey demonstrate the fruitfulness of the land. The Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity was principally this good land; the garden of God. The river of living waters kept flowing from His heart continuously watering the dry land condition of men's souls. All that the Father invested in Him came forth in the fullest possible yield. No loss in this Son of God. He is the faithful and true witness of all the things received from the Father.

In Luke 8, the "*good ground*" in the parable of the sower is said to represent a good and honest heart, able to receive with understanding the WORD (rain of heaven. '*matar*'), keep it (from

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loss) and bring forth fruit (to perfection) with PATIENCE. (Luke 8: 11-15). He has brought us out of the waste land of Babylon and His promise we believe the willing hearted would be brought into this precious land.

Matthew 13 adds that the "*good land*" develops into this hundred fold estate through two other stages - the thirty fold and the sixty fold. The thorns and thistles of partial marriage to the world and its cares have kept our hearts from knowing full romance with the heavenly Bridegroom. We still have a significant portion of the land of our hearts strewn with the stones of self-centeredness, rebellion, pride and the like. The brazen gate of the flesh has kept some areas of our hearts in a dark and fallow condition. A forgetful learner certainly has his mind occupied with the worlds around him (James 1: 5-8).

Through the "*manna*" we are made able to break our fallow ground, crush the stony places, uproot the thorns and thistles of unhelpful attitudes and anoint our sleepy, slumbering almost blind eyes. The more diligent we are in becoming co-labourers with God in this task, the faster the journey out of the wilderness.

Then we begin to have strength to bring forth results which are increasingly a true reflection of divine input. A believer with a porous, leaking heart condition does not show reasonable proof of God's investment in his life. Always coming to fellowship but that is about all that can be said of such. When a believer possesses the "*good land*" condition, he has been brought into the beginning of the land of promise experience. All through the year it will be raining season in his soul (Deut. 11: 12).

Then God will have implicit confidence that His investments is guaranteed against loss. May we be fruitful to our present charge learning to make faithful use of what He gives us seasonally. He is

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withholding the fullness of supplies until we are made able to RECEIVE AND RETAIN "*the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain*" (Deut. 11: 14, Joel 2: 23). Let us press on. The days of glory are just ahead. Today is a part of the coming days. There is a portion now for the willing and obedient. Let us live true to what we have already experienced; open our mouths wide to receive what He is giving now and so live each day in the light of the coming day of fullness. This is the secret of going through all the testing experiences without being laid low.

CHAPTER THREE THE SECOND TESTING EXPERIENCE

The relevant scripture passages covering this aspect of the subject are Exodus Chapters 32 and 33; 1 Cor. 10: 1-14. We would reproduce just a brief section of it: 1Cor. 10: 5-7 Exodus 32: 1-6.

5. *"But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*
6. *Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.*
7. *Neither 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.*
1. *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, up, make us gods, which shall go before us. For as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.*
2. *And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.*

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3. *And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.*
4. *And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, these be thy gods; O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*
5. *And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it, and Aaron made proclamation, and said, tomorrow, is a feast to the LORD.*
6. *And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offering, and brought peace offerings, and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.*

Our consideration of the five testing experiences, Israel of old underwent in their wilderness wanderings brings us to the second. The event occurred three months after they left Egypt and specifically about forty days after they received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

The giving of the Ten Commandments quite definitely made deep impressions upon the people. Now, the Lord God whose voice hath spoken to the children of Israel from the midst of heavenly scenes of glory recommended to their sight by flashes of lightning, peals of thunder and continuous blast of trumpets, desired to dwell among them. It was to be for them the extremity of favour and blessing. God in love set out to communicate to them what He desired for a dwelling place. He longed to reveal Himself to His children and make them a people of praise.

At the request of God, Moses had gone up to the mount of the Lord for this purpose; to receive a revelation of His plans and purposes for Israel; statutes and judgments, ordinances and

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precepts, and two tables of stone in which were written the ten commandments. It was also to be a time for Moses to be personally acquainted with God since it was to be his responsibility to teach the people of Israel the way of the Lord.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, come up to ME into the mount, AND BE THERE" (Exo. 24: 12).

The glorious fellowship with God to which Moses was called was to take a period of forty days. So God prepared Israel's leadership for the responsibilities that would be theirs in the absence of Moses. *"Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel"*. And they saw the God of Israel: Moses, also upon intimating the elders of Israel that his absence might be long, delegated Aaron and Hur to take oversight of the people (Exo. 24: 14). Thus all of Israel knew Moses had an appointment with God, and that it had to do with their welfare and the promised inheritance. This then is the historical setting in which the event recorded in Exodus 32 occurred.

Within forty days, the patience of the people ran out. They began to give expression to the conditions of their hearts and proved they were not yet delivered from the idolatrous ways of Egypt. What was more dreadful was that Aaron and others who had eaten and drank with God a few days before were now very readily creating with their hands '*gods*'. They sacrificed to these '*gods*' and ate, drank and abused themselves. They called their abominations "*a feast unto the LORD*". In later verses in Exodus 32, we see the Israelites rounding off their celebrations with the wine of fornication. It is all shocking and demoralizing to see men and women turn to such folly in the PRESENCE of the PILLAR OF CLOUD to whom they owed their daily sustenance.

However, the tendency towards idolatry and even the practice

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of it remains one of the principal things the very elect of God must permanently deliver themselves from. And of course, the reference is not to merely keep ourselves from bowing down to graven images. Nevertheless, physical and spiritual idolatry spring from the same kind of mentality.

Let us begin to apply the message in the typical story to us today. The primary cause (in the typical story) for Israel's terrible failure is two-fold: The impatience of the people, and wrong spirit in the leadership. The impatient spirit of the people did not make them appreciate the necessity of seeking God's face continually for His instructions, counsel, guidance concerning what they needed to know and to do at every stage. They did not take out time to look again into that which had been received of the Lord previously. To desire to "*move forward*" without a corresponding longing to prove true to what one has known to be the mind of God is a terrible danger. The blessings of the past, the ministrations of His righteousness, and the revelation of the mystery of the kingdom which God had poured upon us are for our strengthening. Only a continuous recourse to them will truly prepare us for the greater things ahead.

Many develop impatient spirit, when it seemed as though the "*sound of abundance of rain*" has not given way to rain itself. The word preached has emphasized that God will do great things. The latter rain is about coming upon us in great dimensions. As it were, there has been much excitement. But now the unspoken question is "*where is the promised glory of the latter house*"? Some sense in the apparent delay a note of uncertainty. Enthusiasm begins to wane. There are others who simply go into slumber and sleep not knowing God's purpose in the seeming delays of the Bridegroom.

Whilst all these tendencies are inexcusable, there is yet another class whose ways more closely fit into the evil examples of the

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Israelites. The concern of this kind of believers is how to "*organize the move*", making a sect out of the spiritual movement God has painstakingly birthed. The molten calf stands for sectarianism, organization, denominating. Well, quite often people may be oblivious of the true meaning of their actions. It therefore behoves us to look closely at this issue, identifying what actions (and attitudes) amount to crystallizing a sect.

First in the list is the creation of a human head, a sort of an idol shepherd, allegiance to man rather than to Christ. God has not given to any man or woman the task of leading His people to glory. That responsibility is the Lord's. This is the reason why the harvest of sons became especially due only when the parousia set in. Christ is among His own today preparing them for, and bringing them into, full union with Him.

At the root of denominationism is the popish spirit of looking unto human headship of spiritual movements. We must purge this evil from our hearts and heads. A steady check on this tendency lies in the truth that every house fellowship in a given locality (city, village or town) is required to manage her affairs under the headship of Christ Jesus. Quite definitely, the Lord would have the unity of the body demonstrated in His children fellowshipping with one another across city and national boundaries. And again God has raised and would continue to raise up men and women whose ministries would be required beyond the boundaries of their locality. Even then, we believe also that it is the responsibility of each local assembly of believers to identify which persons may be received as true ministers of God and which one to reject. The truth of the complete autonomy of local groups cannot be compromised. Just so, the truth of the oneness of the body and the challenge it poses must be submitted to. True humility and spiritually healthful

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hearts will zealously encourage and promote the operation of the meaning and purpose of these two truths in the body of Christ.

Before going to the second point, it is worth noting that the same people who would not rise up early to meditate on God's word and draw upon His life in worship were suddenly up and doing in strengthening themselves to do evil. "*And they rose up early and offered burnt offerings ...and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play*" Exo. 32: 6.

Secondly, no spiritual movement can 'veered off its Course' when the people are keeping in tune with God. True enough, as in our passage, the suggestions for the creation of a sect came from among them. Also true is the fact that a faulty and confused spiritual leadership, symbolized in Aaron, lent their sympathy to the evil suggestions. But all of that cannot crystallize deviation by itself. God in His mercy does adequately bless every '*move*' with diverse operations of revelatory gifts. This is suitably typified in our text by golden earrings. When the Lord's people live consecrated lives, they are able to tell by the spirit that a particular course of action is not of the Lord. Then also, if they have been truly set free from "*idol*" worship, undue respect for human persons, a strong opposition can arise from them and frustrate the foul idea.

Aaron demanded for their earrings which they submitted to him. This implies that the "*calf*" can only be built when the "*earrings*" are not operational.

Thirdly, it is important to know that since every '*calf*' resembles another calf we may as well be able to make some inferences from what operates in the systems of men. Now each denominational or sectarian '*calf*' in Babylon has a descriptive name which clearly distinguishes it from another calf.

Then there is the practice of a paid ministry; official clergy

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who draw salaries (milk) from the '*calf*' (cow) system. This invariably leads to a situation which make spectator of the "*congregation*" whilst the few carry on as it please them.

Finally, national headquarters, secretariat, branch offices, cathedrals and the likes are also in the bargain. We believe the structure which fits the principle of truth God is unveiling to His people today will never need to accommodate these elements.

Quite definitely, as the work of the kingdom among us takes on larger strides and the frontiers extend considerably, there would be many practical issues that would crop up. But we are persuaded of the Lord to believe that the simplicity of the present operations will always be adequate when the people are faithful to their calling. The New Testament pattern will suffice to inspire noble actions.

Idolatry and Graven Images of Babylon

Truth is priceless, of inestimable worth. The church of the living God moves forward on the wings of the revealed WORD. The revelation of the word of God is vital for spiritual growth (welfare) and warfare. Truth is constant, but the revelation of truth is progressive both in its unfolding and the church's appreciation and use of it. The great WHEAT FIELD of truth is not all revealed to the church or to any person (for that matter) in one swift action. The faithful are led through it all one step at a time, as they walk consistently in the narrow way that leads to life. This is important.

Then of course, the revealed word does not come at the behest of scholarship. Man's efforts are of value only as it pleases God to reveal Himself. Thus, every revealed word is due to be understood by the church of His purpose; this implies that every word spoken in the name of the Lord can be examined by the consecrated and decision arrived upon as to its acceptability or otherwise. This

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again is important.

Thirdly, man is fallible; that is capable of making a mistake. A minister with a track record of spiritual faithfulness in life and doctrine inspires great confidence. But it NEVER relieves any believer from his God-given duty to make sure every counsel and revelation (in the word) received from such a one is divine. It is in the way of God to test the hearts of His people as to their absolute fidelity to Christ. All allegiances must be towards God. It is a great joy to have persons as friends who are co-pilgrims. But, mutual love and respect one for another, which thing also is demanded by God, must leave our hearts truly free to concentrate on our Heavenly Bridegroom. The counsel of scriptures is clear: Believe all things (in love); despise not prophecy, but prove all things and hold fast that which is good (true). (1 Thess. 5: 21). This too is important.

Concepts about God which conflict with the revelation of Christ - HIS PERSON, HIS POWER and HIS PURPOSE as set out in the Holy Scriptures - are GRAVEN IMAGES. To flow with any of such concepts is rank idolatry. BABYLON IS A LAND OF GRAVEN IMAGES. Its worship, doctrines and practices are heavily infested with the lie of the ancient serpent. (Jer. 50: 38). A great many of its images are fallen. However some are standing images that have survived in man's mind and hearts, the bright shining light of truth.

In the journey to Zion's glorious land of ALL TRUTH, spiritual movements have always had trying experiences with the graven images of Babylon. Quite often the usefulness (effectiveness) of a spiritual movement is heavily reduced by paying homage to some standing graven image of Babylon. For example, Martin Luther, so mightily used of God in his days clung tenaciously to some odious graven images of Babylon which hindered the work begun by him. He later stood opposing and persecuting others to the point of death

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who saw better and moved on with God.

Apart from the graven images of the land of Babylon, the dragon has poured out contaminated streams of wild doctrines seeking by them to create a detour for the Elects to get out of the way of truth, if possible.

These wild doctrines, new graven images, must be resisted by the elects of God. Here and there all over the world are clear evidences of "comeouters" who have been diverted from the path of truth by bowing the knees to some of these graven images. But God's prospective overcomers must stay clear and keep themselves from idols. John 4: 4 5: 21). Happily, God's word provides us with easy enough ways to test every utterance. None need to be bewildered by these happenings. We briefly state below some important key principles for ascertaining the true source of an utterance. (1) By word (2) By character (3) By the spirit.

(1) BY WORD

Read carefully, 1John 4:1-6, Rev. 19:10. John 6:51 and Heb. 6: 1-3. We reproduce a part of these scriptures:

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

"Hereby know ye the spirit of God: Every spirit (doctrine) that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God."

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. (1 John 4:2, 3)

"For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit (essential content, the very essence, and direction of all) of prophecy." (Rev 19:10).

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"I am the Living Bread which CAME DOWN from heaven: If any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my FLESH, which I will give for the life of the world".
(John 6:51)

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment" (Heb.6: 1-2)

- (a) Every doctrine which is of God centres on:
 - (i) The relevance of Jesus taking up humanity.
 - (ii) The atoning death of Jesus Christ and the Redemption secured by it. Its offer is enjoyed only on the grounds of faith, fellowship and obedience.
 - (iii) JESUS WHO IS. The man Christ Jesus who died is now the LORD OF GLORY.
 - (iv) Continuous efficacy of the blood of Jesus who once for all offered Himself for the sins of the world. That death cannot be repeated need not be repeated. The catholic mass which says the bread turns to Jesus' flesh is the greatest treachery against the throne of God.
- (b) The atoning death of Christ being all important, every true doctrine must agree with its testimony. *"The testimony of Christ's death"* is called the doctrine of Christ. This testimony is founded on six doctrines: Repentance from dead works, faith toward God, baptisms, laying of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment

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Any doctrine from God has the property of being set out in at least two or three passages of scriptures which discusses Christ's death written by two or three different writers. Christ's death is the divine touchstone for truth and error.

(2) By Character

This is the simplest way of confirming any doctrine. Simple, but hundred percent reliable. The consecrated on the basis of Mt. 7:15-19 can speak authoritatively on any doctrine. The passage recommends the character and moral bearing of a prophet or teacher as a yardstick for determining the value of his doctrine.

All graven images lead eventually to moral failure, unholy alliance with the world, spiritual fornication and worldliness. False prophets are of the world (though may be saved); therefore they live like the world, and the world hears them (1 John 4:6).

(3) By the Spirit. (Urim and Thumim)

This is most effective, but available only to the consecrated. The Urim and Thumim in our day speaks of the mind of the Holy Spirit on an issue displayed by proven operations of revelatory gifts. The beginning point of the workings of the Holy spirit in a believer in this regard is mentioned in 1 John 2:20, 27.

This unction of the Holy one develops the believer's power of perception and discernment as he feeds on Christ and the pure word of God.

As may be rightly expected the "*urim and thumim*" does not only detect wrong doctrines and false messengers, but in this regard sharply discriminates against anything (ministration) injurious to the body.

There are some wrong emphases which may stream from

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improper perception of truth. The powers of spiritual discernment will detect and react sharply against such.

Also, a doctrine may be right and the individual out of true fellowship with Christ because of moral sins. Such a preacher can be easily detected by the urim and thumim. A preacher is false if his life is unrighteous.

A Worthy Example

And Moses saw that the people were naked to their shame; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies).

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

And He said unto them, thus saith the LORD God of Israel, put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate through out the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his neighbour.

And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. The children of Levi in this typical record illustrate a principle of truth most vitally relevant to the church today. First, they remained unspotted in the midst of the widespread recourse to idolatry. Only a tribe out of thirteen! The ninety percent were wrong, but the faith of this ten-percent stood rooted in God.

Levi is the grand father of Aaron. Carnal considerations would have informed the children of Levi to close ranks with Aaron and support the "*new thing*" their big uncle was doing. They were sure to get good posts in the deal and would certainly be treated as the immediate exalted associates of the "*man of the hour*". But they did no foolish things.

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They loved Aaron for sure. His past records in the great display of signs and wonders that forced Pharaoh and all of Egypt to bow were still fresh in their minds. All of that happened only three months before then. But they loved God more whose glory sourced the mighty works done in Egypt. Again the sheer sight of the ninety-percent of the population did not scare them one bit. *"They loved not their lives unto the death"*

It is easy to see that the Levites refused to trade their golden earrings for the folly of idolatry. Thus by the spirit and by the word they knew that Aaron was missing it. And they would not be part of it. Why? First, the past ministrations they have received had delivered them from being slaves to the systems of men. And they were grateful to God. True gratitude to God recommends a life of faithfulness. They cannot dishonour God by worshipping the molten calf - one of the gods of Egypt. God had judged that system and their gods (Exo. 12: 12). That was enough testimony that He will judge again, if the old sins of Babylon are found in the courts of the daughters of Zion. God is no respecter of persons.

And what about the tribal ties with Aaron? Well, they loved him well enough to strongly disagree with his folly. And this is important. Any true servant of God can only be grateful to God for younger ones in the Lord to firmly point out a wrong tendency in him. In this day when the dark shadow of the tyranny of the Nicolaitan spirit of Babylon still cast fear of the leadership on the people of God, it is with great joy that a man of God should receive corrections from anyone in the body.

It is terrible hatred and an evil omen for those in the emergent church to see any evil tendencies in the leadership and keep quiet. Our love for the leaders God has given us and will yet give us must be demonstrated in being quick to draw their attention to any wrong

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action. This must be done in love, but it is better, ten times better, doing it shabbily and disrespectfully than not doing it at all.

Soul's salvation is a matter of life and death. Nobody in His sane mind can afford to announce the coming of the kingdom and let the glory slip him by. If we are truly blessed by the ministry of any brother or sister, then it is our duty to watch over such soul in prayers and where necessary, give a word of correction. Plus encouragement too if all is well.

The time is short and we must be one another's keeper. More than that, when God's glory is in view, every other consideration becomes unimportant. For Aaron, the faithful children of Levi brought him deliverance. He was quick to repent when his folly became clear to him at the word of Moses. God forgave, and even brought him into greater service.

But what is even more exciting is that the children of Levi were blessed with the priesthood. It was taken from the whole nation and confirmed with the few faithful.

Wrong Spirit in the Leadership

Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Hur and seventy others went wrong; and were so hopelessly out of tune with God just within forty days of a glorious time with God. For one thing, they had not forgotten the charms of Babylon. They opened up to the new ways of Zion, but only partially. So which ever one calls they were ready on hand.

Perhaps it was not clear to them the implications of making a molten calf. May be too, they thought sincere motives can substitute for not taking on the habit of ensuring vital daily contact, with the Most High God. However, they caused the death of three thousand souls. Aaron's excuses reveal that he did not fully grasp the enormity of the crime he led the whole nation to commit.

Leadership in the spiritual kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is a

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most sacred trust. It does not even matter whether only ten persons are in the local set up. Any altar raised up unto God in any corner of the earth is more valuable to Jesus and His testimony in the earth than all the glories of the kingdoms of this world. Leaders must be very diligent and on daily basis live in the light of their sacred responsibility. Heart purity cannot be compromised as the ways to justification and sanctification in Christ have been truths given to the church. None at all should gloss over any moral failure in his life. Such should cry out to his brethren if he has not been able to obtain victory on his own.

In four of the five testing experiences, unfaithful leadership is responsible for the people's failure. Bad leadership caused the destruction of countless number of souls.

People put a lot of confidence in their leaders, thus, their example in life and doctrine must endear the hearts of the people to Christ.

A faithful leadership determines the spiritual atmosphere that becomes characteristic in a local assembly. So also is the Christian walk of the assembly heavily influenced by the teachings (of the word) that they receive.

When the people sit "*to eat and drink*" nonsense, they certainly would rise up to play. (Exo. 32:6). The Hebrew word translated here as "*play*" is "*Tsachaq*". It means to make sport, to mock, and God is not mocked for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap. (Gal. 6:9)

An unserious, light hearted, sport loving assembly is certainly not well. But, whatever else may be said, the blame falls on those who thresh out wheat in the assembly.

THE BATTLE IS ON

This is a truth we all need to seriously grasp. The conflict of the ages is raging on in restless fury. When any altar is raised up anywhere, it attracts satanic attention and sustained interest. The presence of two or three anywhere who say “no”, a decisive no to the religious confusion of the day and meet together to fellowship is a terrible threat to Satan’s operation in that locality.

From the onset, he begins to muster up fierce opposition in the invisible realms, and whether or not the assembly will be worth something will depend on the members’ readiness to “fight”. Rancour, disunity, quarrelling, characteristic lateness, frivolity, indiscipline, un-cohesiveness are obvious signs of a heavily infested spiritual atmosphere. They reveal the mystery of iniquity at work.

Such was the situation in the wilderness as we can readily point out from the scriptures. “*And when Moses saw that the people were naked (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame in the midst of their enemies)*” Exo. 32: 25. Nakedness always goes with idolatry. The people settled down to sexual immorality and revelry; having fun as they call it. That is the first point in this verse that is pregnant with meaning.

Secondly, the word “naked” in the Hebrew is ‘*Para*’ and connotes the thought of ‘*avenging*’ oneself. The message is clear. Moses had come to rebuke them for forsaking the way of God. That ought to cause them to see their folly and seek God in deep repentance. But rather, they started seeking how to avenge their pride. They sure must have been gathering themselves already to assault Moses.

Moses, sensing this, now called for whoever was on the Lord’s side. This is readily seen to be an interpretation consistent with the rest of the passage. It is perplexing indeed when divine rebukes are

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not taken seriously. For whatever is corrected in us which we refuse to purge out will REAPPEAR again wrecking great damage, but it is even more dangerous to '*scare off*' the Heavenly Dove by resisting His voice.

Thirdly, the "*enemies*" referred to in the passage (vs. 24) are the host of unseen spirits who were master minding the evil ways of the children of Israel. This is borne out in the meaning of the word '*shame*'. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance' (8103) gives the word as "*shimtsah*". The meaning given in the Hebrew dictionary just referred to is: scornful whispering of hostile spectators. Who were these hostile spectators? Certainly no others but invisible demonic spirits having real fun while the children of the kingdom were degrading themselves and dishonouring their God.

The children of Israel thought they were enjoying themselves, but they failed to perceive they were only carrying out the instructions of demons, who were the ones really enjoying themselves at the costly expense of the church in the wilderness. Let us be up and doing, rising up to the challenge of the hour. We must prove worthy of the kingdom honours the soon coming King is bringing with Him. So let it be.

CHAPTER 4

THE THIRD TESTING EXPERIENCE

The Bible passages of interest here are Numbers 22-25; 1 Cor. 10: 1-11. In particular we would be concentrating on Numbers 25 which is the main account of the incidence referred to in 1 Corinthians 10. For the convenience of the reader we reproduce here under Numbers 25:1-9, and 1 Cor. 10:5-8.

- 1. And Israel abode in shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.*
- 2. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.*
- 3. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.*
- 4. And the LORD said unto Moses, take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.*
- 5. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.*

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6. *And, Behold one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.*
7. *And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand.*
8. *And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.*
9. *And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand. (Num. 25: 19).*
5. *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*
6. *Now these things were our examples to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.*
7. *Neither 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".*
8. *Neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. (1 Cor. 10:58).*

We now come to the third of the five testing experiences which have been the theme of our meditation. Let us begin by providing some background material that will aid a proper understanding of the nature of the crisis we are looking into. Israel had just successfully concluded two great wars against the Amorites (Num. 21:24); and the kingdom of Bashan. (Bashan was a prosperous land, and had a significant number of her citizens as giants).

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The victories were total and the news of it had spread throughout the entire region. All the nations round about were affrighted, and began to think seriously about their safety. The war (and victory) against the Amorites was significant for two reasons:

The Amorites were a terribly strong nation, one of the seven mighty nations that covered the whole land marked out by God as the inheritance of the children of Israel. We read from Exodus 3:8 the following declarations God made in the day Moses was commissioned to deliver Israel from the bondage of Egypt. "*And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites and Amorites, and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites*". Thus in essence God had begun to give Israel a practical entry into the land promised them. This point should be carefully noted.

The victory over the Amorites stirred up the consciousness of the nations of the East to the fact that Israel was now a threat to their very existence, a force to be reckoned with. They all marvelled at the swift victory; especially when they could not see the cause of the sweeping results in Israel's army. It became somewhat clear to them something beyond the natural was at work. Israel now moved toward the land of Canaan and encamped in a wood land further east. From the first verse of our text we learn that they encamped in Shittim. Numbers 22: 1 and Numbers 33:48, 49 identify Shittim to be in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. Accordingly, we know that they were now at the very verge of coming into the '*good land*', the land flowing with milk and honey.

This brings us to the setting of the traumatic experience the Israelites had at this stage of their journey. Numbers chapters 22,

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23 and 24 provide an interesting reading. Upon a close study, what on the onset made an interesting reading becomes sweet in the mouth but bitter in the belly. Here is unveiled something every spiritual movement must understand and live in abiding consciousness of. Three important facts emerge from the buildup story (Numbers 22-24), and from the story itself (Num. 25). We list these three points first and then discuss them afterward using the typical record (the historical account) as given in the passage just referred to.

The domain of darkness is seriously engaged in launching a hydra-headed (many sided) attacks in the invisible realm to frustrate God's purposes for the emergent church. Their concerted sinister efforts have been stirred up by the gains God has graciously given to His people. Satan in an unrestrained expression of malice has all his wits and powers at his summons. A serious network of powers and principalities and their hosts of demonic subordinates are at work in the invisible. Seeking to "*break our bands asunder.*"

The throne glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and the full powers of the Heavens at His command are wholly given to frustrate Satan's plans, protect and establish the emergent church. God's glory is set to bring His people into the fullness of their inheritance and nothing can stop that. And Satan knows this too well but hopes in his second approach that has given him some measure of success in the past.

The evil one alongside his activities in the invisible has also released a host of human agents, to crystallize his plans in the natural. Some of these human Satanists work from without the church, while the others have the charge to seek to work from within. The goal is to "*wipe out*" the emergent church by a method of a SELF CURSE. His object is to corrupt the testimony of the

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Church through ceaseless attacks on her morals or else, corrupt the doctrines and seek to make her lose the vision of glory. Now, to the typical story. The main actors are:

- (1) Balak, the son of Zippor, the king of Moab.
- (2) Balaam, the son of Bezor of Pethor. Pethor is a city in Mesopotamia.
- (3) Baal-Peor a Moabitish god.
- (4) Zimri, the son of Sahi. A prince in Israel of the tribe of Simeon
- (5) Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, a midianitish woman.

All of these persons are expressed by their names. That is, their part in the typical story may best be understood from the additional facts that emerge; from the meaning of their names. We would adopt the approach of getting to know these persons and their deeds from the light of their prophetic significance.

From the examination of the first three names viz. Balak, Balaam and Baal-Peor, we would establish the first of three facts mentioned above. Then we would establish the second fact by making direct quotation of relevant verses of scriptures from Numbers 22-24. Next, the last two names will be considered and the third fact established; (The two names being (Zimri and Cozbi).

(1) BALAK

This name means, Annihilator, waster, spoiler, emptier, devastator. Thus his mission is to wipe out by every means, "*the church in God's purpose*". By the term "*the church in God's purpose*" we mean in essence the emergent church, God's Zion. He is deemed to have succeeded if the spiritual movement fizzles out; or get side-tracked. His previous successes are seen in the throng of denominational churches doing their own thing. To get the people

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of God to side track into forming a sect has been the method that has won more victories.

The Bible calls the name of his father Zippor: Zippor simply means a "*bird*". It answers to a PREDATORY SPIRIT; A WITCH. Balak then is the Son of a WITCH. From the contribution one gets in looking into the meaning of Baal, we are to understand that ZIPPOR is a PRINCIPALITY having under his command an army of witches. The straying of a spiritual movement from the narrow path of life is often caused by the activities of WITCHCRAFT spirits. Paul the Apostle was able to spot that the problems of the Galatians Church were caused in part by a BEWITCHING. "*O Foolish Galatians who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth*" Gal. 3: I. The Greek word for '*bewitch*' as used here is '*BASKAINO*' and means real witchcraft attack. Vines expository dictionary says "*to mislead by an evil eye, and so to charm, bewitch*". It is a stronger verb that was used for Simon, the witch of Samaria (Acts 8: 9, 11).

Principalities who head the cult of witches are extremely stubborn, and do not easily give up. They keep making '*seasonal*' attacks hoping to penetrate. In the typical story, Balak who was seriously agitated by the presence of "*the spiritual movement*" of his day got Balaam to '*curse*' the move. Read Numbers 22:16. The word used for '*curse*' here means to '*scoop out*'. The reference is to continue action even after getting a foothold on the victim until everything of spiritual value is '*scooped out*'. The first step is to move a people out of a position of strength; make them sectarian. Fearing that a people could bounce back to their senses, the evil one strengthens his hold (consolidates) until the people become completely "*spoiled, wasted, emptied*". King Saul was ruined by a '*Balakite*' so to speak. Saul, as the reader probably knows typifies

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the HEAD over shoulder church systems as operated in Babylon.

Saul was anointed king on the day of Pentecost. This pictures Pentecostalism at the point of unfaithfulness. The forty years long romance with a witch is clearly revealed in Scriptures. He was ruined indeed by a '*Balakite*', the evil found an in-road into his life and made a complete mess of him. Then, Balak is revealed as the King of Moab. Moab, in spiritual parlance, stands for '*flesh*', the works of the flesh, gross carnality. There is always a common ground between the uncrucified flesh and witchcraft. (1 Sam. 15:23 shows that the sin of disobedience and rebellion opened up Saul to witchery. Galatians 5:20 lists witchcraft as one of the works of the flesh, and is mentioned after idolatry). Nahum 3:4 shows that behind the collapse of whole nations and peoples is the wicked activity of the "*mistress of witches*". Yet, it is thoroughly assuring to know that the normal Christian life is all it takes to completely frustrate the BALAKITES. Let none be afraid to be spiritual enough to be A NORMALCHRISTIAN.

2. BALAAM

This is rather a very strange character; thoroughly gifted yet so completely evil in his ways. Balaam makes us see that spiritual gifts do not in themselves recommend a soul to God. Gifts are received by men as a favour from God. Gifts are divine investments also. The fruit of the Spirit in the believer are received by God as His reward for His investments.

Well, Balaam means "*Destroyer of the people*", "*Lord of the people*", "*becoming not of the people*". The father's name, Beor, has the root meaning of a "*Burning Lamp*". It has the added meaning of '*kindling a fire*'; 'becoming brutish', While the first stresses the prophetic gift of Balaam, the brilliance of a burning Lamp; the second speaks of the agitating passions of greed, making

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him utterly brutish on the long run.

Balaam had his beginning with God and came to a regional fame, great enough for Balak to send for him from a far nation. His uncrucified flesh got the better part of him. By his failures he became "*not of God's people*". Before this, he had attained some prominence in the Church world and "*lorded*" over God's heritage. His gifts; greed and position among the people of God worked together under the influences of BALAK, the witch, to become "*the destroyer of the people*". Balaam is a many-membered body. At the point we meet him in this story, he is already "*out of the move*" comfortably rooted in the Babylonish systems. His prophetic abilities made it easy for him to know what the mind of the LORD is. But strange enough, he chose a place where his gifts could fetch him the wealth of money and human praise.

The Bible says of him. "*which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the Son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity; the dumb ass speaking with a man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet*". (2Peter 2:15, 16). Evidences in the Numbers account showed that he had not already come into the fourth stage of madness. He was simply in "*Mesopotamia*" having gone astray from Zion. You will recall that Abraham was called out of Mesopotamia (Acts 7:2, 3) to go into "*a land that I shall show you*".

Returning to our story, Balaam still had a season of mercy extended to him by God. He was still having in him the touch of the good old days. He still kept his altar, his devotions - so the "*gifts*" could still work. Speaking concerning Israel in prophecy he got to a point where the "*glory of the latter house*" flashed upon him. He cried: Let me die the death of the righteous. "*Let my last*

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end be like the true Israel". (Number 23: 10). That was God's mercy to him. Seeing the glory in a vision amounted to God calling him back. The past would be forgiven. He knew the meaning of it all. At least for a while after that encounter with God, the effect stayed upon him and caused some resolutions to be made. We read in Numbers 24: 1. "And when Balaam saw that it pleased God to bless Israel, HE WENT NOT, AS AT OTHER TIMES. TO SEEK FOR ENCHANTMENTS, but he set his face towards the wilderness". He broke away from his trade for a while, no more seeking for enchantments. He began to look towards God's people in the wilderness, the emergent Church; pondering in the heart on the matter of returning back to the fold of Zion.

God helped him further: The Spirit of the Lord came upon him as we read in Numbers 24:2, 5. "*And Balaam lifted up his eyes and he saw Israel abiding in his tents, and the SPIRIT OF GOD came upon him". "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles O Israel but sadly enough he did not press through to make his repentance thorough. We believe that many of God's true children, ministers that He raised up by His own power now" looked up" in the commercial lane of Pentecostalism will awake. Many will troop back WHEN THE GLORY FROM THE DIVINE PRESENCE grants a season of mercy.*

However, some would not; and the figure of Balaam continues till he becomes mad. It is sad that unfaithful Pentecostalism will metamorphosize into the awful picture of a brute beast. The predicted end of stubborn resistance to divine wooing is shown in Rev. 13:11, 14 which speaks of unfaithful Pentecostalism.

11. "*And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth: and he had two horns like a Lamb, and he spake like a dragon".*

14. *And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those*

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miracles which he had power to do (Rev. 13: 11, 14). Balaam driven by greed gave counsel to Balak what 'trap' should be cast upon the path of Israel. (Numbers 24:16, Rev. 2:14).

In the story, Balaam returned back to Mesopotamia, back to his old trade, "*seeking enchantment for money*". We would finish the word on Balaam by saying there is mentioned in Rev. 2: 14, that amongst God's accepted assembly are to be found some whose doctrines lead to the same end as Balaam's counsel, worldliness, materialism, friendship with the world, uncrucified flesh.

3 BAAL – PEOR

"And Israel joined himself unto Baal-Peor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel", (Number 25:3). Baal-Peor is the name of a Moabitish god. The word 'joined' in the above verse means marriage. The name "Baal-Peor" simply put is "Lord of the penis". A full insight into the spiritual signification of this evil god comes with considering the compound name in parts. Baal means "Master; husband, owner, bird, confederate, furious horsemen". Besides the generic meaning of 'Lord of penis', we may infer from the above that it is a principality with an army (confederate) of witches (birds) at his command. One such is Zippor, the spirit assigned to rule over Balak. Another is Zur which we shall discuss a little later. Peor whilst signifying 'penis' also means "a gap, an opening, open wide".

The combination of the two words pictures "*Baal-Peor*" as a foul and unclean head (master) principality who promotes unclean living through the activities of a cohort of witches. Its activities towards spiritual setups are to seek to get them hooked to the world.

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Worldliness is spiritual fornication. Materialism is the subtle union of the mind and heart to other interests which effectually keeps one from fruitful employment in Kingdom matters. The team of witches, who in their evil trade are as furious as horsemen set themselves to work against spiritual set-ups by looking for a "gap", a "loop-hole", a "breach"- moral lapses. They then begin to seriously work to establish a foothold once they find that 'gap'. The spiritual or moral lapses are strengthened to become fixed habits. Then they settle down for the kill.

Establishing the First Fact

The careful reader would have seen clearly the substance of the first fact in our treatment of the above three personalities. The approach was deliberate. However, for purpose of ensuring a proper comprehension, we would risk repeating ourselves on this issue. The combined activities of Balak, Balaam and Baal-Peor make it plain that the enemy goes to great length to seek to frustrate God's people. The many-sided attacks are directed against God's people in the matters of their faith corporately and individually. They try also to get at the private life circumstances of God's people seeking to frustrate their businesses, studies, finances, marriages and morals - all in a bid to gain access causing discouragement. Balak started out by inviting the elders of Midian. (Number 22:4). The word "*Midian*" stands for contention, quarrelling, bitterness brawling and the like. The expressions of midianitish attacks will be seen in the form of quarrelling, strife and contention between the brethren and even more specifically those in leadership positions. The flying temper, ill-will, suspicion and evil gossips that tear apart the confidence of the Lord's people are sourced by predatory spirits. They seek to take advantage of any opening. Just any opening will do.

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Next, Balak got Balaam to come and curse the "*move of God*" among His people. Men's curses against Israel are by God turned into blessings (Deut. 23:5). Well the enemy may even succeed to get some misguided folks in "*Babylon*" to fast and pray to destroy what God is upholding. But when they speak in tongues they relay to the world of spirits the glorious plans and purposes of God. That gets Balak confused. It gets our brethren in the systems of men wondering why their "*prayers*" are not answered. For God's Zion as also seen by them is gradually and surely covering the "*face of the whole earth*" (Number 22:5).

He may get them to send spies to get, more information to '*fast and pray*' about (Numbers 23:24. Field of Zophim, field of spies). But so long as they pray in tongues more fire power will come forth from Zion. And in any case, whatever decrees they make with understanding only serves to weaken their formation.

For when they make decrees against heresies and demonic works, they frustrate the evil and weaken that which God has set but to destroy - Babylon.

Establishing the Second Fact

There has never been a time in the history of the church when by many unmistakable acts God has graciously committed Himself to a people more than we see in our day. Spread over all the habitable of the earth, there is springing up a body of people founded by grace who have their eyes and hearts fixed on Him that sits on the throne forever and ever. Separate from the world, taught of the Lord, led by the spirit of God the emerging church, coming forth out of the confusion of Pentecostalism, has come to stay.

Much of the work has been entirely by divinely arranged providences in which He gets a people to follow His leading step by

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step, until He brings them to Himself - free from the allurements of "Babylon". In a few places, it has been through the agencies of faithful ministries to whom He has revealed Himself, but by which ever way they have been led unto Himself, the general characteristics of this body is the same world over. We see in this body, oneness (uniformity) not created by any outward organization. And God's tender love and care for this body, amidst every effort to crush it, has given strength and character to the work. We praise the God of majesty. The government of Zion's city is upon the shoulder of our great High Priest who Himself is the messenger of the covenant. God's purpose is fixed. And He has found a people for that purpose. Blessed be the name of the LORD.

We reproduce below partly paraphrased the Divine utterance; confirming His love to Zion; coming forth in the midst of a time of great stress.

Zion is not cursed but blessed. The Lord shall empower her to dwell alone, made thoroughly separate from the world. She shall not diminish but increase in strength, a mighty people. (Num. 23:8-10)

God is not a man that He should lie. What He has spoken, concerning His people shall be established. He will not alter His arrangements. Zion is blessed, it cannot be reversed. There is no iniquity in her, neither any perversion. For my righteousness is over them and shall be seen in them. No witch spells and no enchantments can sway the course of my people. I shall cause Zion to arise to fight the adversary. *"The people shall rise up like as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain"*. (Numbers 23: 19-24, Micah 6:5)

How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob and thy tabernacles O Israel. As the Valleys are they spread forth, as the gardens by the

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riverside; as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the water He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and His seed shall be higher than Agag, and His kingdom shall be exalted. God has brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: HE SHALL EAT UP THE NATIONS, HIS ENEMIES, AND BREAK THEIR BONES, and pierce them through with His arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: WHO SHALL STIR HIM UP? BLESSED IS HE THAT BLESSED THEE, AND CURSED IS HE THAT CURSETH THEE. (Numbers 24:59)

These prophetic utterances coming forth as they do from the mouth of God are in this last hour being fulfilled. These words cannot return to Him void. The full strength of these prophecies shall "*waste the wasters*" and "*destroy the destroyers*", and in the same vein inspire obedience, faith, trust, boldness and constancy of Spirit in His people. The great intent of God in this typical event shall yield full dividends among us to the praise and glory of His Name.

THE EVENT OF THE 3RD SIFTING

The first two facts having been established, we now come to the test proper. Balaam's counsel to Balak was that he should send his ladies to lure the young men of the Israelites to come to their idolatrous feasts. The determined ladies succeeded in getting a great number of Israelites down to their idolatrous party. In the loose atmosphere characteristic of heathen feasts, the young men of Israel lost their senses and worshipped the gods of Moab. The final restraint having been cast aside they sealed their folly by getting into sex orgies with the daughters of Moab.

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God's anger was swift to come upon the children of Israel. In the first occurrence of Idolatry, as recorded in Exodus 32, there was revealed God's forbearance. However, after over 39 years of being instructed in the ways of God, the fierce anger of the most high burned against the self-willed Israelites.

Zimri and Cozbi had come into the camp from the immoral scenes of idolatry and shame. Whilst others were weeping, Zimri still drunk with the odd pleasures of his evil way, oblivious, of the plague that was unleashed on Israel, walked casually with the moabitish lady in his bosom. Phinehas in a swift move struck both of them dead with a javelin. This demonstration of passion for God's glory by the Son of the new High Priest of the nation of Israel saved them from the full strength of the divine wrath. But it was not before twenty four thousand souls were destroyed in that single day. Phinehas, God's man in that hour of shame, was blessed of God; inheriting the covenant of peace for himself and his seed perpetually.

That is the story in brief as it occurred. However the closing verses of that chapter give a clue to the prophetic signification of the event. Much is sealed up in the names of the two chief culprits as we shall now show.

1. ZIMRI

"And, behold, one of the Children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the Children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Num. 25:6).

The Hebrew name Zimri means "*musical*"; "to touch the strings of a musical instrument; 'to play music accompanied by the voice'. We are told that Zimri was of the tribe of Simeon (Num.

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25:14). He was also a leader in Israel. In spiritual symbolism, to play upon musical instrument speaks of ability to prophesy; having a distinct ministry in prophecy. And "*to play music accompanied by the voice*" signifies having a distinct ministry in teaching and preaching the word of God. The Holy Spirit, intending for us to have a fuller insight into what Zimri typifies, adds that he was a principal figure in the tribe of "*them that can hear into the Spirit realm*". Simeon means 'hearing'. All of these combinations show the anti typical Zimri to be persons who have come to the estate of the five-fold ministry, and have remarkable prophetic abilities. Certainly a rare combination of spiritual gifts and ministerial graces!

We may extend the observation to include all such persons who the LORD is taking captive with a view to setting them up as gifts to the Church. The reference is to anyone who by the Spirit's anointing manifests a gift of the spirit and can exhort the Church by the word of God. Zimri is a type of us in his positive aspects.

By the Lord's admonitions taken to heart, Zimri in his negative aspects should not be a type of any believer. But then, we are told additionally that Zimri was the Son of SALU. Salu means "*to be hung up*", "*to be trodden under foot*". The thought is clear: all Zimris are special targets of the enemy. The enemy in fierce opposition desires to "*hang them up*", to crush them under his feet, if possible. And the evil one gives himself to this task with every determination he can muster. It is thoroughly amazing how the Holy Spirit's inspired rendering of the punishment meted out to the erring Israelites confirms the above observation. We read in the fourth verse of our passage: And the LORD said unto Moses, "*Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun*". We here learn a great lesson in spiritual affairs.

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The enemy hates spiritual leadership. Anyone who amounts to something in the House of God attracts satanic malice. He targets to remove such one from being a "*joint of supply*". (Eph. 4: 16). And if possible get the individual completely out of God's Kingdom and into his evil fraternity.

In the typical story, the enemy got Zimri to this latter extent. Zimri joined himself to "*Baal-Peor*". (Num. 25:3) The root of Zimri's problem was the '*flesh*', his uncrucified flesh. It was an opening which the enemy laboured to exploit. We would come back to the issue of Zimri after treating the next figure.

2. COZBI

"And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain was COZBI, the daughter of Zur: he was head over a people and of a chief house in Midian" (Num. 25:15). The name '*Cozbi*' means '*false*'; '*to lie*', '*to deceive*'. Cozbi was one who knew her mission well and was gifted for it. Through Zimri she was brought into the commonwealth of Israel. Zimri brought her "*unto his brethren in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of Israel*". There is a very deliberate use of the words describing the incidence. What is here implied is that before Zimri met his doom this evil woman Cozbi had become known in his house fellowship; and by him, all the other house fellowships in the region about had come to know her too. The Greater Moses has also come to know her! What a mystery! Cozbi is a many-member body.

Well, it is possible the full picture has not dawned on the reader yet. So let us get on to describe Cozbi the more. We are told that Cozbi was the daughter of Zur. Now, Zur means '*a rock*'. It also means "*to be under a great burden*". (See Strong's No. 6698, if you please). A Midianite with a burden fastened to his neck. What

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sort of burden could that be! Quite definitely, Zur had the burden to destroy Zimri. As Zimri is a many-member body so also is Zur. Zur, also meaning a Rock, had a rock determination to crush Zimri. Cozbi is an expression of that burden.

Next, the Scriptures add that Zur was head over a people. This strengthens the picture of his being a ROCK; that is a mighty one, a human god, A PRINCIPALITY. The Strong's Exhaustive concordance interpreting the name Zur, from a consideration of its roots (see No. 6698. 6697. 6696) gives us to know that he stands for the ADVERSARY; SATAN. Zur was a human Satanist, an adept in evil, a mature son of the devil. He has in his service many Satan-filled workers-men and women! He was working against Zion from without, but has agents working from within the walls of Zion. Cozbi is one such. The picture, we believe, is now clear.

We have not finished yet with the issue of Cozbi. It is interesting to figure out how Cozbi found her way into the fellowship, and attained to much popularity in the local set-up, and even nationally. Every fellowship operates an open door policy, since it is not a secret cult. However there are those who come with a mission to cause havoc; to destroy. They feign conversion, and patiently settle down to active membership. They lock up their evil powers before coming to each meeting. But even then they are spotted by the operations of the gifts of the Spirit as '*bound*' needing deliverance. But not every candidate for deliverance is necessarily a medium. Quite often here and there, are to be found persons with genuine experiences with God needing deliverance, needing another touch. So the Cozbi though going out "*for deliverance*" keep themselves intact. And in the passage of time through the power of long association they get into the main stream of things. And you can believe this: mediums are very religious.

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Such become familiar with the Zimris around.

It is the association of the Cozbis with the Zimris that ultimately put a seal to it that the Cozbis are "*Spiritual*". Every Cozbi is a type of Jezebel. Jezebel came into Israel through a Zimri, King Ahab. Cozbis are more frequently females but we have found males also in the evil lot. Jude 1:4 is a Scripture that speaks about this. But whether male or female all Jezebels are associated with exerting much influence. They more easily get into this shape through feigning revelatory gifts. Every Cozbi Jezebel is a witch, and by the "*fountain of demonic information*" can '*minister*' in telling things. But whatever factual information they let out is to get themselves into the confidence of Zimris, and of the people. God sometimes allows a situation like this to test His people (see Deut. 13).

And so it was when the false one, the deceiver, Cozbi had got Zimri hooked to her, she destroyed him. It was a destruction that was gradual. Well, the point in it is that Jezebel (Cozbi), that woman "*which calleth herself a prophetess*", teach and seduce God's "*servants to commit FORNICATION, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols*". (Rev. 2:20). In the story we learn that a thousand Zimris were destroyed and twenty three thousand other brethren laid low through Cozbi. (Num. 25:9, 1 Cor. 10:8). And it all happened in a single day (1 Cor. 10:8).

Now since Zur, Cozbi's father is head over a people, and does not send all his team to work from within, we come to a very serious observation. The human Satanists, Zur, in being desperately burdened to slay the Zimris, through knowing the weaknesses of their prospective victims cast evil spells, to achieve their purpose. They release spirit Cozbis and Jezebels into the heavenly spheres of unsuspecting spiritual set-ups. If received by any, the doctrines that lead to the same evil ends begin to '*flow*' in the congregation. Any teaching that encourages worldliness, materialism, friendship with

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the world, thus making God's people adulterers and adulteresses makes the minister a Balaam (if a male) or a Jezebel (if a female). Such ministries are the product of "*war in the Heavens*", victims of Zur.

Let us return our minds to Zimri. What really led to his fall? To be hated by the devil, is a great blessing. All who love the name of the Lord INDEED must be targets of the enemy. God puts enmity between the: serpent's seed and the Church that redemption might be fully worked out in the experience of His people. We must look beyond the intricate manipulations of Zur, Cozbi, Balak, Jezebel, and Balaam for the REAL REASON behind Zimri's fall. Zimri fell because of his uncrucified flesh. He had weaknesses but did nothing to crush his evil passions. He did not put his body under subjection and so he became a castaway. (1Cor. 9:24-27)

Zimri took for granted many things concentrating upon ministry but neglecting the condition of his soul. One thousand of his kind fell. Twenty three thousand others fell who though not in the leadership nevertheless are under divine mandate to know Jehovah is He that sanctifies His people.

Establishing the Third Fact

We believe much of what should be said here is already understood through the observations made in the above section. However, to go through again will not be hurtful to us, and we believe it is safe for the reader as well. The Christian church wrestles not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and their demonic subordinates. In the conflict, Satan seeks to destroy the church through a method of SELF CURSE.

All of Satan's curses are utterly useless, of no value, so he releases human agents against the church, some working within,

others from without. These operate so as to make the church to walk habitually in disobedience to God and His revealed will.

The Need to Make Mid-course Adjustment

God is all merciful and compassionate. He sets in the Church ministries to bring the Word of Life to His people. He strengthens the obedient to walk in greater victory. He bears long with the disobedient, seeking ever always to restore such ones to Himself. However to walk on in disobedience ultimately brings heavy divine sanctions. (Prov. 29: 1). The believer must learn to live in true fellowship with Christ. He must by this be strong in the LORD and in the POWER OF HIS MIGHT. He must cultivate obedience and be possessed of the spirit of the fear of God. Then all or the brigade of Balak, Balaam, Cozbi, and Jezebel cannot touch him (1 John 5: 18).

It is difficult to see how true lovers of God get into serious mouth-wars with one another. Misunderstandings do crop up once a while even among friends. That does not go outside the expected. But cold wars and unforgiving spirit over flimsy issues bring upon the mind the enemy as sourcing these things. It would be right to charge such behaviour to the flesh giving the enemy an opportunity to work its evil schemes. But that would be saying exactly the same thing. The Lord's people must arise to seriously frustrate the activities of these Midianitish spirits.

But then, contention and strife are not the only things to watch against militarily. Every expression of unseriousness, sensuality, lowering of spiritual standards, loss of the spirit of consecration; lack of understanding of Scriptures, dead formalism, sleepy and slumbering attitudes ought not to describe a people flooded with light of the present truth. Zion must awake and fight, and keep on fighting until learning to fight authoritatively, they win the victory.

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The strength of Zion lies in the "*candlestick all of gold*" restored to a people and in a great stirring up of men's spirits by the divine breath and both of these can be obtained through faithfully crying out unto God. It is pleasing to God to give interventions to those who seek Him with all earnestness. Awake then, Zion awake. The personal and group candlesticks must be trimmed and the lamps kept burning.

The mountain of difficulties will become a plain and the Kingdoms of opposers will utterly fail. Let us war intelligently. Destroy the flapping of the wings of evil birds. Frustrate the witches. Stand in this evil day. Stand clothed with power of grace. Let anointed swords flash forth from your instructed lips. Decree the sleep of death to the witches! For the time has come for them to "*sleep their sleep*", because God has risen among His people Hallelujah.

We Are Shown the Better Way

The way to victory for the Church does not lie in merely taking a defensive stand. We must as a Church take on a sustained attack on the power of darkness. We are empowered of God to crush the evil brigade. The arsenal of the gifts of the Spirit enables us to see ahead the wicked plans of the enemy. We are made able to frustrate his plans before he takes off. The mystery of iniquity must be decisively dealt with by launching a continuous offensive. The uncanny, cloudy atmospheres must be pushed out of the heavens of our homes, offices just the same way it ought to be done in the fellowship.

We must join battle praying for other house fellowships besides ours. And as we do this, the Greater Moses will give us the charge to vex the midianites, and frustrate the kingdom of Satan in our

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country. (Num. 25:16-18). The battle plans are with our JOSHUA, the Lord Jesus Christ. . When we are faithful in keeping our consecration vows all Zimris will become Phinehas, and the least in God's House will be as DAVID. Sanctification is an experience of receiving the testimony of our victory, CHRIST JESUS.

We must close ranks, open up one to another, minister in love to our weaknesses. All must stand who truly are of Christ. So in prayers we must have the faith of God that all who truly knew a beginning with Him can come to a victorious end in Him. The greater days of the emergent Church are just ahead. Those days received will bring us eventually to experiencing the blessed Hope of the appearing of Christ our Life, and of our appearing with Him in glory. Today's faithfulness will bring the glory nearer. And faithfulness is even more contagious than sin. If you are faithful, then that is all it would take for us all to come to the next stage of God's plan. May His great Name be exalted above them all. Amen.

CHAPTER 5
THE FOURTH TESTING
EXPERIENCE

We shall be taking Num. 21:4-9, 12-18 alongside 1 Cor:10 1-11 for our present meditation. We have part of this text below for the convenience of the reader.

4. *And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.*
5. *And the people spake against God and against Moses, wherefore have ye brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water: and our soul loathed this light bread.*
6. *And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people; and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.*
7. *Therefore the people came to Moses and said, we have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee: pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.*

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8. *And the LORD said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he look unto it, shall live.*
9. *And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.*
12. *From thence they removed, and pitched in the valley of zared.*
13. *From thence they removed, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, which is in the wilderness that cometh out the coasts of the Amorites: for Arnon is the boarder of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.*
14. *Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the LORD, what He did in the RED SEA, and in the brooks of Arnon.*
15. *And at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the border of Moab.*
16. *And from thence they went to Beer: that is the well whereof the LORD spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.*
17. *Then Israel sang this song. Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it:*
18. *The princes digged the well, the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the law giver with their staves. And from the wilderness they went to Matta-nah "Num. 21:4-9, 12-18.*

1 Cor. 10: 5-11

5. *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*
7. *Now these things were our examples to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*

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8. *Neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.*
9. *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.*
11. *Now these things happen unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

We are continuing in our discussion on the five testing experiences; and are come to the fourth. It has been quite enriching to see and hear the Voice behind the story of the experiences of the church in the wilderness. The admonitions of the LORD have been much helpful in appreciating the challenge that goes with accepting the High calling of God in Christ Jesus. Looking back we are able to see how one experience dovetails into another. Different events are brought before us but practically the same lessons. We thank God for the re-emphasis. We all find that our '*ups*' and '*downs*' in the Christian race do teach us the fact that we do not seem to learn fully our lessons as they come. So that what leads to another painful experience is not much different from something that had come across our path earlier on.

Here in the fourth event, several elements in all three previous ones appear. However, as with the others certain truths are highlighted which are to be best learnt under the new circumstances before us. In this way we are helped to be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. We begin by noting that the event here recorded took place in the fortieth year of the wilderness wanderings of Israel. The land of promise is just in view. Nothing else seem to stand between them and coming into their possession. And it is quite significant that of all the events recorded in the middle three books

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of Moses, just five were selected for our special instruction. Of the five, two were taken from the fortieth year experience.

We believe by this, our attention is being drawn to the fact that God was concentrating much on working into them things they were still deficient of; God is never in such a hurry as to gloss over important matters that have to do with our becoming exactly like our Redeemer. God intensifies our preparations for the throne as the DAY draws near. And His eyes like flaming fire searches our inward selves, the reins of our hearts.

The first thing that strikes our attention is in verses 4. We meet the words “*Red Sea*” and “*Edom*”. We are told God took them along by the way of the Red Sea. Here we come to an important point: at the very time of the end the first matters of our salvation come up as things God emphasizes. Repentance from dead works, faith towards God, baptisms, deliverance and the like. The Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, sincerity and truth: all these matters spring up again. No wonder God gives the former rain and the rain when all we thought we needed was the latter rain.

Quite recently the LORD said to us: Go back to the archives. Get you back to what I have brought you through in the word of your salvation. Now we are likely to have been thinking that all of the things the LORD was referring to are at our finger tips. But God was not one bit concerned about our heads. God was measuring us - so many loop-holes and breaches in our lives must have come up before His Perfect sight.

Then Edom. And the word concerning this land was that the children of Israel should compass it. Now Edom represents the ‘*flesh*’, not only in its’ outward excesses but more so in the rule of the soul over a man’s life. We may call it the marriage of the soul and the body in a treacherous usurpation of the inner man, the spirit man, our new creation man. That is the spring board of dead works,

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barrenness, death, carnality. Carnality is the incursion of the soulish life into spiritual matters. Everyone of its expression spells spiritual filthiness, filthiness of the spirit as it is called in 2 Cor. 7:1

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

So God would have the children of Israel compass the land of Edom. The flesh must come to death experientially. In Deuteronomy, we learn that the natives of the land of Edom would not allow Israel to go through it. That would have been shorter. But God was behind the refusal. No short cuts, sin must be experientially taken away, rooted out from our nature. The feast of Atonement is appropriately, a reminder of the sin question, and the final casting down and destruction of its main expression - the self life. At no point in our Christian lives are we called upon to exercise greater patience; and to practice diligent submission to the Holy Spirit as when the soulical life is to be crushed. The Lord takes the lead in this matter: one thing after the other in our lives is highlighted by His spirit in us. Things we must put off by an act of faith, trusting His enabling grace. And for the believer who is obedient to the lord's dealings, the demand of His hands touches on more and more things. It is as though there is no end to the work of cleansing that is needed for us to be through with that aspect.

Now note this: whenever any nation is located on the path of the children of Israel, the usual thing is for that people to be crushed by the LORD's army in a single blow. So you can be sure, Israel must have wondered why Edom and Moab must be exceptions. How easy it is relatively speaking to cast out a demon by a word: but when it comes to the flesh the approach is altogether different.

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God explained to the children of Israel, why Edom must not be cast out but compassed about. Edom was a race that sprang from Esau, the twin brother of their father, Jacob. And the land that the Edomites were occupying was by divine appointment. (See Deut. 2:19, 23: 78)

How revealing that is! We have our bodies and souls as precious gift to us from God. They are the very kinsmen of our new creation man. We certainly have need of the soul and the body (Pet. 1:9, 1Cor. 6:20). But the soulish life that is the enthronement of the soul through union with bodily appetites leaves our new creation man in a terrible struggle against being entrapped.

The Bible describes this very appropriately in Gal. 5:16-18.

16. *This I say then, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.*
17. *For the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other: SO THAT YE CANNOT DO THE THINGS THAT YE WOULD.*
18. *But if ye are led of the spirit ye are not under the law.*

The great problem that the age long marriage of the body to the soul (called the flesh) is that the aspirations of the believer are hindered by it. Paul says “*SO THAT YE CANNOT DO THE THINGS THAT YE WOULD*”.

That is death - the great inability to produce spiritual results is death. The rule teaches the flesh that it is legitimate to do LAW. This law teaches the flesh that it is legitimate to do much activity and strive hard to please God. And that was okay in the old order which produced only death. But in the new order of the way of the spirit, faith is the means to acceptance, strength, victory and spiritual fruitfulness. *The adoption of the new order of the way of*

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the spirit and the rejection of the law of sin and death that man has lived with so many years from birth, is the real issue in the fourth testing experience.

Let us illustrate this:

Quite difficult it is for a left – handed man to start practising to use the right hand for all things. And for there to be a heavy penalty placed for using the left hand makes it all the more perplexing. All along, we have been able to manoeuvre through using both hands, and more frequently the right. But in this last hour God is going to see to it that all mixtures must be eliminated. And He is not going to “*amputate*” the “*left hand*” for us to have just one option.

The victory will have to be through making the right choice all the time, even in the midst of strong appeals of the wrong. The whole point to the matter of compassing the land of Edom lies in the value of choice; of making learned choice in life. You will recall that the name Edom stresses something in Esau’s history. He it was who for a “*morsel of bread*” sold his birthright. And right there in Heb. 12 that teaches on Sonship and the high privileges and exalted estate of Zion, we are reminded of Esau, the profane.

We are a product of the preferences we choose when faced with taking critical decisions. And sometimes, the decision to make is not between good and evil. The choice that Edom made and for which he became pronounced profane was between good and the better. The good, the legitimate is evil when choosing it comes at cross – purposes with kingdom demands.

Romans chapters six, seven and eight progressively teach how to overthrow the rule of the flesh and adopt permanently, the rule of the spirit. The eighth in particular, introduces us to the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. There are contained in this passage five

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guiding principles that govern walking and living in the spirit. When these chapters are read and considered along side Gal. 5:12-18 we are made able to see how to encompass the land of our Edom. It is a basic teaching for many. It is like returning to our feeding bottles and it is rather simple diet of milk sweetened with honey to improve taste. But that is exactly what God is calling for in relation to encompassing Edom.

Now in the typical story, the children of Israel were just coming out in their journey from mount Hor (Verse 4). Hor means “*mountain*”, “*promotion*”. The message is clear. They were coming from a ‘mountain’ experience. They had real promotion in the spirit; a sure addition from God. Think of it for a moment. Imagine being in a sustained atmosphere of praise, worship and anointed teaching on the coming glory. As the thundering revelations and occasional exciting shouts in the spirit keep on filling the weeks and months you are sure to be in high spirit. Who would not?

Then imagine further, this sequence of things halted for something else. The emphasis in the new meal is on how to deal with the works of the flesh. And for that and related topics to come on stage for six continuous months by the Lord’s leading!

For many it would start becoming boring as from the second week! Human nature has certainly not changed much, has it? Israel complained. They spoke against God and Moses. They imputed evil motive to the way God and His servant were handling them. “*Manna is light and boring; and besides, no water*” They said.

Many do not go to the extent of speaking with the words of mouth against Christ. They do however by actions. Our responses to God's word say much about the inward disposition. We must be appreciative of the things God has given for our glorification.

Deut.8:3 remind us of God's purpose in the manna.

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"And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by EVERY WORD that proceeded out of the mouth of the LORD, DOTH MAN LIVE"

We must give attention to every word He ministers to us through the spiritual ministries He places in the body. Many do not realise that the real indication of receiving the "*weightier*" matters of the kingdom is seen in our abilities to live in obedience to the "*lesser*" ones. It is very doubtful if any truly understands the message of Sonship who thinks little about "*encompassing Edom*". In the manifestation, it is what God has worked into His own that is revealed in their lives and services.

When God's sons come into the hour of manifestation, all things are made manifest in their true essence. Evil will manifest for what it is and get punished. Putting it more plainly: none has the capacity for the fullness that cannot walk in the light of the first principles of the kingdom of Heaven.

Taking again what has just been said, we imply that those of the Israel of old who murmured against the issue of encompassing Edom never really learnt or received anything in Mount Hor. There may have been shouts of excitement in the camp as the Canaanites by Mount Hor were utterly destroyed. However only such knew the meaning of it all who patiently accepted the challenge of encompassing Edom. (See Num. 21:13)

The '*lower*' blessings and the '*higher*' blessings require the same principle for their appropriation: the principle of faith. Again, those who truly "*drank in to the spirit*" on the mount cannot possibly complain of no water in the valley. When the heart is in a good condition, it retains the water of life in its hills and valleys.

Deuteronomy 8:7 tells us about the land of promise a land of

brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of hills and valleys. That is the picture of the heart that will be honoured with glory. Later on, we see God leading them on to the secret of abiding refreshing: A life which is like a tree planted besides “*the rivers of water*”, fruitful all through the seasons.

TRUE HOPE SUSTAINS

We now come to the issue of their being discouraged because of the “*way*”. The word “*discouraged*” in the Hebrew denotes partial withdrawal from a usual course of life. When this is taken together with the reason for it, we are brought into something of great importance. There are so many Christians who have started out the race on an extremely good note. They came out of the denominational church systems drawn to God by the work of his power. The tenor of God’s word suggested great urgency. The kingdom of Heaven was near to be established. The glorious manifestation and the out-resurrection were events that seem to be at the very door of fulfilment all within a couple of years. So they ran with much eagerness and expectation. But when the years wore on and the “*manifestation*”, the ‘*glory*’ seem to delay there is a general loss of enthusiasm. So much so that the wise together with the foolish virgins slumber and sleep. It is a thing most sad.

We must be ready to press through to possessing now the sure and true hope of his glory. Biblical hope is something beyond ordinary expectation. All false hopes must be abandoned. True hopes are pearls of great price (Mt. 13:46)). They must be persistently sought for. A man must “*sell all that he has*”, Jesus declared, in order to possess the pearl of “*that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our God*”.

The effect of possessing such a hope is to live in spiritual wakefulness, rejoicing in and beholding, the sure prospects of the

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coming kingdom. Then sacrifices made now for the love of his name would not become a matter of regret tomorrow. The apparent delay of the Bridegroom is a great test of the fidelity and love of the prospective bridal class.

Truly speaking, there are no delays with our God. Under the present ministry of Christ among His own, the operative word is "*Time no longer*". The events that are detailed to take place are shaping up by the day. Those possessing the true hope of a resurrection glory with Christ are reasonably aware of the "*times and seasons*". Being true children of the day they "*watch*" and are "*sober*".

"For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night" (1 Thess. 5:7); the "*night*" attracts sleep and drunkenness. But the day empowers wakefulness, alertness and soberness. What is "*night*" time to some is "*day time*" to others. Ignorance of the times is the principal element in the concept of "*night*", spiritually speaking. There are those who suddenly begin to get "*drunk*" with the affair of this life, withdrawing gradually from the way of consecration. All because they are, as it were, seized with an understanding that Christ may not introduce the kingdom in their time. That of course, is a manifestation of a sick heart. Staying awake has nothing to do with suppressed inward desire of an evil kind. They who stay awake find their desires fulfilled daily. However the desires in their soul align fully with the herald of the coming king (Col. 3: 1-4).

Returning our minds back to the typical story, God plagued the children of Israel for their evil speaking. He sent fiery serpents among the people: "*they bit the people; and much people of Israel died*".

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They were laid low in the wilderness. Theirs was a physical death. But today men stand the risk of losing out from the throne-ship company, when they treat Christ's authority with levity. If a man by choice lives like the world and shrinks back from healthful spiritual pursuits, he is implying the sovereign grace exercised toward him is worthless. May the Lord continually have mercy upon us.

The Way of Faith and the Place of Christ Revealed

In the typical story, the fall of some awakened the others to the folly of their evil speaking. They began to cry out for mercy. The gracious LORD hearkened to their cry. He stretched forth His mercy toward them in love.

There is much to learn from the deliverance He granted them. He did not take away the fiery serpents. He rather showed them the way of abiding victoriously in the midst of their enemies, who are made powerless. The LORD asked Moses to make a brazen serpent and hang it on a pole. All who were bitten only needed to look to the serpent on the pole and received healing. The serpents were utterly powerless against those who fixed their gaze upon the symbolic Christ.

Several important lessons may be deduced from this simple remedy

Edom's hold on man is but a sting of the serpent. It is poisonous and immediately sets in motion destruction and death. Sin is the sting of the serpent. The "*flesh*" is the partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It acknowledges the good but does only the wrong. The serpent is behind the fall of man as the Bible records.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should

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not perish but have eternal life". (John. 3:14, 15). The serpent of brass is symbolic of the Son of God dying for the sins of the human race. The blessings of His atoning death are enjoyed by those who place their faith in Him. Faith implies looking unto Jesus Christ the Lord with total heart reliance.

Victory from the hold of the flesh comes through recognizing the all sufficiency of the blood of the Lamb of God, and the power of the resurrected Christ to minister the blessings of that blood. Such recognition invokes faith. As it was in the typical story so it is now: Those who see Him live.

The preaching of the cross is the power of salvation. The whole sphere of the serpent's activities and wickedness is dealt with by the cross, by the atoning death. Christ crucified declared and received is the power of God unto deliverance.

Christ who died but now alive forever more is the shepherd of our souls. If the serpents were not taken away, so must they know that the Rock is present with them. They can know Him not only as the one who died to take away sins but also the living one who imparts life and shelters His own.

There was therefore, no ground for complaining of there being no water. All they needed is in the Lord that was present among them. The Rock that followed them complements the work of Himself on the cross. The Rock which is Christ is total solution for all of man's need. He is as (Isaiah 32:1-2) reveals Him

- i. Rivers of water in a dry place, always available to His own.
- ii. Shadow of refreshing and peace in a weary land.
- iii. A sure hiding place from all evil caused adversities.
- iv. Healer of the blind, the deaf and the lame.

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Through Him we are made able to see the wisdom of God's plans and purposes and to joyfully respond to His love in blessing us with these. As the believer keeps exercising total heart reliance on the Rock of our salvation, Christ is revealed all the more to Him.

“And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken”.

“The heart of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly” (Isaiah 32: 3-4)

He is the perfect solution to all human problems, both natural and spiritual. The children of Israel learnt in that terrible situation to look up to God and not to themselves. It was a great lesson on faith. A man's life style depends on what he is seeing and to whom he is listening. The eyes of them that see Him never get dim. Enlightenment increases as we continue to fix our gaze upon Him. The ears of them that hear hearken. If we prepare ourselves to hear Him there would be found power in His word to walk obediently before Him. His voice is powerful.

The restless, murmuring disposition of the heart is altered when we both see and hear Him. In understanding knowledge, evil no longer lodges in our hearts nor proceeds from our mouths. The tongue is thus purged from its venom and instead of speaking indistinctly we are helped to declare His testimony plainly, elegantly. All of these favours flow from that spiritual Rock who was with them in the wilderness, *and now with us*.

Brooks of Arnon and the Dwelling of Ar

We now come to a second division of our text. Here God's purpose for taking them through the Edom episode and teaching them the first principles of faith is revealed. God had His mind on the several

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battles they would have to fight to dispossess the Canaanite nations of the land of their inheritance.

The battles would prove as difficult as encompassing Edom if they considered them (the battles) as their own. The battles would prove easy to fight and win if taken as the LORD'S wars and fought on the principles of faith they have just learnt. They only needed to look at the raised serpent of brass to win the victory over the fiery serpents. However, the revelation of what they needed to do came from God. Their faith in the revealed strategy brought victory and praise.

These two principles of revelation and obedience to the revealed strategy are symbolized in the terms "*brooks of Arnon, and the dwelling of Ar*". They are the abiding principles that run through all the battles of the LORD. The word "*Ar*" means the "*opening of the eyes*" and "*a city guarded by being awake*". The reference is to the place of revelatory gifts in divine warfare.

In the LORD'S battles the first thing of importance is "*what is the Lord's strategy for this battle?*" The Lord's mind is communicated to His own through the operation of the revelatory gifts. The battle plans are with the Lord; these communication to His own is their sure hope of winning the victory. By it also we see the glory of God. Then of course, the term "*the dwelling of Ar*" would mean a condition of permanence of the operation of these gifts in the body. That makes Zion a "*guarded City*". With the "*seeing eyes*", we are made able to see and know the evil schemes of the enemy ahead of time. We are also made able to see and know what the Lord would have us do.

The word "*Arnon*" means "*to rejoice, to shout aloud, to shout for joy, to triumph*". The word "*brooks*" connotes "*taking possession, to inherit*" apart from its usual meaning of a stream. The

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combination reveals something of a great importance. The inheritance is given to a people of praise and worship. The response of a people when God has made them to know the enemies' evil schemes and then His instructions for victory is spontaneous praise, worship and rejoicing. The obedience of faith brings the triumph.

What is more, when a people are permanently dwelling in “*Ar*” faith teaches that the spirit of praise and worship should come upon the people as they wait on the Lord for instructions. This is important. When the instructions have been received, the spirit of praise and worship should accompany the act of obedience. Praise reveals faith, dynamic faith. The place of praise in divine warfare is vividly seen in Psalms 148, 149, 150. Note for example, Ps. 149:5-9 is also straight to the point.

What is here revealed as counsel from the LORD will eventually characterize His army at this time of the end. The spirit of praise shall increase mightily upon His people. And that will promote the impartation of prophetic abilities.

The Way to Abiding Refreshing

“*Gather the people together, and I will give them water*” Num. 21:16. Having seen in the preceding section how gloriously different “*a people of murmuring*” is from “*a people of praise*”. God takes the children of Israel further in teaching them the way of victory.

The seventeenth verse of Numbers 21 is an eye opener. Imagine Israel singing in the wilderness. This is quite unlike them. We read about singing last in Exodus 15, forty years before this. If Israel had known that encompassing Edom was a preparation for receiving the greater things of God, they would have behaved differently.

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Just so it is today. Our dry times of murmuring and complaining against God, others and ourselves are because we do not seem to see the tomorrow God has for us. The heavy veil of the flesh prevents spiritual seeing. And without “*sight*” none can truly fight in the battles of the LORD. Again, there can be no permanence in dwelling in the land of “*Ar*” if we indulge the flesh occasionally. All our spiritual lessons are for our profit. His commandments therefore, are not grievous.

But let us consider their song: “*Spring up, O well; Sing ye to it*”. Where was the well? Where is the well today? The well is within us. It is the well of living water. It always yearns to spring up. We can give way to its springing up by taking up the spirit of joy and rejoicing. Water, enough for the individual, overflowing also to bless others, is within the bowels of the spirit filled believer. (Read Isaiah 12: 1-6, Note verse 3).

There is no ground for spiritual dryness. If there is no neglect of our devotional altars through living to the flesh, then the “*springing signals*” are always there waiting for us to answer to it. Glory! The Spirit - yearning to spring up is subject to us. (1 Cor. 14:32) But while there in waiting, it yearns for release.

“*Answer ye unto it*”. Israel called one to another as they learn the secret.

How glorious it is in a meeting when everyone is answering to the springs within. Hallelujah!

The way towards abiding refreshing may be summarised as follows: “*Keep fellowship and devotion with Lord. Go on being filled with the spirit thereby. Learn to respond to the "springing" signal within*”. Let this become habitual “*The anointing abides, it does not go and come*”. It has nothing to do with such variables as moods, feelings, rainy season, dry season, heat or cold. These

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elements change. *But the anointing abides. Just sing ye to it. Hallelujah!*

Now, let us also consider how abiding refreshing for the local assembly may be secured. The eighteenth verse of our text reveals this.

"The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the LAWGIVER with their staves".

A little word study is necessary here to help proper understanding. We would examine the following words which together reveal the Lord's voice in this verse: Princes digged, nobles, staves, and lawgiver.

Princes (Strong's No 8269) - It means "*head persons*", "*captains*," "*steward*", "*master*". The persons referred to were the seventy persons raised to leadership through the request of Moses. They answer to those in the spiritual leadership among God's people, especially those who have come to the estate of the five fold ministries. Simply put, the reference is to those who minister in the word of God by an anointing from God.

Digged. There are two different words translated "*digged*" in this passage. One used in relation to the princes; the other is associated with the nobles. We take the first of this here. "*Digged*" The Hebrew word is "*Chapter*" (Strong's No 2658). It means to search out, to explore. The reference is to give attention to searching the Scriptures. Exploring its inestimable riches by the Holy Spirit's help and leading. The princes were to "*dig*" the well. The root word for "*well*" as used here means to explain and declare plainly. (Strong's No 874). Thus the princes helped by the abiding refreshing of the living waters within them were by God required to labour in the study of the scripture so that they can plainly declare the plans and purposes of God.

Nobles of the People - The word translated Nobles is in the

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Hebrew. It means "to volunteer"; to be "generous", "willing hearted", "nobles". (Strong's 5081). "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power". (Ps. 110:3). This word is so rich in its application. Those are nobles indeed whose hearts yearn deeply for God and His people. Their affections are so strong for the living God and the people of God, that they willingly give themselves to the ministry of prayer and intercession. They are God's watch men. Quite often, they are simple humble minded people; unobtrusive, gentle, loving and deeply spiritual. They act or seek to act in the secrecy of their closets where in bold faith they have power with God and men. Possessed of priestly hearts they rule together with God in their closets.

These receive the "signet", the "ring of engagement" for marriage ahead of those who do not chose to convert their leisure hours for kingdom purposes. There is plenty in God's house because of their labours of love. This leads us to the next word.

Digged - This word used in connection with the nobles translate the Hebrew word "Karah" (Strong's No 3738). It means "to dig so as to make open", "to make banquet".

Let us illustrate this with the use of a familiar situation in this country. It is like oil exploration. There are those who are skilled in locating sites where oil can be got. Through specialized instruments they prospect for oil in the vast fields. They mark out promising locations for oil. Then the next batch comes, skilled in the art of drilling oil sites employing suitable rigs. The crude oil is now made available for conversion through sales to nation's wealth.

The nobles upon receiving the Lord's instructions through the teaching and preaching of the word are inspired to labour in prayers and intercession to bring forth the treasures of heaven. There is then "Banquet" for all. The glory revealed is received by prayers.

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All can come into such love for God and His people to earnestly seek for the grace to lead a life of prayers.

Lawgiver - This word has a twofold application. The first simply means a commander; a general; a governor. The second application is to the decrees of the commander, symbolised by his staff. The law giver is the LORD JESUS CHRIST and His holy decrees are given to us on the written word. All spiritual labours must conform to the inspired record, the Bible. He guides us through revealing His mind to us by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures are Holy Spirit inspired. All His leading will always be harmonious with the principles of the written word as revealed. The "princes" and the "nobles" labour by the grace of God upon them but the Excellency of the power is of the LAW GIVER.

Staves - This speaks of the equipments by which the "princes" and "nobles" labour. Each labourer labours with his stave. The staves are the graces of God upon the individual which sustain and support his labours. Gifts plus dedication to God, births ministry. Gifts, dedication and ministry reveal the grace of God upon a man as he has received and utilized it INDEED.

All that have been said helps us to understand the way to abiding refreshing in a local set up. When the Lord's people in their individual aspects know to walk in the supplies of the springs of the living waters in their inner most being, they are able to come to fellowship prepared. When the "princes" and "nobles" give themselves truly to their calling, the spiritual atmosphere in the fellowship brings freshness, praise, and abiding refreshing. It is in such a setting that Zion may be able to dwell in Ar and drink perpetually from the brooks of Arnon.

We will close with this observation. The situation just described of a thoroughly functional local assembly is of great value to God. When God's people labour with staves in the manner just described,

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they are able to birth spiritual "*poles*"

The serpent of brass was borne on a pole (Num. 21:8).

When the enemy comes like a flood, the spirit of God will lift up (stir up) a standard against it. This standard is by the testimony of spiritual "*poles*" who exalt Jesus that His people may see His glory and receive their victory. God will continue to bless His house with men and women whom the spirit of God can stir up to set up the testimony of Christ in battle against every move of the enemy. God is building up His church. As we move forward in His will, the gates of hell cannot stop us. Blessed be the Name of the Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER 6
THE FIFTH TESTING
EXPERIENCE

The Scripture passage of interest is Numbers Chapters 13 and 14. The earnest reader should endeavour to familiarize himself with the story. We would reproduce below 1 Cor. 10:5, 6, 10, 11 alongside Numbers Chapter 13: 26-33 : 14: 1-4.

26. *And they went and came to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation of the Children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadish, and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the first of the Land.*
27. *And they told him, and said we came unto the Land wither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.*
28. *Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the Land, and the cities are walled, and very great; and moreover we saw the Children of Anak there.*
29. *The Amalekites dwell in the Land of the South: and the Hititites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the cananites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.*

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30. *And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.*
31. *But the men that went up with him said, we be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.*
32. *And they brought up an evil report of the Land which they searched unto the Children of Israel, saying, The Land, through which we have gone to search it, it is a Land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.*
33. *And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. (Num. 13:26-33)*
1. *And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.*
2. *And all the Children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, would God that we had died in the Land of Egypt! or would God we had died in the wilderness!*
3. *And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this Land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our Children should be prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?*
4. *And they said one to another, let us make a Captain, and let us return into Egypt". (Num. 14:1-4)*
5. *But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*
6. *Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.*

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10. *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*
11. *Now all these things happened unto them for samples: and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:5-6, 10, 11).*

The fifth testing experience was occasioned by the sending of twelve spies to search out the Land of Promise. The LORD instructed Moses to send a man "*of every tribe of their fathers*"; "*everyone a ruler among them*".

The historical occurrence was two years after they left Egypt. At this time the Children of Israel were encamped in the wilderness of Paran. It was at the very edge of the Land of Promise on the north end as the Scriptures imply in verses 17 and 22 of the Thirteenth Chapter. God's purpose was to strengthen their desire for the inheritance. . He had promised their Fathers. Accordingly, He chose a suitable time, when the land has been under the showers of the latter rain; the rain of harvest. We are told in the twentieth verse of the same chapter that "*the time was the time of the first ripe grape. So Moses encouraged the twelve carefully selected men to bring of the fruit of the Land*" (Numbers 13: 20). The search of the land took the twelve able men forty days. From the report they gave, it is certain they covered much of the land. Upon return to the camp, they shewed excellent evidences that the land marked out for their inheritance was truly a land that flowed with milk and honey.

They brought with them pomegranate fruits and figs besides large-size clusters of grapes; big enough to require two men to carry one bunch. They also delivered their findings concerning the inhabitants of the land, this being one of the things Moses required them to do. (Numbers 13:18-20). Ten of the men gave a rather exaggerated account of the inhabitants of the land bringing the

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terrible fear they were under upon the people.

They said, "*Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the Land, and the cities are walled, and very great and more over we saw the Children of Anak (giants) there. We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we*" (Num. 13:28, 31).

The other two men, however, were of a completely different opinion. Caleb and Joshua drawing strength of conviction from the revelation to them of the God of glory declared that Israel was well able to take possession of their inheritance.

"*And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it*" (Num. 13:30). "*And Joshua the Son of Nun, and Caleb the Son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the Land rent their clothes*". (Num. 14:6)

And they spake unto all the company of the Children of Israel, saying, "*The Land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good Land. If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us into this Land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey*".

Only rebel not ye against the LORD neither fear ye the people of the Land, for they are bread for us, and their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: Fear them not. (Num. 14:6-9). The reaction of the children of Israel showed that they took sides with the evil report of the ten.

The first verse of the fourteenth chapter has a sad story to tell. The whole nation wept all night; not a night vigil of prayers and intercession. They murmured against God, Moses and Aaron. They started out also to stone Joshua and Caleb. In a swift move, they resolved to select for themselves a captain and return to Egypt.

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They preferred death in the wilderness to the prospect of facing the terrible Canaanites in warfare. The intercessory prayers of Moses and Aaron could not save the people from the wrath of God. The ten evil men died instantly.

The divine sentence meted out to the children of Israel was putting a stamp of approval on the people's preference. They would rather perish in the wilderness than go into battle. God granted them their heart desires. All of that generation perished in the wilderness.

The only persons spared the judgment were, Joshua and Caleb together with those of the Israelites who were at the time less than twenty years of age. The large-heartedness of Moses in seeking God's mercy for the people saved the people from an instant destruction.

The sentence remained and was to be realized by the people in wasteful wanderings. Thirty-eight years of gradual elimination swallowed that generation. Why was God's anger so strong against Israel? The scriptures reveal the full import of the people's transgression. First, this occasion of murmuring and rebelling against God; imputing evil into His purpose for them was the tenth.

Because all those men which have seen my glory and my miracle which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness and have tempted me now these TEN TIMES, and have not hearkened to my voice:

Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it (Num. 14: 22, 23). God's long suffering and forbearance were fully tested. The LORD was taking note of all their indignities even though they themselves would have been oblivious of this fact.

However the real issue to be noted was that the people had come into a fixed habit. Their heart condition toward spiritual matters could no longer be improved. Isaiah says something of this

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nature in his prophecy concerning the wicked.

"Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness in the land of uprightness, will he deal unjustly and will not behold the majesty of the LORD". (Isaiah 26: 10) Thus the children of Israel fully revealed themselves in those ten occasions of tempting God.

Secondly, the great intervention God gave to the children of Israel in Egypt was enough to teach them something of the exceeding majesty of the sovereign LORD. Ten great plagues subdued the nation whose King at that time was regarded in history as a "*King of Kings*", a King of the whole earth.

The Egyptian army was the best at the time and the fame of the glory of that Land was well attested to in history. Yet God subdued the whole nation, delivering their slaves, the Israelites from the midst of it without any physical combat.

And when God led them out of Egypt, the pride of pharaoh's heart stirred him up to marshal his army in swift pursuit of the Israelites. The wonder of parting the Red sea and of leading Israel through while at the same burying Pharaoh and his army alive in the waters shook the whole earth.

As the Scriptures put it, "*the terror and dread of Israel fell on all the nations*" in the then known world. The Canaanites and Amorites trembled exceedingly as their spies brought the reports to them of the approaching Israelite nation. Thus the reaction of the children of Israel was discounting God's glory (see Num. 14:22).

Thirdly, their reaction against the two witnesses of God's power and glory was in essence standing in opposition against God. "*I the LORD have said. I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation that are gathered together against me in this wilderness. They shall be consumed, and then: they shall die*"

(Num. 14:35).

The Israelites rather than unite their faith with the faith of the two who proclaimed the gospel of God's power and favour toward His people withstood their testimony, and would have slain them. This spirit that seeks to root out God's men and women from the earth is the same that has made "*Mystery Babylon*" to be drunk with "*the blood of the saints, and with the martyrs of Jesus*" (Rev. 17:6).

Let us now apply the facts and lessons in the typical history to our day. Recall what Paul said after rehearsing all the events we have been considering. "*They are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*" (1 Cor. 10: 11).

Someone may ask, what is meant by the "*ends of this world*", and to whom specifically is the admonition given? We answer by making reference to the two Greek words translated "*ends*" and "*world*". The first is "*telos*", the second is "*ion*". These words are better translated in the Revised Standard Version, and more newer translations.

For "*telos*", the Strong's Exhaustive concordance says, "*to set out for a definite point or goal*". "*The point aimed at as a limit*" "*ultimate result or purpose*". For "*ion*", the same dictionary gives the meaning as "*age*". The text has this word in the plural. Hence, the reference is to "*ages*". Thus, "*the ends of the world*" or better still, the "*ends of the ages*" signifies the ultimate result sought for, in the dealings God has had with the human race down through the ages. Each age or dispensation is usually marked by specific moral and spiritual characteristics God's purposes for each of these ages are a buildup of the ultimate purpose He has in mind. This ultimate purpose concerning all ages, finds its fulfilment in the age Paul is referring to in 1 Corinthians 10: 11.

We know that Paul implied that the age he was writing about was already in progress in his day. We would be correct to say then

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that the church age is the time period in which there is the desired fulfilment of the divine purposes. The church age therefore is the period in which the intents and purposes of God's use of the ages before and after it find interpretation. This is a weighty statement. It implies, among other things that God holds his age with special regard.

There is one more point to be made concerning this which answers the second part of the question asked. The church is a special creation of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The age in which the church is being developed unto perfection has two special time periods incorporated into it. The beginning and the conclusion of the church age are these two special time periods. The scriptures refer to them as the "*last days*". A few scripture verses will help to bring out clearly the observation just made. "*Little Children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that anti-christ shall come, even now are there many anti-christs; whereby we know that it is the last time*". 1 John 2:18.

"But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God. I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh..." (Acts 2: 16, 17).

"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled. and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto Salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:4, 5).

The first scripture states that the Apostle John was living in the "*last time*". In the second, Apostle Peter agrees with this saying that the outpouring of the Spirit upon them was a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy concerning the last days. In the third passage however, Peter speaks about a season of time, the very final, the last time, in which will be revealed the fullness of salvation experience. Thus he

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was also pointing to another time period which he refers to as the last time, last days.

Apostle Paul in his writings also uses the term as both present in his days and would yet come in the future. It can be shown that the first of these started during the first advent of the LORD Jesus Christ. The second set is when the "*times of the Gentiles was demonstrated as having come to a close*". Thus we are in the second time period. Specifically, we are the Church upon whom the "*ends of the ages*" are come. God is seeking the ultimate fulfilment of His divine purposes in and from the Church of our day. This is an extremely important awareness that should dawn on all who truly hope for the soon installation of the Kingdom of heaven.

If in the typical history God was very mindful of His people living and serving Him according to His very will, how much more now. There is a compelling voice behind the events that transpired in Israel's journey through the wilderness. Let us hear it with the whole of our being. None can dare despise the authority of that VOICE.

Breach of Promise

There is a very serious statement made by God as He reviewed with judgment Israel's rejection of the Promised Land. "*After the number of the days, in which ye searched the Land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise*". (Num. 13:34)

Israel of old was charged with causing a breach of the promise God made to their fathers. The word breach means an interruption. Israel's unfaithfulness forced an interruption on God's programme for bringing them into their inheritance.

There was a delay of about thirty-eight years which was not in God's schedule for them. It is a most solemn observation. The

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interruption was imposed to see to it that those who made it necessary did not have a share in the fulfilment of the promise. As it was then so it is now, the event of the promised glory, the manifestation of the Sons of God, calls for all diligent submission to the Lord Jesus in faithful obedience.

Unfaithfulness would be as unwise as it is costly. May the blood of the everlasting covenant cover us up as we are enabled by God to daily build up a life of faithfulness. May the spirit that was in Joshua and Caleb prove to be in many prospective Sons of God; sufficient in number and grace to make an interruption in the divine schedule unnecessary in our day.

The Strength of Israel Will Not Lie

God will never abandon His purpose. He will never alter His promise. He will release full resources to support the realization of His purpose. He will vindicate every trust placed upon Him in relation to the out working of that purpose He has set His mind on. Yes, the strength of Israel will not lie. The evil boasts of the enemy must be fully discountenanced by a people for the divine purpose.

Moses intercessory plea for the nation of Israel reveal much. (See Num. 14: 13-19). Moses heart bums in hot affection for Israel and for God's glory. This miracle of a man shall be found in a great measure in our day.

Moses was bold, had an experience with God that only divine grace can impart. He stretched his plea to the fullest possible length. He got answers. There shall be many of his type in our day; in Jesus Name. But the essential thing we desire to point out here is the tenor of God's answers to his plea. We read in verses fifteen and sixteen of the fourteenth chapter of Numbers, something that made full demand upon God's integrity.

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"Now if thou shall kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness."

God's answer to this plea is highly revealing, *"And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to the word, But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD"*, (Num. 14:20, 21), God is saying in essence that the realization not only of that purpose for Israel of old, but more specifically of the ultimate desires of His heart for the Church are bound up in His person and majesty. The success of His plans rests on His shoulders alone. Many may defect, but He will not abandon His Purpose. Men's faithfulness is not what His plan is hooked unto; Men's opinion is not what will motivate a fulfilment. His desire will prevail upon the earth by the strength and glory of His being. What an assurance! What a peace is birthed in those who see it! What a rest! What a faith!

Mercy has provided that man should be incorporated into the outworking of God's purpose. And this mercy is most fully conferred on the Church of this hour. We must with grateful hearts embrace this limitless privilege. Faithfulness is believing God who has spoken by His glory, a belief that translates into diligent obedience, trust and heart reliance upon Him.

Israel of old did not enter unto their inheritance, not because of giants. They were kept back because of unbelief. Faith then is the central challenge of this hour: a faith that sees God, and then looks at the hosts of dark forces without fear.

Though these forces presently lay claim to the domain of the Air, nevertheless, the greater Michael now stands in battle for the victory of the Church.

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Twelve Excellent Ones and a Great Sign in Heaven

The Twelve spies sent by Moses to search the Land of Promise were carefully selected. It included Joshua the Son of Nun. It is highly probable that outside Moses and Aaron, none was called to fulfil as important a role as these spies. They were men of distinction; honoured among their brethren.

The word used to describe what the spies were expected to do makes an interesting study:

"And the LORD spake unto Moses saying, Send thou men, that they may SEARCH the Land of Canaan, which I give unto the Children of Israel; of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, everyone a ruler among them" (Num. 13: 1, 2).

The word "search" translates the Hebrew word "Tuwr" and means "to be excellent"; "merchant man" among others. It is the same word used in verse 16 translated "spy".

Again we meet the word in Numbers 10:33. It is used there to describe the work of the Ark of the Covenant in bringing them to their various resting places.

"And they departed from the mount of the LORD three days journey: and the Ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them in the three days journey to SEARCH OUT a resting place for them".

The twelve spies were privileged to be given a foretaste of the Land of Promise ahead of others. It was a privilege that carried with it a great responsibility. This responsibility involves declaring to the Church in the wilderness the goodness of the riches of their inheritance. They were to be witnesses unto God concerning all He has purposed for Israel in relation to possessing their inheritance.

The twelve spies were required to experientially show forth the

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glory of the land of their inheritance and so inspire faith and obedience in the rest of Israel.

In Hebrew 4:2, the proclamation of the Gospel spoken about was a reference to the report of the twelve. When this verse is read in the context of the third and fourth chapters, we would agree readily that the subject Paul was discussing was concerning Israel's experiences in the wilderness.

Thus the twelve spies were given an entrance into the realm of the fullness so as to be strengthened in faith and be qualified to declare what they have seen. We see the role played by the twelve spies as fitting into the ministry of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.

The church in the wilderness had only Moses and Aaron standing in ministerial capacities beyond the twelve spies. Moses and Aaron in this respect are a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King-Priest. The church of Jesus Christ has the twelve apostles of the Lamb as being persons upon whose ministries she is founded. (Eph. 2:19, 20).

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens 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".

Revelation chapter 21 reveals that all twelve apostles were overcomers and made it to the throne. All the twelve apostles gave a good report of the heavenly inheritance. They were witnesses who manifested in word and life the truth of the Kingdom. (Rev 21: 14).

Thus the twelve stars on the crown of the woman in Revelation chapter 12 primarily speak of the twelve apostles. Furthermore, we are to understand that there is a specific fulfilment at this time of the end concerning the raising up of the anti types of the twelve spies. The twelve apostles being a primary fulfilment we expect a secondary and larger fulfilment in the Church that has emerged out

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of today's Babylon.

It is the way of God to encourage His people to move forward in His purpose by placing among them men and women who are empowered by Him to show forth in their lives and ministry what He expects of them. We believe that all over the earth, God will raise up men in the body who will fulfil anti typically the ministry of the twelve spies. These will not fail God and will not fail the church; for God shall keep them.

The first twelve of the church were faithful. The glory of this latter house is destined by God to exceed that of the early church. Accordingly, we are to expect to see the fulfilment of a "*more excellent ministry*".

These ministries will be birthed by the church as she travails in prayers unto God. They will fulfil vital roles in the body at this time of the end. And we know the tail of the red dragon cannot touch these ones.

We have in Rev. 1:20 a precedence which teaches that the stars are human angels of God, physically present among the people they minister to.

We agree that there is a great gap between what is seen of ministry now and what God has in store for us. But this fact should provoke greater dependence upon God, seeking in prayers and intercession for Him to shine upon the church. He will do a quick and a short work. The perfecting of the saints will take on great strides as God begins to grant the unveiling of His Son to men and women in a dimension that is unprecedented.

The *merchant man* of Mt. 13:45 is an anti type of the twelve spies. He seeks for goodly pearls in the spirit of the worship of the most High God. Let us individually and collectively earnestly seek the face of God who will in mercy grant us kingdom favours.

War in the Heavens

The prospect of war in the natural causes the heart to shrink. It always involves great loss of lives and property. There is a great note of uncertainty on both sides involved in a war. Isaiah, the prophet has this to say: "*For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise*" Isaiah 9:5.

These considerations alongside knowing the strong formation of the occupants of the Promised Land made the twelve spies to fear. They shrank back in horror. We believe as the elect church moves toward possessing their inheritance, there would be a coming face to face with the stiffest opposition and satanic malice. It is fearsome to contemplate what this means in the natural. But the picture of the woman of Rev. 12 fills the heart with so much comfort and assurance. The chapter reveals that neither the woman nor the man child would be victim of the great red dragon. This is God's arrangement to be received by faith.

The means of victory is revealed (Rev. 12: 11) and we believe the ministry of the blood of sprinkling will take on greater prominence in the days ahead. The way of victory is accessible to faith.

The Root of Unbelief Is Ignorance

It would prove most valuable to take to heart the Apostle's teaching in Hebrew chapters 3 and 4. The admonition Paul gives here is drawn from considering the fifth testing experience. Faith is the product of a good seed sown in a proper soil. The seed is God's word quickened by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the accurate knowledge of Jesus Christ. The soil is a heart diligently prepared and consistently dressed.

Unbelief sprouts when either the viable seed is unavailable or

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the heart is in an unsuitable condition. The emphasis in The Hebrews chapter is that the second possibility is what we should watch against. That is, God would always make the good seed, His anointed word available. But we must prepare ourselves to use it aright.

In the typical story, God charged the children of Israel with the guilt of despising the inheritance. This is the divine assessment of what their behaviour amounted unto.

"But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall possess the land which ye have DESPISED". (Num. 14:31).

Unbelief is the fruit of a tree whose seed is ignorance; an ignorance that stems from despising the good seed. Wilful ignorance is that which has access to information but has not made use of it. It is inexcusable.

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God". (Heb. 3:12)

An evil heart is one that has been taken over by interests that are injurious to cultivating spiritual habits. (see Luke 21:34-36) We must take out time to daily turn our hearts from being engrossed in carnal pursuits. Since the kingdom is so important to us, let us prove this by acquainting ourselves with its precepts.

In Hebrews chapter 3:18, 19, the words disobedience (vs. 19) is used in place of unbelief (vs. 18) showing a relationship between the two words. Thus, disobedience, as the Greek dictionary puts it, is the refusal to hear. Carelessness in attitude is actually a preparation of heart to disobey.

If we pay heed to the call of the hour we would be possessed of the faith that receives the crown. To do otherwise means in practical terms despising the inheritance, and forsaking God. In the

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midst of today's economic depression and hard times, faith can be nurtured. Men will be grievously harassed who do not walk in faith.

Truly, faith is a singular factor at this end of time. The life of faith is available to all who will keep daily, vital, fellowship with the Spirit and Word of Christ.

CHAPTER 7

REFLECTION ON UNFAITHFULNESS

In this and the next chapter, we would be considering the five testing experiences using a different approach altogether. Our purpose in this is to present the precious lessons in the previous chapters as they are readily seen in the New Testament. This will improve our understanding them and promote a more fruitful response to the Lord among His people.

You will recall that the bulk of scriptures we meditated upon were drawn from the book of Numbers. We used the keys provided by Apostles Paul in 1 Corinthians 10. One of the starting thoughts mentioned in the introduction was that the book of Numbers was especially written, among other things, to demonstrate the fact that God measures His people.

Associated with that thought was the fact that God sets out to measure His people only when He has put in place all that they need for success. We find these two guiding principles in understanding the book of Numbers operative in the book of Revelations. In fact, the two books may be taken as spiritual counterparts in many

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respects; just as the book of Joshua and the letter of Paul to the Ephesians are mutually useful in interpreting much of their contents.

In the book of Numbers, the lessons come to us in such forms as require further (much) enlightenment to see their relations to the Christian church. But in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, these same lessons come to us in an easy to understand language. The direct utterances of the Lord Jesus Christ in the seven letters to the churches carry a warmth and freshness characteristics of His teachings in the Gospels. The High Priest and the great healing care of the good Shepherd flow through all seven letters.

These elements in the letters give a kind of calm assurance mingled with reverential fear as we listen to the very words of His mouth. Our object is not to make an expository study of all seven letters, covering all subjects found therein. We shall be reflecting on marks of unfaithfulness and faithfulness found in seven churches addressed in the seven letters. This chapter will concentrate on the marks of unfaithfulness while the other deals with elements of faithfulness.

The whole of the wilderness journey of the children of Israel was by God regarded as a day of judgment, even though it spanned forty years. See Ps. 95:7-11.7. "For he is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today if ye will hear His voice:

8. *Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.*
9. *When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.*
10. *Forty years was I grieved with this generation, and said it is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.*

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11. *Unto whom I swore in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.*

In the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, we are brought face to face with the Lord's examination of the Churches. It was indeed *a day of making manifest God's assessment of the performance of His people*. God measured the churches and revealed His findings. Again, it is to be noticed that the incidence recorded in these three chapters occurred over sixty years after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He ensured that adequate time was given to His people to learn of Him and benefit fully from the resources of His Spirit and ministries that He had graciously given to them.

John the apostle records, *"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet"* (Rev. 1:10). The word, *"day"*, translates the Greek word *"Hemera"*. Greek dictionaries tell us this word is associated with the passing of judgment upon persons and circumstances. Thus we may reasonably infer that what John records, is a typical day of judgment.

Let us gather the few similarities we have found between the two books to enhance our appreciation of their relatedness.

In Numbers, the Lord is visibly seen to be among them in the cloudy pillar and the pillar of fire. In Revelation, the Lord is seen *"in the midst of the seven candlesticks"* (churches), as recorded in Rev. 1:13-16 and Rev. 2:1.

Numbers and Revelation both contain a measurement of God's people with definite sentences passed out on what was found.

The measurement takes place after some time has been allowed for the people to develop a habitual response to God, thus revealing their heart conditions.

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In Numbers, the church in the wilderness is taken as a type of the Christian church throughout her time of preparation. In Revelation the seven churches were representative types of all churches then present on the earth, and at the same time they typically show the history of the church ever since.

With these observations made, we come to the main stream of our burden.

In looking at the seven letters, certain things need first be highlighted to aid proper understanding. We would serialize these to make identifying them easy.

All seven letters were to be read and responded to by each one of the churches. For example, the church in Ephesus apart from reading their letter they were specifically required to read the six other (letters). They were to take note of the specific instructions in the first and respond appropriately to God. But they were expected to take to heart too the messages in the other letters. This is implied in the phrase "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches."

The responses counselled by the Lord in the messages to the churches were to be adopted by the entire church, corporately; and as well individually. God is interested in the proper functioning of the body so that each individual may better be assisted in growing up spiritually.

The letters were addressed to the leadership of each of the churches. The '*angels*' of the churches are human persons placed in each assembly to fulfil leadership responsibilities.

Leadership is a plural concept, that is, many persons are symbolized in each star (see Rev. 1:16, 19 20). This method is very instructive. God writes to the leadership because they occupy a critical position in the overall situation of the assembly they belong to.

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A sick leadership begets an unhealthy assembly. It is good enough index to take the failures characteristics of a local assembly to be a reflection of what is obtaining in the leadership. The ministry of the word of God can crush every evil tendency in an assembly if the leadership truly manifests victory in that area.

God takes great care to protect, provide for and empower His servants BECAUSE He desires all of His people to be filled with His nature and glory.

Failure of spiritual leadership is a terrible thing; and God frowns at it seriously. You will recall that in three of the five testing events, the failure is fully identified with bad leadership. And the casualties attending such events were heavy.

God intends for leadership to be a proof of His great love for His people. He rewards with great honours faithful leadership. However, an unfaithful spiritual leadership is a curse. Thus the letters are addressed to the leaders who read and responded to God's instructions. Then it is their responsibility to pass on the word of God to the people faithfully, encouraging them to make such self adjustments, repentances, as God counsels. And of course, we are generally responsible to God to minister to one another whatever He has made us to know of His will. The challenge of leadership rests squarely in all who are true members of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:16).

Every local assembly of God's people from the point of birth tends to take on different characteristics. Putting it simply, a fellowship may fit into the picture of the church in Smyrna at the beginning. A little later it may have the marks of the church in Ephesus. Then at other times, the characteristics of the others will appear. After a while, however, a local assembly settles down to one distinct church type. This fact makes it important for every local

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fellowship to take to heart all God is saying to the seven churches. May the Lord help us to so submit to Him that the Philadelphian church type would characterize the various home churches across the country.

We now come to the letter proper. We would be considering five of the seven churches. These are the churches at Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Laodicea. Each of these church types has a characteristic mark of unfaithfulness. Thus five marks will be listed. These correspond to the things that caused the overthrow of the greater number of the children of Israel in the wilderness. These marks are drawn from the word of condemnation that came from the Lord with respect to the things that displeased Him in the assemblies. (The churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia received no word of condemnation from the Lord. They were however to read all seven letters).

Let us begin with the letter to the church in Ephesus. Rev. 2:1-8:

- 1. Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write these things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the Seven candle sticks.*
- 2. I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil, and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.*
- 3. And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and has not fainted.*
- 4. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*

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5. *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do this first work; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*
6. *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*
7. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

1. **A Cold Heart**

The church in Ephesus was in the sight of God, in a fallen condition. The fall has to do with their having left their first love. It was not much as losing their first love. They were still of the faith of Jesus Christ. However, they had *left* their first love; abandoned it for something else. A cold heart, such as was the problem with this Church type, may be described as having to do with *a grievous neglect of the place of affection and love in the service of God.*

Now, notice that the Lord commended them in the beginning of the letter. It is doubtful if this congregation knew the implication of lovelessness. The third verse particularly shows their attitude towards the labours of the kingdom. This church had enduring patience, labouring on without fainting. They had great energy to serve. Besides, their spiritual antennae were functioning properly. No false teacher or Apostle can successfully come to the midst of this church without being detected. The Lord was well pleased with this manifestation of His grace among them.

They had also a proper attitude towards ministry. They hated the Nicolaitan spirit, and would not function like '*Babylon*'. The leadership was not lording it over the brethren. Good and great as

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these characteristics were the sweeping condemnation they received showed something about God's dealings with His people.

Man is disposed to softening up toward any who might have great abilities and some sound moral aspects, even though visibly given to one foul thing or the other. The good and great qualities of an individual are by man treated as grounds for overlooking some bad aspects in him. But with God, our good aspects are never taken by him to compensate for one seemingly mild but ugly situation in our lives. There is no principle of compensation in God's Kingdom. He has the power to perfect us. Whatever is beautiful in our lives is by the work of His grace and reveal submission to Him in that area. In the same vein, whatever is out-of-place in us shows a rebellion against His will especially when it is habitual. "*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*".

God can never settle for the second best. He saves to the uttermost and He has before Him at all times what would satisfy Him. His resources are fully adequate to carry out the purpose of His heart. He cannot be denied the pleasure of His will. It is because this aspect of God's dealings with His people is not much appreciated that many persons greatly used of God allow some unpleasant character traits in their lives. They suppose God will overlook these since He is "*benefiting*" so much from them. Such attitude is fatal.

The nature of the condemnation was total: "*You are fallen repent, or your candlestick will be taken out of its place*". The taking away of the candlestick from a local fellowship, amount to that body of people ceasing from that point to be regarded by God as a Church. That set-up ceases to be reckoned by God as an instrument for the outworking of His purpose. The towns, cities and villages are filled with sectarian bodies on earth. The pity in it all is

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that they continue on in their religious duties supposedly serving God.

Now, the church type under study, Ephesus had a cold heart toward God. Things were done but in mere routines. They laboured, but not motivated by love.

What then does this consist of in practical terms? First, the church in Ephesus was cold hearted toward brethren in general. At that time, condition of living was hard, economically speaking. Besides, the many evidences of false teachers trying to creep in made them extra critical. Trust, as an element in Christian fellowship, was eventually lost under these circumstances. They gradually became very formal, bordering even on heartlessness, in their dealings with the brethren. It was right to reject false ministries, but in allowing brotherly love to fizzle out, they were gradually, although not intentionally, shutting out true ministries.

Secondly, through possessing a cold heart, it was not possible for them to develop a missionary spirit. A cold heart is awfully insensitive and very much unreasonable in its attitudes. There is a stupid mentality that flows from cold-heartedness that is very shocking. This has to do with a people's attitude toward the Lord's flock in the denominational systems. Many there are who are outrightly unfriendly toward the "*Babylonians*". There is nothing that provokes God to anger as much as disdaining a child of the covenant.

In the divine expectation, the Kingdom church should develop such a passion towards our brethren in the systems that generate soul travail in prayers for them. The intercessory ministry is rooted in love for God and for all that is His. It is in habitual waiting upon God, that specific leadings will be received by individuals to minister in opportune times to persons in the denominations. There

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are several entrances into this labour of love, and God will lead the ones who care by His voice along these lines.

We are called at all times to *insulate* ourselves from the *pollutions in the denominational system*; and to be *isolated from being members* of them in order not to be guilty of supporting a false position. However, the love we should have for our brethren in the systems *must be kept alive and growing*. It is because God loves all of His own that He is dealing peculiarly with us. There is nothing wonderful about us in ourselves. And a people miss out on the true purpose of God in drawing them close to Himself if they shut their bowels of mercy toward other Christians.

The third and most important manifestation of a cold heart is the *neglect of the altar of incense*. When the first love is left, the *first works* will be *abandoned*. (Rev. 2:5). A people can be involved in doing so many things in the name of serving God, and yet devoid of true and growing love for Him.

The altar of incense speaks principally of spirit-borne worship and praise, and incorporates prayer as involved element in divinely pleasing communion with God. There are forms of prayers, worship and praise that are used only to appease the conscience. These forms rarely bring God into the scene. And when the object and subject of worship is absent what is obtained is irritating nonsense.

The worship life of an individual is a true measure of his spiritual worth. At the altar of incense, a man gives evidence of what he has benefited from the use of the other pieces of furniture: altar of burnt offering, the laver, the candlestick and the table of shewbread. The incense and the fire are gathered from these and in thankful adoration we offer worship unto God. In return, God's life, power, presence and voice are granted to the believer, enabling him to use the other four pieces of furniture well. This is the cycle that sustains spirituality and imparts overcoming life. The altar of

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incense is the active enabling furniture that brings a soul in life-transforming contact with the Almighty. His purposes, instruction, counsel, directions are only received in the medium of an actively functioning altar of incense. This allows for a moving forward.

It cannot be doubted whether the Ephesians Church had love of God *in them*. They sure had the love of God in them, stored away in an unused chamber of their hearts. The *holy incense* was there no doubt. They had not LOST it. They had the understanding of the faithfulness and glory of God. And they had also the capacity to respond to this glorious understanding. Yes, they had the incense but they did not burn it. They were not yet engrossed in worldliness, so they had all the opportunities and time to fruitfully use the altar but did not. Read the book of Ephesians and you will readily agree with the fact that there was plenty truth in their store house of knowledge. Yet their love was locked up; unexpressed.

The wonder of it all was that they were having fellowship meetings every week, even raining season. Some unwise folks take days off during “*raining*” seasons. But the Ephesians church did not faint from their labours. So what could they be doing? Mere religious formalism; dry routines; lifeless meetings. All because the altar of incense was not given attention, and so the source of Life was not fellowshipped with.

The LORD of GLORY must occupy the supreme place in our lives and services. He is our first LOVE. Accordingly, the true worship of God is our first WORK. And every other work that flows from this is retained in His sight as of the FIRST WORK. True love for God thus expressed will abundantly show in a great love for His people. The glory He gives to us when we are with Him in worship, praise, adoration, thanksgiving, prayers

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EMPOWERS US TO LIVE A LIFE OF LOVE AND ONENESS WITH ONE ANOTHER IN HIS PURPOSE.

It is always a wonderful experience when kingdom seed (truth) is ministered in a spiritual assembly consisting of persons whose hearts have been ploughed by the spirit of praise and worship. Men begin to bring forth evidence of a holy life and fruitful service. All, in such a case, are turned to the divine voice, possessed of His grace, triumphing in every crisis, MOVING ON WITH GOD. For it is to move on with God, that the Lamp of God is placed within an assembly. If a people are not moving on with God, it will certainly make no difference to them when the candlestick is taken out of its place. May there be a searching of the heart to ensure that the love for God and His people is constantly growing.

Let us now come to the second mark of unfaithfulness. We would skip the letter to the Church in Smyrna for they had no condemnation. We are taking the next, the one to the church in Pergamos. Rev 2:12-17.

12. *And to the angel of the Church in Pergamos write: "These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges";*
13. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is, and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth.*
14. *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast 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.*
15. *So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which thing I hate.*

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- 16. Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*
- 17. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the Churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*

2. Gross Carnality and Worldliness

The second mark of unfaithfulness is carnality (and worldliness). Let us contrast this with the first before taking up discussion on it. In the first, the people were not necessarily worldly. They were void of what is of value in spiritual service. They had not the manifest unction of the Holy Spirit in their midst. They had religious robes on, deeply set in their ways. Neither given to the pleasures of the world nor to God's love. They were legalistic; more concerned about rules than love (life).

Secondly, in the first situation the spiritual leadership was swallowed up by the same plague (cold heartedness) just as with the whole house. However in the second, there is evidence of the spiritual leadership being measurably faithful. Here in Pergamos, quite a proportion of the people were given to gross carnality and worldliness. The love of the world alongside unconsecrated living plagued the assembly.

Four areas of consideration of this mark of unfaithfulness will suffice to bring out clearly its practical forms. First, when the spirit and work of consecration are not fully embraced in a fellowship, moral weakness begins to surface; here a little, there a little. The weakness may consist of such things as picking offence easily, gossip, unforgiving spirit, malice. On the other hand are such things

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as loose moral conduct, careless speech, unhealthy attitude toward the opposite sex. There may just be slight traces of these.

When left unchecked these evil tendencies begin to make a more visible appearance. The Lord always moves in through the operation of the gifts of the spirit to draw the attention of His people to this. If love for God and His people has a hold on the fellowship, the evil trend can be arrested. The corrupting waters once spotted can be dried up by the ministry of counsel, judgment, and prayers besides the ministry of the word.

It becomes dangerous when there is much consideration for the human ego and a corresponding lack of passion for God's glory. There is no senior prefect in God's house; neither are we to suppose that there is wisdom in "*petting*" any individual having some careless manners. The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable. Moral failure must be treated decisively, though in love, no matter who is involved. That brings us to the second point.

When early appearances of character traits not harmonious with God's word are not put away, these invariably get the attention of wicked spirits. You will notice that twice in the letter the word 'Satan' is mentioned. It is not difficult to see what wicked spirit forces will do when a people of God allow uncrucified flesh to manifest: a heavy demonic pressure, a thick cloud of iniquity-causing presence will seek to take advantage of such a situation.

Under such mounting pressure of the enemy what began as simple lust becomes a spirit of lust; love for food becomes gluttony, gossip becomes murderous slander. What began as mere natural weakness grows into irresistible impulse under satanic oppression. Bitterness, quarrelsomeness and indifference grow out of easily picking offence. Misunderstanding thrives where these abound.

It is a terrible thing when demonic pressure has successfully waded into controlling certain character traits in an assembly. In

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some places, you only need to be there for five minutes and can sense some serious moral issues plaguing the assembly. There have been cases of Pentecostal churches swallowed up by moral failure of a serious sort. Pastors, Deacons, Deaconesses, “*Reverends*”, and others thickly immersed in gross immorality. Such a situation calls for more than merely supposing the people are lousy. The evil one had taken control. But it all began when the early appearances were not dealt with.

Thirdly, influx of new persons into an assembly can seriously affect the moral tone. Persons might come in who are still in the conflict stage with sin. They do not love sin but are nevertheless in a constant struggle with it. These persons must be ministered to and shown the way to living a life of victory. But if on the other hand, they meet an unconsecrated atmosphere, the spiritual climate is further polluted by their presence. Consecration as taught and truly practised creates a spiritually sanctified environment in a fellowship. New entrants get easily influenced by whatever situation they meet. They sit up when the Spirit of the fear of God is in an assembly.

But the critical issue in this letter for which they received condemnation was the evil influence of some persons in the secondary leadership. These persons held doctrinal views that encouraged worldliness. The prosperity message for example certainly had its beginning in God. Covenant provisions were elaborated upon which helped the Church to understand that life’s blessings were a part of the favours that accompany justification by faith. It was not given to set aside the truth of self-denial and holiness of life. However, covetousness, greed, unbridled desire for wealth, and other worldly motives crept into the message and perverted it. Right now, fraudulent practices have been openly incorporated into the lifestyle of a growing number of “prosperity”

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teachers. *By and large, worldly excesses and flamboyant attitudes have become an accepted norm in many Pentecostal assemblies. This together with Clergy/laity distinction is here called the “deeds of the Nicolaitans”. Balaam was a Nicolaitan.*

Balaam in history was a ‘*babylonian*’, for his homeland, Mesopotamia, was in the Chaldeas. His greed for unrighteous reward prompted him to counsel Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel. These brethren in the Pergamos church were not Balaams but through lack of spiritual foresight imbibed the false concepts of perverted prosperity teachings. These teachings led the membership of this church to see the possession of worldly goods and wealth as proof of spirituality.

The Lord Jesus Christ said, “*Take heed and beware of covetousness for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he posseseth*”. Luke 12:15. The Pharisees were plagued with this same malady (Luke 16:13-15). They even laughed at Jesus for teaching on the danger of covetousness.

The ‘*prosperity*’ teaching feeds the indulgence of the flesh and makes men abandon all restraints in pursuing wealth. This invariably leads to all kinds of unholy alliances with worldliness. Friendship with the world makes a man an enemy of God. It is spiritual fornication. The subtlety of this teaching “*prosperity*” that has been sacrificed to the idol of mammon is that many of its victims may not necessarily have obvious moral lapses. They could be as disciplined outwardly like the Pharisees. The same heart sickness that caused men to bow to physical idols is at work in those who yield to this evil example.

This is easily noticed as present when the heart is gradually drawn away from giving more and more time to spirituality and life. So the issue of cold heartedness sets in. Breaking loose from mammon worship proves to be terribly difficult. Is it not a wonder

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that a church that survived the persecuting mouth of the dragon fell to the allurements of its tail? (Rev. 2:13). At times it even takes the LORD fighting mammon victims with the sword of His mouth to recover them to their senses. (Rev. 2:12, 17). However, repentance is possible and must be diligently pursued before fruitful dividends are reaped. Drastic measures may need to be taken depending on the extent to which it has eaten into the soul of the individual. The first place to direct the attention to is the altar of incense. There our LORD in mercy will send deliverance.

Whatever approach an individual should take as discussed above is the same path to follow when a fellowship is infested with this evil passion. It is certainly not an easy thing to contemplate if the Son of God has to “come in quickly” and fight this condition with two edged sword. It is a fearful thing to fall in this manner into the hands of the Living God. (Heb. 12: 25-29, 10:31).

3. **Erroneous Doctrines**

The third mark of unfaithfulness we would be reflecting on is drawn from the letter to the Church in Thyatira. Rev. 2: 18-29.

The matter before us is a case of dangerous doctrinal errors rocking the boat of the Church in Thyatira. The source of these errors is attributed to “*Lady Jezebel*” whose main instrument is a professed gift of prophecy. She called herself a prophetess. We are sure Jezebel represents a class of ministries given to the same evil trade.

The main target is to lead astray the servants of the living God. A terrible seduction is involved, and quite often the victims may not be aware. At least we may infer this from verses 22-24. But Alas! She was too deeply involved in the pleasures of it all to desire true repentance. Her time was up!

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What exactly are the issues involved here? How may this situation be identified? How does it crop up in an assembly? We would begin with the last of these questions.

The genesis of this problem may be seen in considering the progression in the marks of unfaithfulness already listed. A cold heart, a broken devotional habit will invariably lead to carnality and worldliness. When worldliness and general lowering of spirituality features in an assembly, the likes of Jezebel are attracted. It is a fellowship setting which has already started courting friendship of the world that is open to the '*charming*' personality of a Jezebel.

Jezebel comes in with a touch of the "supernatural". The carnal minded membership soon gets carried away by the "*spurious gifts of the spirit*" of the evil woman. The twenty third verse suggests that the popularity of this '*prophetess*' was spread over all the churches. And because of her pretended gifts she was allowed to teach. In the typical story we are told (1 Kings 18:19) eight hundred and fifty persons ate at Jezebel's table. And in the twenty third verse of our passage, we are told she has many children. Hence when the LORD said, "*that woman*" everyone knew who He was referring to (certainly her name in the natural would not have been Jezebel. It possibly was an innocent name, if not attractive. It is ironical that the name Jezebel means virtuous!).

A person in teaching brings over a congregation the influences of his inward man. Thus "*Jezebel*" cast her spell on the people. One way to spot a "*Jezebelite*" is through the nature of her "*prophecies*". They always ministers to the pride and ego of the leadership. Praises are heaped on the leadership professing these to be word from the LORD. You can imagine the Acts 16 story. What would have happened if Paul did not discern that a python spirit was speaking through the evil lady? She would have been an active member of the church in Philippi.

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We must beware of prophetic utterances that always speak good thing about us. We all need frequent self- adjustments in our spiritual walk. When God measures an individual, there is usually something to correct or else challenge. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy so the Jezebels are always strange loyalists doing everything to get the fullest attention. And when a man's heart is given over to the tongue of evil spirits, unreasonable attitudes begin to crop up. Strange doctrines, loose appetites, unseparatedness from the world are the inevitable results.

Before moving on to the next mark of unfaithfulness, let us make an important observation. God is without doubt restoring the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit to the church. We are witnessing much blessings along this line. The Lord will increase His gracious bestowment on the people for His purpose. However, certain unwise attitudes must be avoided.

Undue emphasis on trances, dreams, visions, and revelations might lead to derailing. The word of God must be given its proper place and every manifestation must be judged by the principles of God's word. To habitually seek to be guided by supernatural manifestations when there is only a scanty understanding of the word of the Kingdom is dangerous.

The LORD is the basis of all gathering. To swarm on someone because of his gifts gives birth to two evils. The first is that perversion of the gifts could occur due to idol worship. Secondly, the usual careful check of every manifestation may be skipped because of built up confidence in the vessel.

In particular, the ministry of the prophet is an independent witness. God is going to use the prophetic finger to direct the operations of His church in these last days. The ministry has not yet come to full maturity among us, even though clear indications exist

to show God is raising up many brethren along this line. But these persons must be allowed to grow up without placing them under undue publicity and pressure. There are some misguided folks who get into real danger because they are playing up to the expectation of those who regard them as prophets.

Persons who sense an unusual anointing upon them in prophetic manifestations should endeavour to consecrate themselves fully to God. They should spend much time with the word of God and in prayers and worship. The mystery of the kingdom must be thoroughly understood by anyone who seriously sees God as preparing him for the prophetic office. Finally, these persons must keep humble opinion about themselves, leading morally pleasing lives.

4. Spiritual Decay

The first six verses of Revelation chapter 3 covers the letter to the church in Sardis. The fourth point is drawn from this church type (Rev. 3:1-6).

The church in Sardis was altogether lame spiritually; dead! There was nothing whatsoever to commend; much unlike the other four. Ephesus had eager hands and legs, fine mind but cold hearts. *'Laodicea'* is lukewarm, neither cold nor hot. Thyatira despite the terrible mixture, had evidences of faith, hope and love. The best and worst were there in Thyatira. Pergamos had faith and patience even under persecution.

But when you come to Sardis, nothing of real spiritual measure was there. Cold hearts, dull heads, slow hands, crippled feet, feeble knees and general complacency. They were certainly not in Babylon, the doctrine of the Nicolaitans was not in operation there. Nothing more can be said in the favour of this church type.

There must have been plenty of noise making in the set-up. At least, people in the city felt something must be happening there. A

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name that they were alive was to be seen in their activities. Nothing more! There certainly must have been few outercourt doctrines that can be easily appreciated by the world. Evidently the candlestick was not being used; the table of shewbread contained no bread upon it. There was neither incense nor fire on the Golden Altar.

All elements that promote spirituality were dying out bit by bit. They had lost much of these already. A few remained that were at the point of death. (Rev. 3:2). Probably, they were still regular in fellowship, and fasted once a long while. It is clear there was much singing that made passers-by think something is happening. There perhaps were no incidences of gross moral misconduct. But only a few them did not have polluted garments (Rev. 3:5)

This church type need complete overhauling. There must be a fresh start altogether. The third verse suggests that only repentance stood between them and a judgmental visitation. We will consider the matter of repentance at the end of this chapter. Finally, we shall consider the seventh letter and pick on the condemnation to make the fifth mark of unfaithfulness. (Rev. 3:14-20).

5. Self-sufficiency and Spiritual Luke-Warmness

The church in Laodicea had enough fire power to class it as not being cold. There has been a recovery from the spiritual deadness of the Sardis church. But the mature fruit of repentance was not painstakingly sought for. They brought no desirable graces to maturity. The Lord's word to Laodicea implies that these people were not in the horrible pit condition (Ps. 40:2). But they were not also having their feet set upon the Rock. Consequently, "their goings" could not be established; they knew neither the song of the Lamb nor was there a desire to learn it. (Ps. 40:2, 3). They loved the plain of spiritual common place; a plain that is slippery, miry

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clay ground. A people's goings cannot be established on slippery grounds.

Psalm 40:1 read alongside Ps. 78:8-10 reveals that spiritual perseverance in seeking after God is what brings a people to the high mountain. It is also what keeps a people there. Quite evidently, the church in Laodicea was using all three furniture in the Holy place. The candlestick was being used; but only a few of the lamps were burning, and dimly so.

The table of shewbread contained bread on it, but no "*changes*" were made. What was on the table had always been and had become stale. No fresh unction of the Holy Spirit on truths held, and no new light on God's purposes for his sons. The altar of incense was being used, but just when life beings to attend it, they hurriedly put to some seemingly pressing engagements. Consequently, there is no clear direction in ministry. Anything goes.

Plenty of beautiful songs of worship were ministered to the LORD in every meeting. But just enough heart is put into it to cause excitement in the air. They sometimes "*praised through*", fit into God's purpose. Jehovah Joshua Messiah is on the move; and only those who habitually seek him with deep longing hearts can have their limbs strengthened to keep pace with Him.

The call to the throne which begins with being born again is optional. "*Whosoever will*" does not imply a command. But those who accept the call must submit to all the demands of the king.

Someone might ask what exactly was God looking for in His people? What are the indices He employs when measuring His people? The letter to the churches usually opens with such word as "*I known your works*". Reading through them, we find such phrases as "*faith*", "*charity*", "*patience*", "*service*", "*My Name*", "*My word*", "*The word of my patience*". We might not for space be able

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to elaborate on these, but they represent what God seeks for in a people. The church in Thessalonica may be taken as a model.

Paul writing on the beautiful spirit in that local assembly sums up all the phrases above into three:

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.”

“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our father”. (1 Thess. 1:2, 3)

The work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope these three are ever growing in proportions! That is what God looks for. It is possible to have these livingly sustained. The Thessalonians heard them. And years after the first epistle was written to them these gracious features continued in that assembly and abounded (Read 2 Thess. 1:2-6). The churches in Laodicea and Sardis had none of these! For Laodicea, they seemed to have no need for faith, as there was abundance of worldly goods. True faith finds expression in loftier matters than merely raking in money (Read 2 Thess. 1:2, 6).

The Laodicians had no eager desires for the installation of the kingdom of Heaven. Enduring patience is called for in continually seeking God for the birthing and growth of the true hope of resurrection glory. But the “*exciting*” life style of the Laodicea could only accommodate an easy-going religion. There was every reason to feel satisfied with what this present life was affording: marriage, children, fame, riches, business boom and such other things which in unconsecration sponsor earthliness. In fact, they would rather plead with God to hold back the kingdom for a good while, so as to have their fill of worldly pleasures.

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They took no much time to improve their inward man. Though the inward man was perishing yet the outward man was renewed day by day. The hidden man of the heart was unclothed, but they found satisfaction in changes of raiment. The Laodiceans saw, appreciated and could educate men on national and international issues freely. But they had no “*meat in due season*” for their less opportune brethren in Babylon. No labour of love.

The LORD’S estimation of the Laodiceans leaves no one in doubt of the worthlessness of their condition despite the feelings of self sufficiency. “*And knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*” (Rev. 3:17). They were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked *but did not know* it. This hardly can happen in the natural. When a man in the natural is faced with abject poverty, he might possibly, foolishly, resign himself to fate. That may be because he does not see the possibility of any change. But it is unthinkable for such a man in his pitiable condition to begin to draw attention to himself as one with kingly riches, honour and estate! That would be a combination of tragedy and insanity! But self-conceit makes a man mad, at least in behaviour. So it was in the case of the laodiceans.

Taking up a permanent lodging in the middle of the road condition of the laodiceans is highly deceptive. Spiritual lukewarmness is a great trap; for it takes a feeling of self-sufficiency to remain spiritually static. The self-sufficient in spiritual things usually do not declare it with their mouths. “I am rich and increased in goods, and have need for nothing” is more of the voice of attitude to spiritual things than verbal sounds. May the Lord in His mercy help us all. Amen.

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True Repentance Greatly Needed

True repentance is a long and arduous journey. It does not end with confessionals. It does not even begin there! Its first signs of appearance are to be seen in brokenness and heart contrition. Brokenness is the first lap of the journey and becomes the vehicle of travel. And no man knows how terrible a condition he may have been in until at some point in the journey God's mercy intervenes. In the light of God's holy presence man is able to see his nakedness.

Thereafter, the cry for mercy cannot cease until a full recovery has been given him. The memory of the experiences on the journey keeps the recovered one in a brokenness of spirit. Yes, a recovered man, now in his right senses, is ever always cleaving to God for mercy, grace and peace. That is the normal Christian life.

CHAPTER EIGHT REFLECTION ON FAITHFULNESS

In discussing what marks of unfaithfulness existed in the several church types examined, we also mentioned what things God is looking for in His Ekklesia. Of the seven churches, only two had features, which satisfied God - Smyrna and Philadelphia assemblies. We have more information on the church in Philadelphia. It is therefore a model church type.

Local assemblies of God's people must continually seek to take on the features of the church in Philadelphia. And of course, it would be out of place for any fellowship of believers to regard themselves as of the Philadelphia type. To do this is in itself a proof that they are not. Nevertheless, we all can aim to function corporately, in our individual home churches, with more and more of these features that give God satisfaction. We cannot tell much about the beginnings of those churches, how they were fairing. But this much can be said.

The church in Ephesus had an excellent out start. They were doctrinally sound and had beautiful prospects. Apostle Paul's epistle to this church about thirty years before the Lord's letter shows a thoroughly functional set up. God's investment in that assembly

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was great. Timothy and John besides Paul had resident ministry to that body for quite some years. However, at the time of the Lord's letter, they were already in a declining condition.

In a similar vein, the church in Laodicea had a fairly good start, and picked up gradually. However, at some points spiritual lethargy started showing signs of encroaching the early promise they had. Through the ministry of Paul and Epaphras they were made steady. This can be inferred from Colossians 2:1-7, 4:12-17. However, the problem of not having a steady, growing spiritual focus re-appeared and had become a characteristic features at the time of the Lord's letter. In a contrast, the church in Thessalonica had a rather weak beginning. (Acts 17:11-12). With time they took up strength, and mounted high in the spirit. They kept a steady pace, growing in faith, hope and love. The church in Thessalonica became a model to all others in that sub- region of Asia Minor (1 Thess. 1:2, 3, 7, 10; 2 Thess. 1:24).

It is the current form of a local congregation that counts. We all must continually strive to maintain what good qualities are to be found in us, and root out such things that attract divine disapproval. Our purpose in this chapter is to identify for discussion such things that are the results of faithfulness. They are drawn from the seven letters, but we will not necessarily consider each of the seven churches in turn. That will take much time and space. We would rather list these elements, seven in numbers and discuss some of them.

The following marks would be seen in an individual or body of believers if faithful to the LORD.

- (a) Spiritual power
- (b) Covenant love, Agape love

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- (c) Consecration
- (d) Spiritual beauty
- (e) Fruitfulness
- (f) Boldness
- (g) Holiness of life and service.

We would begin by saying that all seven qualities in their fullest development are seen in our Lord Jesus Christ. In Rev 3:14, He introduces Himself to the church in Loadicea as the true and faithful witness. The description of Him in revelation chapter 1 contains all of these seven qualities in spiritual imageries. Revelation chapter 1:12-17 has a description of Him.

12. *“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.*
13. *And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*
14. *And His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were a flame of fire.*
15. *And his feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters.*
16. *And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

We would be referring to this description of Him in our discussion. He comes among His own to measure how faithful they have been. But He presents Himself as the epitome of the faithfulness desired in his people. The earnest reader would have noticed already that much emphasis is being put on the proper

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functioning of the local assembly. It has been deliberate. For although the promises are made to the individual, to him that overcomes, God's method of setting up His testimony on earth is through a body.

We would keep this same approach. However, it should be noted that these qualities that come with faithfulness are the principal requirements in spiritual leadership. The body of Christ had a great part to play, in union with the Lord, in the raising up of spiritual ministries. This is important. A faithful local congregation will see the emergence of more and more God-sent leaders. A dearth of divinely helped leadership in a spiritual movement is the loudest evidence of the unfaithfulness of her people.

We are yet to witness the greatest commitment ever that God desires to make towards a people. The sworn oath of Genesis 22:16-18, reveals the covenant of grace as unilateral, one that depends upon God entirely for its fulfilment. In the performance of His oath God has done two principal things.

1. Sent forth His Son to be the Saviour of the body.
2. Outpoured the Holy Spirit to make Christ known to the Church and so bring them to His image.

There is a third principal thing that He has done and keeps doing; the setting up of anointed ministries in the Church to receive and dispense saving grace to His people. In the third connection, the greatest help ever shall be received by a body of people who will walk with Him in faithfulness.

The letter to the Philadelphia church bears the note of this commitment. Divine favours as may be experienced by a people are fully entrenched in that letter. That church knows a measure of the fulfilment of Christ's promises to it that was glorious. We are

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confident in our God, that the fullest of divine favours awaits a people who will release themselves completely to Him. And God shall have it.

The context of the sworn oath calls for this interpretation: Abraham loved and trusted enough to willingly give up to God all he is and hoped to be. Abraham, the father of faith, thus became a personification in his day, of a body of people who will reproduce that level of commitment to God. They will bring upon themselves the fullness of God's commitment and blessings.

Let it be borne in mind that Abraham was a man of like passion like us. It was through many ups and downs, (but every time with a heart toward God) that he finally crystallized that wonderful confidence in God. Let nothing in our past weigh the mind down. The longsuffering God waits still to see a people that will step out into total, practical, unreserved commitment of themselves to Him. May we rise up to the occasion and begin to draw strength from Him to embark on a more and more faithful course.

a. Spiritual Power

There are two elements in the description of the Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation chapter 1 that sums up what is meant by spiritual power. They are both taken from the sixteenth verse.

- (i) And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.
- (ii) And His countenance was as the sun shineth in His strength.

The first of these refers to the authority and power released through anointed ministrations. It is the ministry of the word with heaven's authority backing it up. The Lord said through Jeremiah "*Is my word not hammer?*" yes, spiritual power will always reveal itself in a word carrying the energy of God to transform lives. It

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also refers to Spirit-assisted ministrations that crush evil and subdues wickedness.

“And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the LORD shall CONSUME WITH THE SPIRIT OF HIS MOUTH, and shall destroy with the brightness of His presence” (2 Thess. 2:8) “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”.

The second element refers to the outshining of the divine presence emanating from one who has spiritual power with God. Remember Moses. This element reveals the fruit of true and sustained communion with God.

Simply put an evidence of faithfulness on an individual's life or in a congregation is Spiritual Power. It expresses itself in Holy Spirit empowered ministrations. But it can be easily felt once Spiritual power is present in a place. Another way of saying the same thing is that spiritual power is the presence and flow of the SPIRIT AND THE WORD yielding divinely pleasing results. Spiritual power imparts life and crushes evil. When present, the faintest desire to serve God in an individual is fanned progressively into flaming fire.

When spiritual power indwells a fellowship, there is a great quickening and fervency of spirit. It is pretty difficult for there to be spiritual casualties in such a setting. Only such as are desperately given to self destruction are overthrown. The only preparation against mass sifting is faithfulness itself in spiritual power. In a fellowship setting, everyone can contribute to a constant atmosphere of spiritual power. Each meeting in a local fellowship can be prepared for by the membership as toward an important conference. Spiritual power comes through prayers, worship and the revealed

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word. When a people are faithful, each one of them carries into the meeting the effulgence of the divine presence. This situation solves so many things without struggle.

Let us illustrate this by reference to 2 Cor 3:1-6.

1. *Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?*
2. *Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:*
3. *For as much as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the Living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.*
4. *And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:*
5. *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;*
6. *Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*

This passage is extremely rich but few comments will suffice for our present purpose. Paul and his team of workers were persons with Spiritual Power. Made able ministers through being submissive to God, they were by WORD AND SPIRIT bringing forth *fruit who were good examples of God's power to save.*

Paul and his team carried life with them and crushed death out of their listeners. They always left imprint of God's saving grace anywhere their labours took them to. Yes, those men crushed out death by the power and presence of the divine that accompanied

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them. And they went forth in the confidence that God's rule will breakthrough all resistances as they ministered.

What makes them this much fruitful? Where was their sufficiency? They were not sufficient in themselves; their sufficiency was of God. And there is nothing that reveals a people's dependence upon God as much as a life of prayer, intercession and worship. The secret behind Spiritual Power is there for all to see and adopt. Act 6:4, 4:24-31 is the reason behind the results shown in Acts 4:33.

Looking closely at 2 Cor. 3:2, 3 copied out for the reader above we learn a great secret. Before the Corinthians who came under the ministry of Paul and others with Him became epistle of Christ, they were first epistle in the heart of these ministers. In the place of prayers and soul travail they have held up these individuals before God pleading the mercy of Christ. They now could come forth openly, having secured God's power and presence, to destroy death and impart life. Spiritual growth became rapid.

And think of what it would be if a people constantly hold up one another up before God in prayers, seeking the expression of His glory in the body. Cold heartedness cannot stand. Death will be crushed out, and God mighty glorified in His people. O that we would be faithful! The testing experiences would then be occasions of obtaining spiritual promotion. They would not be times of manifesting divine displeasures. We have made a fine choice, if faithfulness is decidedly embraced. Faithfulness yields great dividends.

b. Covenant Love

Faithfulness begets spiritual power. This in turn receives of the life of God and imparts the same. God is love, and those who receive His life are made able to move in the dimension of love that

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passes human understanding. Love; agape love the love of the God of Love, is a heavenly mark. It is selfless and desirers to give to others time, attention, understanding and compassion, as the need arises. True love never discriminates since it is not promoted by earthly considerations.

When the life of love, God's love has taken hold of a congregation there would be such a family feeling and body consciousness that will make the care for each person the concern of all. And love will be so expressed so that God as well as His people receives gain. It would always be easy for each person to feel the measures of God when all receive care from one another.

The Lord Jesus said *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another"* (John 13:35). *"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"* (John 13:34). The Apostle John wrote his Gospel after he had written the book of revelation. He was inspired to write this upon digesting the precious lessons contained in the Revelation of Jesus Christ to him in the Island of Patmos.

The commandment to love has been there since the Old Testament times. Why then in referring to it here as a new commandment? What he perceived to be love in that encounter he had with the Lord Jesus Christ reminded him of what our saviour has spoken in the days of this flesh. John saw a great distinction between love as practised among the brethren at the time of writing and the kind of love the Lord was making manifest. The love he saw previously was mainly *"in word"* and *"in tongue"* He was moved by the Spirit to announce the commandment to love as a new commandment both from Jesus and himself (1 John 2:7-10).

Please recall that John wrote the last five books written in the New Testament. His works provided what needed to be emphasized,

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and things not fully set out in all previous writings. It must make a deep impression in our minds to see that on the average, every two references to love in the New Testament is found in the writings to John. It was a dominant emphasis in his message because the life of love has not yet been fully reproduced in the Church. And it will. Let us read his five books through and through. And if we do with open hearts there would be plenty of pleas to make before God, asking for deliverance and mercy.

Returning our minds back to two verses we took from John 13, we desire to make a few comments:

- a. The word of love began with the instruction: love your neighbour as yourself.
- b. It extended the reach of the practice of love by saying “Love your enemies, and pray for them who despitefully use you
- c. Then the word of love now brought in the glorious depth to which it must be practised in the Church. “*Love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*”

This level of love is the one sufficient proof of true discipleship. It is not obtained by merely wishing it. It is realized through faithfully following the Lamb of God. Glory is a seed. God plants the seed of glory in the lives of those who earnestly seek Him. He waters it continuously as men yield themselves to Him. Love is the harvest of the seed of glory.

Love is the evidence of true, vital communion with God. It is not possible to be filled with His life and be selfish or self-centred. Envy and jealousy flow from selfish considerations. Indifference, intolerance and a sharp tongue constitute harvest of the seed of shame which Satan sows and water in the hearts of them that yield to his influence.

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“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me”. (John 17:22, 23). Is the Lord in and among a people? If yes, they would manifest increasingly a oneness that flows from covenant love. If no, there would be quarrelling, envying, petty jealousy, party spirit and un-cohesiveness.

The supply of His presence is received through prayers (Phil 1:19) and worship (Ps. 22:3). His life present in a people changes their whole concept about things. Theory cannot produce it, but His life does.

This family bond that seeks to promote the interest, peace and prosperity of one another is the root of spiritual increase among people. Consider this: a certain grace is seen in a brother by a few persons in a congregation. These persons rejoicing in the goodness of God toward His house begin to take up ceaseless intercession for that one privately. As they pray, the gracious Lord blesses such a one with an increase. The hearts of interceding ones see the new increase and with thanksgiving and adoring praise to God, they intensify their prayers. Before a long while such a brother comes up to the estate of ministry. And the House is blessed by this addition to it.

Now consider this example spread over seven different cases, all under the help of God. The result is the emergence of seven additional persons that have broken through to the grace of leadership. Yes, there can never be scarcity of God-sent leaders among a faithful people who draw upon the divine life daily through prayers and worship.

Extend this observation further to the perceived needs and adverse conditions among the household of God. What would the

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result be? Daily testimonies of breakthroughs and the hearts of believers knit together in joy and thanksgiving to God. When there is covenant oneness the victory of one comes by the input of all. And all have deep consciousness that what they are materially, spiritually, financially, physically, is by the input of many. There would be no place for vain glory, or slander, or suspicion, or envy. There would be care; and the wants and need of others are graciously met to the glory of God and the joy and blessing of all.

We are persuaded that money is the least thing a man can be a steward over. To hold tenaciously to it in the face of obvious needs which can be comfortably met does not require just a sermon. It reveals that something is seriously missing. The glorious resurrection life of God must be sought for in the fellowship meeting. When there is an outpouring of the glory of God, even the wicked begin to become less self-centred and more body conscious. The welfarism practised in the early Church is the physical expression of the effect of an abounding presence of God in the assemblies. There would be a reproduction of that in Spirit of it. It would not be by physical arrangement but would evolve from the abounding presence of God among a people carefully and diligently sought for day by day

The distribution of tangible and intangible materials and spiritual blessings would not be by apostles, but the body shall eagerly care for itself in love. The Lord's prayers would be fully answered, and this heavenly reality shall be reaped by those who look to God for it. The time is just ahead. The signs are appearing already, though now rather faintly. It shall soon be the size of a man's hand. Seeing that this thing shall be, it is much in place to provoke one another to the practice of it now. Release yourself to your brethren.

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“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this word’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us love not in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:15-18).

3. Consecration

This is the word that expresses man’s acceptance of the covenant of grace and a readiness to benefit fully from it. The Hebrew word translated as consecration is very interesting. It is “*millu*” and signifies “*to be set*” “*fulfilling*” “*having both hands full*”.

The reference is to opening both hands to God, receiving a duty charge, and to go forth, fulfilling that charge, ensuring that neither of the two hands should be excused from that task. It was because of this, that the Old Testament Priests did not do any secular job. They had their “*hands filled*” with what would take them the whole of life time to discharge. God Himself was to be their ultimate reward for this service. In the interim, God commanded the Children of Israel to indirectly contribute to their sustenance by bringing offerings and tithes to the house of God. Of these offerings, ninety percent were directly used by the Priests in the service of God. The rest ten percent was by God’s commandment for their private use.

In the New Testament, the letter is changed, but the spirit of it is retained and even lifted to higher heights. God requires the total devotion of all His people to Himself at all times. He gives them

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certain privileges which must never be allowed to encroach on their devotion to Him.

These privileges include (i) marrying (ii) the raising up of children (iii) working for a living (iv) maintaining family and social relationships.

They exclude partisan politics and all unholy alliances with the world. The privileges are to be used in such a way as not to hinder one from faithfully following the LORD. So vitally important is this arrangement. However, God makes acceptance of it optional. It is only mandatory for those who having carefully weighed the matter of choosing between either living for self or a place in the Kingdom of heaven, choose the latter.

Having seen the above, let us look into the Lord's teaching on this subject. (Remember to adhere to His teaching is to practically choose a place in the Kingdom of Heaven. Conversely not to adhere to it implies refusing the high calling of God in Christ Jesus: that is, not having the hope of reigning with Christ). *"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find It. (Mt. 16:24,25) If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple". (Luke 14:26-27).*

These verses of scriptures should be read in the context in which they occur in the Bible. They set for the call of consecration. We would like to add a few verses from the epistles before making comments on the above passages. *"Husbands, love your wives, even*

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as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it” (Eph. 5:25)

“But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he had denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8).

For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not the power, but to make ourselves an examples unto you to follow us.

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. Now we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness (all should) they work and eat their own bread”. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing (2 Thess. 3:7-10, 12-13).

The call to discipleship is mandatory for all who desire Christ. The love for God must be supreme. Our legitimate affection for spouses, children and family should be exercised in such a way as to allow us to be fully given to the interests of the Kingdom. It is required for all to work and provide for himself and family. It is also required for us to care for the needy as we have already seen, in covenant love.

The challenge of consecration consists of self-denial and denial of the world with the great purpose in mind to follow the Lord whole-heartedly. The love for any should not come between us and God. The love for all others in comparison to our love for God should be as hatred. Here the reference is to giving preference to God whenever human consideration for our friends and loved ones would keep us from the obedience of duty and devotion to the Kingdom.

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In this respect, following the Lord in consecration will involve such things as studying God's word; practising obedience to God's word; the spread of God's word; vital fellowship with the Lord in prayers and worship, self judgments and maintaining a loving disposition in life and service, even in the face of opposition and persecution. And since all of these should be taken on daily, there must be a corresponding withdrawal from self and the world. This is the place of self-denial in consecration. It is the wisdom of making use of life's privileges only as true and proper needs demand. The spirit of consecration would call for making more and more sacrifices in order to better follow the Lamb

Faithfulness will show forth in the increasing use of the spirit of consecration. When a body of believers meeting together for fellowship is faithful they would practise consecration individually and corporately. Whatever else expresses faithfulness, the springboard is living in consecration unto God. No one is called to fulfil a life of consecration so that others may be excused from it. Whatever degree of consecration a man gets into reveals his personal love for God and His Kingdom. He will be rewarded by God for it.

The challenges of consecration relates to the Priesthood of all believers. The Clergy/laity distinction, which arranges for official paid ministry does not have the blessing of God. It is an arrangement that human heads have imagined and imported into the church. What about full-time ministry? We all are called to it and should live our lives as unto Him who died for us and was raised. (2Cor. 5: 14, 15) A people who yield themselves unto God in increasing consecration will have no need for the spurious arrangement of "hired" ministries. That is the first consideration of the subject

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We believe that faithfulness will take more and more time of persons who have come to the estate of ministry. It is a most healthy development. Such should improve their use of time and still provide for their own needs like Paul. Paul is a pattern disciple in life and ministry. Self-employment, which allows for flexibility in use of time, helps in this regard. This is a second consideration of the subject of full time ministry.

There is a third and as expected, Paul walked in this also. The demands of faithfulness might become so great that for a significant length of time doing any secular work is made practically impossible. It is expected that such persons so drawn by God into a season of all ministry should wholly depend upon God for sustenance. The Lord will provide for all such ones without having to lay the burden on a local congregation. People entering into this dimension of ministry should evidence by their lives that they have gone through the earlier forms discussed.

Besides, such persons need not draw the attention of any body or group of persons to his new circumstances. They should be prepared to return to their self-employment state whenever the pressure allows it. Paul worked in this dimension. There are seasons in which he just could not find time for his tent making. He accepted free will offering from individuals under no arrangements whatsoever. He always returned to his tent making after such special seasons of ministerial demands.

Many of the other apostles did not do any secular work at all. They gave themselves fully to the work of the ministry. But they lived by faith and were not under any salary arrangement. The God who fed the ravens provided for their needs. They did not have to take from the Church purse to feed themselves and their families! The thrust of the burden of this chapter is to show that a life of consecration express faithfulness in individuals and fellowship

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groups. Consecration as a feature in a local congregation is a proof that they know what the Kingdom of heaven is all about.

4. **Spiritual Beauty**

This term is used to describe the presence of divine attributes of character and power in an individual's life or in a fellowship. Isaiah chapter 11:2, 3 reveal attributes of the divine while Gal. 5:22, 23 reflect His character.

“And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD, and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears”.

This seven-fold anointing of divine attributes was upon Jesus Christ our LORD. In the description of him in Revelation Chapter 1, these elements are portrayed.

The garment speaks of His character and characteristics (vs.13).

The girdle about His breast reveals the ease with which He carries out His mission as the Saviour. The girdle of service is not on his loins but on the breast: he is Jehovah El-Shaddai. The Spirit of counsel and might was and is upon Him in infinite measures.

The head speaks of His office as Saviour and Lord. The head being white shows the office he holds as rightfully His by His Father's appointment. The sceptre of His Kingly rule is the right sceptre. (Heb. 1:8, 5:4)

His eyes were as a flame of fire. Nothing escapes His notice. All things appear before Him in their true estates. He has perfect discernment and brings this power to bear upon His ministry as the judge of all the earth. Spiritual beauty increasingly confers upon

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God's people the mind of Christ. Unlimited ability to discern between good and evil is part of the inheritance of the believer. This is brought about by the principles of God's word perfectly enlightening the eyes of our understanding and by the revelatory gifts of the Spirit. The veil of flesh shall be lifted and we shall know as we are known.

His feet (were) like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace. The metal brass typifies judgment primarily: the LORD Jesus Christ executive's judgment. The LORD, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, is beautiful for all situations. He confers this beauty upon the true Zion, the city of the great king. He upholds righteous principles, flushes out of His Kingdom all things that offend.

Spiritual beauty confers boldness; makes fruitful and is the equipment that enables holiness of service. This is why the priest's garments are said to be "*for glory and for beauty*". (Exodus 28:2). In addition, the fair mitre, an adornment for the High Priest's forehead, carries on the front part of it the inscription "*HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD*".

The Ashes condition is, in a contrast speaking of spiritual poverty. The LORD will give "*Beauty for Ashes*" to the ones who ceaselessly mourn the weak estate of today's visible church (Isaiah 61:2, 3). The church is a supernatural organism. Glory, power, counsel, might, wisdom, knowledge and understanding are spiritual linen materials woven into spiritual garment of beauty that CHRIST DOES give to the faithful of the church class. These will walk with Him in white (beauty) as they follow on in the worthy path of faithfulness.

CHAPTER NINE

TWO GREAT PROVISIONS

The many incidences of death and the wasting plagues of judgment by which God manifested His displeasure towards the disobedient among the children of Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness drew a great concern. As it were, the people became distraught about their future in the worship of Jehovah. How were they to keep themselves from judgment attracting behaviour? Is it possible for a people to be approved by God in their lives and services? How may His fierce anger be kept from burning against the nation of Israel?

These questions filled the hearts of the children of Israel as they watched helplessly a whole generation of people being wiped out gradually. The closing verses of Numbers chapter 17, read and considered in context expressed the deep concern and fear of the people. God in mercy made known to the people how to ensure they live according to His will. He showed them the way out of being set aside from His purposes. The eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of the book of Numbers deal with this great subject. They reveal God's counsel on how a body of people called into the divine purpose may

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keep their estate and remain as instruments for the outworking of His will.

It is to be borne in mind that our God is full of longsuffering towards His people. He is more abundantly willing to shepherd us to fullness of life in His kingdom than many appreciate. He will not set aside anybody of people called into His plans and purpose unless they manifestly prove themselves not amenable to correction.

Now, we know that all local congregations of believers come under changing spiritual fortunes in the course of time. We may speak of mountain-type and valley-type experiences as being common to all spiritual movements at the early part of their history. Eventually many settle down to more or less unfaithfulness. A few come into a steady and faithful career. This crystallization of a characteristic behaviour after a period of time makes it possible to call a people faithful or unfaithful as the case may be. A whole congregation can be set aside by God if it is habitually unfaithful. The streets of religion are littered with examples of dead assemblies who have long lost their candlesticks. This is very sad indeed, and we ought to give earnest heed to the warnings of scriptures. Let us with eager hearts look into God's specific counsel in the issue under discussion. We certainly would be blessed if we take the path of obedience to His revealed will.

The eighteenth chapter gives practical counsel on how to stay in the favour of God and keeping a people away from judgment bringing attitudes. The nineteenth on the other hand offers remedial measures. It concerns itself with what a body of people should do if death (moral and ministerial deviations) is breaking into an assembly. These two great provisions – the first preventive the second remedial-ought to be effectively used by all desiring to see God's glory in His church. Although we are much concerned here about the local assembly, it is in place to begin our discussion with a

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reference to how the individual can keep himself in the love and purposes of God.

In the first epistle of John, the principle governing fellowship with God is discussed in chapter one. It is simple enough. Instead of being filled with fear the believer may know fullness of joy in Christ Jesus. You may want to read through the chapter to familiarize yourself with that passage of scriptures. Here are things the individual believer needs to know in relation to maintaining growing fellowship with God.

- (1) God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. This calls for an attitude of transparent honesty in all of man's dealings with God and others. Sincerity coupled with truth is counted as being of great value in God's sight. (1 Cor. 5:7, 8). It is a reward of dishonest dealing with others if a man is able to deceive himself. We must learn to protect our powers of self-judgement by embracing truth principles in relating to others (verses 5, 6).
- (2) We are to live with an abiding consciousness of our imperfections. Justification by faith presupposes an admission of imperfection. It is an arrangement whereby God progressively deals with man's imperfection, without condemning him. The way of justification requires the believer to embrace the principles of righteousness and desire God's strength to live according to them. Walking in the light of what He knows to be the will of God, and at the same time cleaving to the blood of the ransom as the only sufficient ground for claiming acceptance with God takes care of unknown sins. (verse 7).
- (3) The believer walking in the light of what he knows must daily seek God for more spiritual enlightenment. This will invariably

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lead him to more of the saving knowledge of Christ, which will assist him to be more, yielded to God. It is this eager yearning for more and more of the life of God that is the practical proof of one being not satisfied with his imperfections. It reveals an individual as knowing the purpose of justification by faith. Only such ones will never cover their sins. Those not truly eager for life transformation are in effect saying they have no need for a change. (verse 8).

- (4) The Lord will always bless the desirous with light. The light of God's word received makes possible two vital things; the improvement of the power of self-judgement which assists repentance and secondly, it secures to the believer deeper work of cleansing.

When a sin is committed there is a loss of fellowship between God and the individual concerned. His attitude towards his sin if known would be dependent on how much he is living in harmony with the principles set out in our first three observations. If true repentance is possessed by the individual he is able to receive forgiveness and cleansing by an act of faith. Forgiveness breaks the power of sin acknowledged and truly repented of. Cleansing completes the work of taking away the guilt. Fellowship with God is restored. This is the principle of bouncing back and operating in the environment of the other three things noted above.

Whenever a sin becomes habitual with an individual it is a revelation of a considerable lack of the operation of the truth in the inward parts. Truth sanctifies. There are usually more things to deal with than that besetting sin. A general rule is for the individual to take out time to study God's word and pray. As he seeks to reinforce the areas of moral strength in his life, help begins to emerge. It is consistent with the way of faith to yield to the

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principles of truth in our first three observations. The secret desire for that habitual sin is dealt with in these circumstances. True repentance becomes possible. Brokenness, sanctification, deliverance from that sin's hold is then wrought by the power of God.

If habitual sins are not thoroughly dealt with through Holy Spirit empowered repentance and faith operation, they spread their defiling hold on other aspects of the believer's life. Quite often it takes the ministry of interceding faith exercised by another believer to rescue such a soul from the path of destruction. The sixteenth to nineteenth verses of 1 John 5 set out how this labour of love is to be entered into by a concerned individual. This last observation brings us into the two great provisions that assist a body of believers to remain in God's reckoning as an instrument for the realization of His purpose.

The First Great Provision

Recall the setting in the wilderness at the time that these love provisions in Numbers chapters 18 and 19 were given. A season of devastating judgment had brought the people to their senses.

It became clear to them that the course of self will and rebellion is lined up with destruction and death. In their bewildered condition they wondered how they could be free from their predicament. There is much to be seen in the two verses with which the Numbers chapter 17 closes.

“And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying Behold we die, we perish we all perish. Whosoever cometh anything near the tabernacle of the LORD shall die: shall we be consumed with dying? (Num. 17:12, 13).

We need not wait until a terrible visitation forces us to seek the way of God. The open counsel of God and the enabling grace

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available to the obedient are there for all local expressions of the body of Christ to appropriate. It would be useful for the reader to go through the eighteenth chapter on his own. However, we would be considering four elements which together constitute the first great provision for success. The four elements are found in the following verses: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8. Only these verses will be reproduced below because of space considerations.

“And the LORD said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father’s house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood. And thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring thou with thee, that they may be joined unto thee: but thou and thy sons with thee shall minister before the tabernacle of witnesses. And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die.

Therefore, thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest’s office for everything of the altar, and within the veil; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest’s office unto you as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold I also have given thee the charge of my heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel: unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever”. (Num. 18:1-3, 7-8). We would discuss the under listed four elements in the first provision so as to make clear what God was teaching Aaron to do.

- (a) Intercessory prayers for two distinct classes.
- (b) Seeking and encouraging the emergence of more spiritual leaders

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- (c) Leadership responsibilities to be borne by divinely fitted individuals alone.
- (d) Knowing how to bear the glory of God.

(a) Intercessory Prayers.

All of God's people meeting together in fellowship must cultivate the spiritual habit of praying one for another. The prayer concern for one another should particularly cover the spiritual and moral state of the individuals. All must bear in mind that priestly intercessions are needed to counter the imperfections of the house. As people uphold one another in prayers out of a concern for God's glory to be revealed in the house, the Holy Spirit will communicate specific burdens that deal with diverse conditions respecting them. Moral and spiritual tendencies that are displeasing are revealed and taken care of in a priestly manner.

In particular, there should be a sustained ministry of prayers for persons who take on leadership responsibilities in the fellowship. Failure in a leader is usually of a great telling effect on many. When a people are faithful to pray for their leaders many evil things can be forestalled. The first verse indicates that leaders should take out time to pray together for themselves besides being faithful to do so in their closets. Many acts of divine interventions and reception of specific instructions will always attend obedience to this arrangement on matters pertaining to the house. This makes ministry fruitful.

Bearing the iniquity of the priesthood also includes taking up mutual counselling. Leaders should counsel among themselves, lovingly and truthfully. It is quite easy for leaders to talk to persons of younger standing in the Lord. But there is much reluctance when there is the need for someone to counsel with another of similar

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spiritual exposure. The reluctance, quite often, is derived from the resistance encountered when such a ministry is to be fulfilled. But that as an excuse is not tenable in God's sight. We must humbly seek to carry out this duty in love and prayers no matter what attitudes are met with. God will always give grace if this is sought for in all sincerity and goodwill.

It is culpable hypocrisy if one cannot correct a colleague and yet seek to give the impression that all is well. We must die the death to self-protectionism. And if we are ready to open up to others' correction, then there is every assurance that our priestly service along the same line will be helped by God. Let it be realised that this matter is not left to a man's fancy. It is a commandment of the LORD.

We have already noted that obedient use of this provision secures the help and direction of the LORD. The willing hearted are able to find meat in due season to feed upon. The house is kept spiritually healthy and alive to its responsibilities under the constant care of the great Shepherd.

(b) Seeking the emergence of more leaders.

This is a very important issue. In the performance of the word of oath He swore concerning the seed of Christ, God is constantly thrusting out men and women into His vineyard. The presence of an adequate number of suitably blessed spiritual ministries in a local congregation is an indication that divine favours are at work towards them.

God's servants are to seek for a situation where more and more persons are being raised up to spiritual Leadership. The first obvious way this is to be done is prayers unto God. It is the matter that comes under list of things to pray for without ceasing. Closely associated with taking up this burden is the responsibility of

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ministries to identify, encourage and support persons who manifest an anointing upon them to serve in God's house. The second verse of our passage says to "*bring them near*". This does not call for the opening of Bible schools. Whatever good may be secured by that end certainly falls short of the results that accrue from men and women receiving grace for spiritual leadership through divine training. All believers are enrolled in the school of life. Those fairing well in their use of divinely arranged providence of grace receive more and more of divine attention. But these ones spotted must be encouraged to make use of opportunities of service. These persons must be held up to God in strong, deliberate, intercessory prayers for more grace and character.

"He that is joined to the LORD is one spirit with Him". The same passion for the body is developed in men and women upon whom the LORD'S hands rest. Spiritual labours are effectual when they proceed from divinely enabled individuals. The house is kept steady in its spiritual pursuits when more and more persons within it minister effectively.

The appearance of secondary spiritual leadership relieves the primary ones. They are thus enabled to spend more quality time with the LORD in His word and spirit. This is the situation we find in Acts 6: 1.4. It is not to be supposed however that election of men to official responsibilities is what is being counselled. The ordination services in the denominational church systems cannot make ministries. Spiritually gifted persons need only be allowed to operate along lines of their calling. Shared ministerial responsibilities lessen the workload on any one individual. All must make themselves available whom God is placing in the church for spiritual service. A one-man ministry approach almost always wants to creep into every spiritual set up. It neither helps such an

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individual nor God's purposes. Where it obtains, the level of spiritual growth never rises beyond spiritual infancy. No one becomes spiritual by receiving ministry only. All must learn "*to ascend and descend*" upon the son of man to grow up unto Him in all things. This observation should be borne in mind by all who are being used of God to provide spiritual nurturing for the local assembly. They must keep their charge. But so must they also deliberately seek God for a corporate expression of the ministry of Christ in the Eklessia. This brings us to the next element in our discussion. It stipulates the necessity for great caution to be taken in extending spiritual responsibilities to persons.

(c) Leadership Responsibilities to Be Borne By Individuals Divinely Fitted For These

In our passage, the seventh verse tells us that the priest's office under the Old Testament arrangement is a service of gift. Again, in the New Testament, there is a provision against novices taking up responsibilities of the oversight of the congregation.

Disregarding this counsel has led to much spiritual damage to the ministry of local congregations

The word of God specifically says, "*and the stranger that cometh nigh shall he put to death*". The term "*stranger*" as used here may be understood along two distinct lines. From 1Cor 14: 16, 23-24 and 1Tim. 3:6, 7, we may infer that the one sitting in the room of the unlearned or who is a novice in spiritual matters approximates to the "*stranger*" in our text. Leadership duties should be submitted to those who have such graces of God upon their lives as may be required

The kingdom of heaven is not a democracy. God rules in the universe; more so in His house. The expression of theocratic governance in the house of God is along the lines of the anointing.

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Spiritual abilities, exposures to more mature ministries, strength of character and availability assist the release of the anointing that rest on an individual to do a specific work. Only such as suitably equipped for an assignment should take it up. Natural skills, educational advantages and societal standing are of secondary importance in the kingdom. Heaven does not need the adornment of such natural gifted persons to register its control and rights in any matter of eternal significance. It is the anointing that breaks the yoke. We are submitting to God as there is found in us a ready spirit to give place to the work of the Holy Spirit in an assembly. Thus great care must be taken in relation to ministering in the holy things of God.

Secondly, the word "*stranger*" may be taken as referring to the unconsecrated. All services within the kingdom are spiritual. The believer is called upon to fulfil priestly roles which are essentially spiritual. The entrance into every spiritual service is by way of consecration. (Rom. 12: 1, 2). This implies that one in an unconsecrated condition should not presume to do any work.

In a house fellowship setting, there might be a situation in which none has come up to the estate of ministry, that is, the five fold ministry. Does this mean that no ministry should be fulfilled; and none should take the responsibility of having an oversight in the house of God? We believe that the spirit of consecration can be used by all in God's house. So long as the way of consecration is adopted, there can be a fruitful ministry fulfilled in such a setting. God will always move upon the availability of His people through responding to their consecration. The service of the anointing discussed in Leviticus chapter 8 is actually the occasion of the consecration of the Priests. Man consecrates himself; God anoints. However the rules still holds, that the services of the more

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spiritually gifted persons are needed in relation to exercising spiritual leadership.

A most needed service in any congregation of believers is the ministry of the word in teaching and preaching. The principles of God's word and doctrinal positions and concept derived therefore are God's holy vessels. Those who labour in the word of God and doctrine must be persons who have received the needed graces. They may be few in a local congregation. God's word provides for such only to fulfil the teaching ministry. There is no wisdom in supposing that the present emphasis on body ministry calls for just anyone to presume to teach. The spheres of spiritual services include more elements than teaching. Every sphere of service is equally important, and a man should seek to faithfully serve God according to what graces are evident in his life. We all may exhort one another but there is a place for a regular ministry in teaching as men and women are enabled to provide meat in due season to God's people.

Faithfulness in the things of God sponsors rapid growth. Ministries must beget ministries if a true spirit is maintained. The steady increase in the number of persons coming to the estate of ministry is the only practical proof that those already standing in that grace are faithful to their charge.

(b) Knowing How To Bear His Glory

"And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel. Unto thee have I given this by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance forever" (Num. 18:8). "All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the LORD, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute forever; it is a covenant of salt

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forever before the LORD unto thee and to thy seed with thee" (Num. 18:19). "This is the portion of the anointing of Aaron, and the anointing of his son, out of the offerings of the LORD made by fire, in the day when he presented them to minister unto the LORD in the priests' office, which the LORD commanded to be given them of the children of Israel, in the day that he anointed them, by a statute forever throughout their generations "(Lev.,. 7:35.36).

The heave offerings were placed under the charge of the priest by a covenant provision, they were taken from the offerings the children of Israel gave unto God after they have been formally presented. Thus these heave offerings could be regarded as direct gifts from God to the priesthood. The heave offerings speak of things that relate to the glory of God as it relates to His Servants.

No man in his natural estate can serve God acceptably. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23). The fall accomplished a twofold damage to man. He cannot bring glory to God not being worthy enough. And then he is not suitable in himself to interact with glory and obtain improvement. The amplified version of the Bible gives a correct rendering of Romans 3:23. It reads as follows: "*since all have sinned and are fallen short of the honour and glory which God bestows and receives.*" Redemption restores man to a standing where upon being bestowed with glory he is made able to bring glory to God.

The glory God bestows upon redeemed man is the anointing and is always in view of service. Accordingly, devotion to God's service is the environment in which the anointing is both received and expresses itself. When by the anointing, a consecrated man serves the LORD, he brings glory to Him. The glory which God receives has to do with the establishment of His authority, rule and worship among men. Thus the consecrated man is expected through

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life and service to bring self and others to deeper submission to the will of God.

Ultimately, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God; which knowledge will cause the human race to thoroughly and rejoicingly worship the LORD.

Man is by the fall extremely rebellious. The yoke of rebellion and self worship can only be crushed by the glory of God. The greater the glory of God men sees in operation the easier it is for them to learn submission. The offerings of the LORD's people speak of their hearts, minds, and wills submitted to Him. The heave offerings speak of these same things but now as they pertain to the ministry of the house in a corporate (body) expression of the worship of God. The spiritual leadership set in the body are expected to properly direct the willing hearted in God-honouring services. This is typified in the priests being asked to eat the heave offerings. This responsibility is upon the priests by reason of the anointing. (Num. 18:8)

The implication of what has just been said is twofold. Firstly, those filling the room of leaders (or elders) in a local congregation are under divine mandate to receive glory (anointing) from God with a view to bringing about the obedience of the Lord's people unto Him. *This is a very solemn responsibility. If the Lord's people do not obey and reverentially fear Him, the first persons to answer for this are the leaders.* There is glory available to cause men to be obedient to the faith. We must very deliberately seek God for this grace. He is more abundantly willing to bestow His grace upon His people than it is realised. It may call for a weeping before the LORD "*between the porch and the altar*". But one thing is predictable: "*The LORD will answer and say unto His people, Behold I will send you corn and wine and oil and ye shall be satisfied therewith*". (Joel 2: 19).

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Secondly, the Lord will have His people thoroughly given to the outworking of His purposes. The Lord has placed ministries within the local expressions of the body of Christ for this reason. It is the responsibility of spiritual leadership, having by the anointing secured the confidences of the people, to see to it that the Lord's work is being done. Leaders must mobilise the people to work; and to do so as the Lord will have His work done. It is inexcusable for the ministries to say the Lord's work is not being done because the people are disobedient. Read Rom. 1:5, 6; Ps. 68:18, Isaiah 49:8, Acts 13:47.

The priests were also required to heave a portion of their heave offerings to the LORD. A little explanation of the typical performance of this duty is necessary at this point.

Under the Old Testament, when the children of Israel brought their offerings to the LORD, a certain described portion is taken out as the heave offering. The priests will raise the portion up unto the LORD using the right hand. This act of raising up is called heaving. The priests would regard all of the heaved offering as their own. Before eating it, they would take out a tithe, heave and burn it as a memorial before the LORD.

The heaving of a portion of the heave offering speaks of the fact that God's servants must thoroughly honour Him by life and service. They are to reflect credit to God in all of their services. They must very deliberately sanctify the LORD before the people. The reference is to making sure God's glory is not obscured. Prideful arrogance attracts judgment from God. True ministers must have and keep a sober view of themselves, not magnifying themselves above the flock. They must thoroughly consecrate the respect and goodwill they enjoy among the people to the LORD. (Num. 31:23). They must faithfully and lovingly endure all

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misunderstanding and ill treatments received in the course of service.

Ministers of God are under divine mandate to so consecrate themselves as to receive uncommon grace and glory for performing the work of the LORD. Then they are required to put the people of the LORD to work by example and precept. In doing so, they must not lord it over God's heritage. However, they must in a firm resolve establish the rule of God in the midst of the congregation. God in response to all these will put in the hearts of His people to love and submit to their leaders. He will deliberately choose to honour His servants by clothing them with grace and glory. Yet, in all of these things His ministers must take on the spirit of meekness and humility and by tireless labour serve the church in the interest of God.

To make use of divine glory without coming into self destruction has been a most difficult challenge servants of God have had to face. The nature of man is basically haughty. Men are prone to begin to magnify themselves when they touch a little measure of glory. Men, in a negative attitude, treat the glory that accompanies their ministry as a ground to turn themselves into graven images. Hero-worship is a most insulting kind of treachery against God when it is set up by men whom He has honoured with His glory. Divine judgments cannot be held back from visiting human grooves and their worshippers.

The spirit of prophecy is saying very clearly that because the LORD's temple, already in building, would be brought to a perfect finish, God will release great glory to fully empower those who share in the work. By means of it a great many will arise to build in the temple of the LORD. God will fully commit Himself to His people. Men and women would be taught how to bear the glory of the LORD. It is also certain that several persons through a wrong

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spirit would be crushed as they are made stewards of God's glory.

Glory preserves, it also enables men to mount up higher and higher until the promise is fulfilled to them: "*I am thy part and thine inheritance*".

But glory kills when wrongfully handled. We must all realise that it is the exclusive preserve of God to receive glory from men. Should men think otherwise, they would have to learn the hard way. Self-conceit breeds worms. Presumption flows from attaching too much importance to self.

The scriptures teach us how to bear the glory of God. The Bible says that it is the priest that sprinkles the blood that should take the heave offering. This implies our holding tenaciously to the blood of the Lamb as the only ground of our acceptance with God.

Then the Bible teaches that the heave offering should be eaten before the LORD. The attitude of a servant must be maintained all through as one seeks to fulfil ministry in the house of God. The scriptures also stipulate that only the clean among the priests should eat of the heave offering. All upon whom the grace of God rests must deliberately seek to live morally pleasing lives. To bear the glory in a shameful lifestyle does damage to the testimony of Christ.

Waiting upon the LORD before a season of ministry is a familiar practice. It is also a spiritually healthy habit to take out time to seek the face of the LORD after a period of ministry. There, in the presence of God, we are assisted to review our ministerial labours. Worship, thanksgiving and praise must go up to God for enabling grace received. God sources all our breakthroughs and successes. Quite often, the Holy Spirit surfaces before us certain situations in which we behaved uncomely. Repentance coupled with sincere pleas for mercy attracts divine help. The heart

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is thoroughly purged and the inner man strengthened with needed virtues.

Such times are also attended with divine teachings and instructions which help to improve our lives and services. These things just referred to answer to "*washing our clothes*", "*shaving the flesh*"; "*consecrating our gain*"; and using "*purifying waters*" which were required of the priests continually.

As we bear His glory in a true and humble spirit, He invests us with more of it. We are thus enabled to so labour effectively as to make "*all Israel serve the LORD*" to His pleasure. This counters being laid low in the wilderness. (1 Cor. 10:5)

The Second Great Provision

The nineteenth chapter of the book of Numbers may be divided into three distinct group of verses: The first ten verses (Num. 19: 1-10), then next, the middle six verses (Num. 19: 11-16); and the last six verses (Num. 19: 17-22).

The subject matter is on how to deal with the problem of death; such conditions among God's people that are injurious to life and spirituality. The first group of verses essentially deals with divine provision for countering death-bringing conditions. The second group of verses discusses the type of death bringing cases needing this provision. The last set of verses show how the benefits of this provision may be enjoyed

The first and third group of verses give further insight on how to fulfil the task of "*bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary and of the Priesthood*" already discussed in our consideration of Numbers chapter 18.

Our concern in this section will be limited to things revealed in the middle six verses and their practical implications for the church. You would notice that while the instructions in Numbers chapter 18

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were specifically spoken to Aaron the anointed Priest, the commandments given in chapter 19 were addressed to both Moses and Aaron. This is important. In the nineteenth chapter things are brought up which require combined expression of the authority of the King and the compassion of the Priest of God.

We reproduce here the six verses under consideration (Num. 19: 11-16). Also reproduced is Numbers 5:1-4 which will assist us in interpreting the other passage.

11. *He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.*
12. *He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean.*
13. *Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him.*
14. *This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days.*
15. *And every open vessel which hath no covering bound upon it is unclean.*
16. *And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.*

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Numbers 5: 1-4

1. *And the LORD spoke unto Moses. saying.*
2. *Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whoever is defiled by the dead:*
3. *Both male and female shall be put out, without the camp shall ye put them: that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell.*
4. *And the children of Israel, did so and put them out without the camp: as the LORD spoke unto Moses, so did the children of Israel.*

We comment on the above verses as follows:

- (a) The passages deal with God's interests in the moral and ministerial purity of the Eklessia; and of man's responsibility in both submitting to and ensuring the protection of these rights.
- (b) The Lord's people are to particularly remind themselves that the church is the dwelling place of the most High God, the Holy One.
- (c) The category of persons to be put out of the camp is mentioned: the lepers; those having a running issue (discharge); and those defiled by the dead.
- (d) The three listed conditions are a three-fold description of the same malady: The utter depravity of the old Adamic nature gaining ascendancy over the individual. In the natural sphere, we know that leprosy is contagious. Lepers are usually separated from the rest of society. The use of the figure of leprosy to antitype morally undesirable characteristics conveys to mind a clear picture of what God would have His church know.

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Discharge or running issue reveals inability to retain life; the victim having pierced himself through with diverse injurious cares. The Lord expects fruitful results from all His investments.

The dead man is the first Adam. To be defiled by touching the dead is to allow self to be overcome by some moral failure. It becomes a fixed habit. The defilement that comes through contact with dead men's bones or through walking over a tomb speaks of one who has been ruined morally by evil associates. Matthew 23: 27 reveals this term as being used for the Pharisees and Scribes of Jesus' day.

There is evident in all these scriptures that God expects spiritual elders to enforce needful discipline on erring members of a local congregation. Disorderliness, disgraceful conduct, immorality, unbridled anger and such like are character traits which must not be allowed to find any form of expression in the Eklessia. The fifth to tenth verses of Numbers chapter 5 separate the class of believers who are still in the conflict stage with sin and are visibly yearning for God's mercy and deliverance. Through proper counselling and the ministry of the word and prayers these should be provided all assistance to win the victory over the flesh. But it is not an expression of love to overlook cases of habitual failure which quite often are accompanied by a carefree attitude.

It must be remembered that the handling of '*unclean*' persons must be both punitive and redemptive. Provisions must always be made to ensure the recovery of one placed under discipline, the '*unclean*' has a duty toward himself, and such persons that effected the discipline also have a duty toward him. In such a circumstance, "*third day repentance*" may be easily detected so that the discipline may be lifted on the "*seventh day*". Where fellowship is withdrawn

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from any it should never be taken as an excommunication. The latter practice is rarely called for and we are of the opinion that the prerogative for such level of discipline belongs to the LORD.

The Kingdom of heaven is the domain of the LORD'S RULE, AUTHORITY AND POWER. Learning to live in unreserved submission to God's governance is of paramount importance. Spiritual discipline, which may here be defined as subjecting oneself to divine controls and the arrangements that God has put in place in His Kingdom, is not negotiable. "*The LORD knoweth*" at every instance of time, "*them who are His*" and requires from them unqualified obedience. He places those who neglect to yield to Him due reverence and submission under fatherly chastisement. It is part of the child-training measures He directly adopts towards us so that we might progressively learn obedience and be rewarded with fully developed divine nature.

There is this aspect of effecting discipline in His house which He places under the responsibilities of the overseers (elders). We are brought face to face with this challenge in this chapter.

God must be honoured by His people through their submitting to this provision. The terrible and fearful abuse of the word of discipline has made many well meaning servants of God to shy away from the subject and practice. But it must be realised that if the church would not lovingly but firmly deal with matters calling for discipline, God will take the initiative. If we judge ourselves, we would not be judged. This is true both in relation to individual and corporate acceptance of the counsel. It is not an easy matter when God steps in to judge.

It would be useful to meditatively read each of the letters written to the churches in Ephesus, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea. We repeat again it is not an easy matter to dare God carry out judgmental inspection of His house because men are

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careless over their responsibilities.

The fall has made man callous. It is potentially dangerous to have man be in a position where he can wield instruments of punishment over others. But this fear ought not to have a place among God's children. The boundaries of authority to discipline are clearly marked out. If the Spirit of Jesus is allowed to rule in the heart, needed wisdom and caution shall be supplied to suitable persons whose main desires in stepping into this issue in the local set up are to honour God and show redemptive concern for the flock purchased by the blood of the LAMB.