

ABOMINATION THAT MAKES DESOLATE

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

There is a distressing and very troubling sign emerging from the visible Church world today. The great falling away spoken about by the prophets (Mat 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:1; 1 John 2:18) is already here with us. The spiritual environment that would allow the full revelation of “*the man of sin*” in church setting is unfolding. And it is happening fast too. All around us are visible abominations going on in Church settings and in the name of the Lord. *Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah* (Isa1: 9)

If you truly love the Lord and seek His glory in the earth, you cannot but weep when God opens your eyes to see some of the things going on behind the beautiful walls of the great cathedrals. Unimaginable things are happening under the cover of darkness. The things Ezekiel saw in his days concerning the desecration of the temple of God (Eze. 8) are no longer far away: the seat of the image of jealousy at the door of the inner gate of the temple; the image of jealousy in the entry to the gate of the altar; creeping things and

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abominable beasts and all the idols of the house of Israel portrayed upon the wall of the temple round about; men and women well respected in the court of religion burning incense and offering sacrifice to strange gods. They say to one another ...*The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.* (Eze. 8:12).

While darkness is fast covering the earth, gross darkness is enveloping the visible church world (Isa 60:2). The name of the Lord is continuously polluted before the nations. In transgressing and lying against the LORD, speaking oppression and revolt in His name, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood, men and women have set themselves against the glory of GOD. As the prophet declared, truth is fallen in the street of religion, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth fails; and anyone that departs from evil makes himself a prey (Isa 59: 13-15).

In the midst of all these, the sheep (people) of the Lord are left bewildered and scattered. They wonder *from mountain to hill in search of rest. They faint from exhaustion and weariness* (Mat 9:36. Jer. 50:6.). Having been brainwashed by false and erroneous doctrines and teachings, they have forgotten their resting place, even the Lord who is their shepherd. *The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib: but God's people do not know, they do not consider* (Isa 1:3). Yes, hireling Shepherds have taken over God's sheep (John 10:13). They make them to buy all kinds of things in pretense to solving their problems. ...*They that rule over them*

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make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day is blasphemed (Isa 52:5).

Some “*Shepherds*” pervert the scriptures to squeeze and tax the children of God and milk them dry. From Church offerings to honorarium (guest preacher settlement package), to “*prophetic offerings*” (to the “*man of God*” for prophecies), “*miracle offerings*” (dropped on the alter during messages for solutions), “*seed faith envelope*” (sowing in order to reap), “*thanksgiving offerings*”, “*peace offerings*” (to appease the “*man of God*” and avoid the curse), “*seed of completion*”, “*24-hour miracle seed*” (quick action miracle offering), “*sacrificial offerings*” (“*empty your pockets in expectation*”), “*tapping-into-the anointing*” (cash to touch the prophet’s mantle, sweat etc.), “*firstfruits offering*” (all January salaries of church members), “*covenant seed*” (offering to tie God down), “*vows and pledges*” (for buildings and business projects etc.), “*gate fees*” (to attend special meetings), “*market-day offerings*” etc. The list is endless.

And since men and women who assume the status of God have taken to them the vicious wisdom of the kingdoms of this world, many of God’s people also take on the wisdom of the children of the world. A man would change a hundred naira bill (just over twenty five cents) into five twenty naira notes (just over five cents). So in five offerings, he gives five times but everything just amount to a hundred naira; an

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attempt to beat the “man of God” to it in the display of sensual and devilish wisdom (Jam 3:15). What a scenario!

Bizarre things are even happening. In a particular congregation, the people were told by the “President and Founder” that they should pay physical money for the mansion they want in heaven. And, of course, the people rushed to pay for their “house” in heaven. In another, the “Pastor” asked the congregation to go eat grasses like goats and they all rushed in obedience. What a tragedy! God’s people have become *the flock of the slaughter whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, “Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich”*: and their own shepherds pity them not (Zec 11:4-5).

Many Shepherds have made themselves idols (Zec 10:2) sitting as god in God’s temple. They are the “beginning and ending”. The people literally worship them. They put their images in their hearts; they pray in their names. They buy their effigies and think that by wearing these over their necks, sticking them over their houses and vehicles, they will be saved from all evils. Men who began as humble servants of God have arrogated to themselves the status of the Almighty God.

To make matters worse, false Christs; men and women who have never known Jesus as Saviour and Lord; spurious fellows who draw “anointing” from the evil one, have invaded the church world. They want a share of the “booty”

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too. They compete with the false prophets who were once humble followers of Christ but like Balaam have departed out of the way of truth for reward (2 Pet 2:15; Jude 1:1). These all ply their trade in the courts of religion, fishing in the troubled waters of human souls! Yes, the city of religion is fast becoming *the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird* (Rev 18:2).

Paul once wondered whether the believers in Galatia had been bewitched (Gal 3:1). Quite obviously, something is grievously wrong in today's church world. There is a strange deception and delusion that is gradually taking men and women over (2 Thess 2: 11) Surely, witchcraft and sorcery are at work . The Bible calls it MYSTERY BABYLON; the Harlot who sits upon many waters, spreading a veil over the minds of the people, the mistress of witchcraft, is at work (Rev 17:1; Nah 3:4).

By her activities, all tables (where the Lord's food is supposed to be served) are full of vomits so that there is no place clean (Isa 28:8). Vomits (erroneous teachings and ruinous emphases that were once rejected by the Church because they do not agree with the word of God and purpose for which He called us) are now being embraced and used to bind God's people. Things which were once frowned at, which were rejected by all who loved the Lord as He

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delivered us from the bondage of organized religion, have now been wholly embraced. No wonder there is spiritual blindness, lameness and moral failures all over the place. *There is no place clean.* Feeding on vomit only produces a life of shame (2 Pet 2: 22).

Who shall bemoan today's Church world? *That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten* (Joel 2:4). Once feared and held in respect by the nations, today, the visible church system is the subject of mockery and merry-making (Rev 11:8). The steam and fire is gone; there is no more difference between the systems of this world and "church", between a worldly carnival and the gathering of God's people. All that remains is mere religion, dead bodies of spiritual movements that once shook the world now littering the street of religion. Like Samson of old, the eyes of the heavenly vision is gone; the hair of separation is shaven and the church is making sports to the amusement of the nations (Jud 16:21-25).

This has not been at the beginning, in the days of the Apostles. The early generations of Christians will agree it was not so in their days (Joel 1:2). How did we get to this sorry state? *How did the faithful city become a harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Her silver has become dross, her wine mixed with water: Her princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves:*

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every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. (Isa 1:21-23). And now her sins have reached up to heaven (Rev 18: 5). The stench of the filthiness of her abominations is all over the place. It is reported in the news and carried on social media.

Ah! The Son of God is being crucified afresh and put to an open shame in the courts of religion (Heb. 6: 6). He is being wounded in the house of His friends (John 15:14; Zec 13:6; Ps 41:9; John 13:18). Who shall save us in this perverse and crooked generation? How shall the pure testimony of Jesus Christ be recovered in the earth? Who shall declare His generation? (Isa 53:8). What is the hope of the remnant, the true and faithful servants and children of God who have refused to bow their knees to Baal and who sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the courts and city of religion? (1 Kings 19:18; Eze 9:4) Can the age-long desire of the Lord to take unto Himself a church without spot, wrinkle or blemish, or any of such things (Eph. 5: 25-27) ever be realised?

These words are coming to you at the instance of the Lord and out of a deep burden. Terrible judgment is not too far away. But before then, there is an hour of mercy that is being extended to all that truly love and desire Him (Eze. 9). Let it be known to all that the Lord has not abandoned the earth; the

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God of the earth shall He be called (Isa 54: 5). His glory shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together (Isa 40: 5). We trust that as you hear these words, the great God, Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, will enlighten you and turn your heart unto Him. May He grant that all that truly belong to Him heed His voice and avail themselves of the opportunity provided in this short period of mercy; we ask this through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord, Amen!

Chapter Two

A PATTERN REPEATING ITSELF

The things we are seeing in the Church world today are a replication of the circumstances surrounding God's people at the closing period of the Old Testament Age. By looking at the situation and the activities of the Lord among His people in that period as recorded for us in the Scriptures, we are able to see clearly the stakes before us as the Lord's people at such a time as this and what He expects of us.

We begin by noting that the Old Covenant arrangement was intended by God to be a bridge to that which He had in mind when He made promise concerning the redemption of the human race (Gen 22: 15-18; Gal 3:8, 17-19). The promise was to be fulfilled under a Covenant arrangement secured through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. But He brought in the Old Testament to, *among other things*; prove the utter inability of fallen man to meet God's moral requirements and to show him his need of a Saviour (Gal 3: 19). It was an arrangement imposed upon the people until "*the time of reformation*" when things will be thoroughly

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straightened out and the thought of God for them brought into focus and fulfilment (Heb. 9:10). God was to use the Old Testament arrangement to prepare their hearts to receive the Messiah and thereby enter into the fulfilment of the promise that He made to their fathers (Luke 1: 68-75).

But His people were not faithful to the provisions of the Covenant. The entire period in which the Old Testament lasted revealed a chequered history of long-drawn times of idolatry and rebellion, followed by short seasons of repentance and divine interventions, only to again give way to backsliding and idolatry. Despite repeated circles of judgements, the situation got from bad to worse. As the prophet noted, there was no need for further punishment, the people would rebel more and more (Isa 1: 5).

At the time the prophet, Malachi, wrote the last Book of the Old Testament, many of God's people, including the Priests, were already thickly set on their evil ways. God was no longer honoured; His name was despised and profaned. Polluted bread, blind, lame and sick animals were offered on the altar (Mal 1:6-8). The Priests had corrupted the Covenant; they had departed out of the way and caused many to stumble at the law. Family lives were in shambles. Even Judah, the ones that may be considered to express a greater love for the Lord, had dealt treacherously and committed abomination in the land. There was a common saying going around: "*Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD and he delights in them*". And a few that were concerned about the

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state of things wondered in amazement, “*where is the God of judgment?*” (Mal 2: 17). The whole nation stood in danger of being cursed (Mal 4: 6).

By the time the Age was to be closed up, things had gotten to their lowest ebb. Everybody knew the Messiah was about to appear, even the harlot in John 4. But they were far from being ready to receive Him. The very purpose for which God set up the Temple had been lost; it had become a house of merchandise (Mat. 21:12-14; John 2:16). Oxen, sheep and doves, were sold in the Temple and “*moneychangers*” and “*changers of money*” operated freely.

It will be interesting to examine this scenario closely in order to better appreciate what they stand for in our day. Positively, merchants are men and women that employ diligence in pursuing a trade for profit. Applied to the kingdom of heaven, we are all called to be merchant men, destined to bring profit to God and the kingdom through faithful use of the graces of God (Mathew 13: 45; Mat 25: 14-30; 1 Cor. 12: 7). However when a believer converts the calling and graces upon His life for personal pursuits, he becomes another kind of merchant, a thief and robber. Such were the merchants operating in the Temple at that time. They were “*money changers*” (Mat 21:12) and “*changers of money*” (John 2:14). Interestingly, the two phrases, though referring to the same set of persons,

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bring out two distinct but related elements in the art of money-changing as practiced by those merchants.

The first phrase, “*money changers*”, derive from a Greek word whose roots speaks of both physical money (coins used in those days) as well as medicine used for the eyes (eyesalve). This immediately brings to mind the words of the Lord to His people in Revelation 3:18. Eyesalve is needed to anoint the eyes in order to see clearly into the vision of God and be motivated unto commitment to the realization of that purpose in the earth. Without eyesalve, a people will be blind; they will also be wretched, miserable, poor and naked before God, even though they may be boasting of worldly riches and earthly approvals.

Psalm 25:9 shows that the true eyeslave can be secured from the Lord when the believer cultivates the spirit of the fear of God and delight in Him. But there is another kind of eyesalve that is associated with *money-changing*. Such blinds the minds of the people to spiritual truth while opening their eyes to the carnal realm. It makes them to believe a lie, to think that gain is godliness (1Tim 6:5), to lose all sense of the fear of God and be increasingly given to the world. “*Money changers*” cause the sheep to go astray.

The phrase, “*changers of money*”, implies “*to be shorn or shear*”. The same Greek word is used in Acts 8:18 and 1 Cor. 11:6. The merchants, through the art of money-changing, cause the sheep to be shorn. By their teachings and

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practices, they shave off the hair of consecration of God's people making them naked before Him. Remember Samson (Judg. 16:19). They also make the people to depend on them as their god.

A look at the spiritual symbolisms of the things that were being traded in the Temple by the merchants establishes the above observations. Oxen symbolises the capacity of a child of God to labour in prayer and ministry of the word so that the Lord's purpose in the midst of His people is prospered (1Cor. 9:9-11; Ps 144:14). To sell oxen therefore would mean to convert the strength of God's people for personal gain, using it to build man's kingdom. Like Jacob in the Bible (Gen 29: 16-25), many beautiful children of God labour tirelessly in the courts of religion in the belief they are serving for the vision of the kingdom, not knowing that they are being used to build man's empire and personal vision. They have been captured and men are making personal profit from their strength and labours.

This reminds us of the words of the Lord to His people when they rejected His direct rule over them and asked instead for a king. God's only appointed king was to be the seed of David, a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the people had other ideas; they wanted an arrangement, a structure similar to what operates in the nations. They wanted man, not the Lord, in

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charge. And the Lord told them the manner of the king that will rule over them. He said in I Sam. 8:10-18,

¹¹... He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. ¹²And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. ¹³And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. ¹⁴And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. ¹⁵And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. ¹⁶And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. ¹⁷He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. ¹⁸And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

What bondage! The merchants also make merchandise of sheep. All of the Lord's people are His sheep (Psa. 95:7; John 10). Unlike the oxen, the sheep does not have the capacity to bear burden but it is known to be a good follower and can be very foolish in following. For men to build their religious kingdom, they not only need oxen but also sheep. Without a committed and loyal congregation who follow without questioning the authority of the "*Pastor*", there can be no "*business*".

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To sell sheep is to bring God's people into slavery making them blind followers of "Shepherds" who compete with Christ. They are recruited and bonded into the *cult of followership* where they owe absolute allegiance to their "Shepherds" having no right to question his authority, conduct or teachings. Servitude is sealed through the use of doctrines and teachings which Paul in Galatians 4:8-11 calls *weak and beggarly elements*. The sheep are indoctrinated; they fear the curse that would come upon them if they break the "oath of allegiance" or refuse to fulfil their "vows".

In those closing days of the Old Testament Age, the sheep were in a sorry state. Even the Lord could not but have compassion on them. They fainted and were scattered abroad (Mat 9:36). The alternate Shepherds had divided them among themselves and taken possession. They were fleecing them dry. The more sheep they had, the greater their wealth. The stones of the Temple had become bread for shepherds who can never have enough (Mat 4:3; Isa 56:11).

The Merchants also traded in doves, a symbol of the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Mat 3:16; Acts 10:38). Selling dove is equivalent to selling the anointing. There are different ways and manner this selling and buying takes place. For example, the conduct of miracles, healings and deliverance ministrations is big business today. So also is the payment of money to tap into the anointing of the "man of

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God". According to one servant of God, "*money is the name of the game*". As it is commonly said, "*nothing is free even in the land of Freetown*". No wonder false Christs were also at work.

After observing what was happening in the courts of religion in those days, the Lord would not want His disciples to follow that evil example. He strictly commanded them saying "*freely you have received, freely give*" (Mat 10:8). But alas, not many wholeheartedly yielded to the command of the Master. Many "servants" of God cleaved to the art of merchandising; they will not let it go; the profit was too much to lose. And so when the situation will be unveiled again at the close of the Church Age, the list of things being sold in the street of religion has increased and now includes the souls of men (Rev 18: 12-13).

And we are told that the kings of the earth, who in another connection are also the merchants of the earth, have been made stupendously rich by the *abundance of the delicacies* of the HARLOT woman (Rev 18:3). Also in the fold are "*native doctors*" and "*magicians*" who have cleaned up themselves to partake of the "*great business*". They only needed to borrow some Christian garments and learn some of the languages. The city of religion has become *the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird* (Rev 18:2).

The money changers in those days had their tables, and those

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that sold doves, their seats. As we mentioned in the first chapter, tables in spiritual symbolism, represent the prophetic scriptures. The Lord always sets a table before His people (Psa 23:5). As they eat of the table of the Lord, feeding on the bread of His presence, they grow up and are made fit to stand in the purposes of God for them. But the “money changes” have their own tables; the false doctrines, teachings and emphases by means of which they take over the minds of the people, so that they just follow them helplessly.

What of the *seats* of them that sold doves? The word “*seats*” speak of a position occupied by an individual or group of people, the rank or influence they bear. In those days, the merchants that sold doves sat in Moses seat (Mat 23:2). They took to themselves the position of God, a status that makes them unquestionable. Who are you to question God’s representative on earth? The people still remembered what happened to Korah and his companions and how God dealt with Miriam (Num. 16; 12:1-10).

To send the message clearly to the minds of the people, these sellers of dove took on various official titles, including names of blasphemy. They even sowed special robes to mark themselves out; very intimidating clothing for that matter. *They made broad their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments* (Mat. 23:5). It was all a game, a spiritual masquerading, making a man to take on the appearance of a

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god so as to extract absolute loyalty from the people.

And Oh, they loved the worship and adoration in the market place where they sell their wares, the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues (Mat 23:6-7). Having successfully transmuted from just one among the Lord's people to a god, they devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer. They hold bound as debtor whosoever swears by the gold of the temple or the gift on the altar (Mat 23: 15-22). They care less the manner of life he or she is living. The money must be paid; otherwise "God's" judgment will be invoked. This is the typical way of masquerades!

Mathew 24:1 says...*And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple.* This was after He had made several efforts to recover the Old Testament worship and the purpose for which the Temple was set up by God. First was the ministry of John, sent to prepare the way before Him. "...*Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together*", the prophet declared (Isa 40:4-5; Luke 3:1-6).

After so much exposure to evil doctrines and terrible practices, the hearts of the people have become like a harrowing desert with mountains and hills, valleys and rough places. But if they return to Him, right in their hearts, a

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highway would be prepared for the Lord. John spoke of an impending judgment and called the people to a baptism of repentance... *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire* (Luke 3:9). But not many truly hearkened to his voice.

It would appear the message of John was too “*hard*”; he was too “*uncompromising*” for the people. So, the Lord Himself, the Messenger of the Covenant, came to them speaking of God’s offer of mercy and salvation and how it can be enjoyed through repentance and faith. “*For God so love the world...*” He preached. “*The kingdom of heaven is at hand, repent and believe the gospel*” (John 3:16; Mark 1:15) He cried. Yea, He did many great works among them seeking to by these woo their hearts back to God. For three and a half years, He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil (Acts 10: 38). But in spite of these, the people rejected Him; only a few returned (John 1:11). Their hearts had become terribly dark; they would eventually kill the Son of God.

The passion of the Lord to recover His people was unflinching; He laboured till the end. At a point, towards the end of His ministry in the earth, in a partial fulfilment of the prophecies in Malachi 3: 2, He even went into the temple and attempted to rid it of its abominations. ...*And when he had*

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made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves (John 2: 15; Mat 21:12). And then he healed all the sheep (the blind and the lame) who came to him from all the bruises that they had suffered in the hands of false shepherds (Mat 21: 14).

One would have thought that would bring to an end the mysterious trade in the temple and cause the people to turn in repentance. But NO; it only angered them the more and made them even more determined to kill Him.

Then the turning-point came. The appointed time of visitation had been wasted; an ominous cloud of judgement began to gather over the city. It will still take some years for the floods to fully break forth, but the fate of the “*holy city*” was now sealed. Divine judgement could no longer be averted, that which was determined must come upon the desolate (Dan 9: 27). And as the Son of God looked upon the city and the temple, He began to weep

³⁷O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! ³⁸Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ³⁹Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Mat 23: 37-

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39)

It was a generation that knew not the day of their visitation. John came to them with a song of mourning calling to repentance, he himself neither eating nor drinking. But they would not lament; they said he had a devil. Then the Son of man came with a song of mercy, eating and drinking. But they would not dance; they said “*behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners*” (Mat 11:16-19). Heaven had exhausted its options! There was no more hope of recovery for the city of religion.

⁸Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed. ⁹We would have healed her, said the Lord, but she cannot be healed. Forsake her, let every man depart from her and flee for her soul, for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies (Jer 51: 9)

⁴Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. ⁵For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities (Rev 18:4-5).

At this point, the Lord himself *went out and departed from the temple*, never to return (Mat 24:1). His task in the intervening period before the judgment would break forth would be to gather out of the apostate city all that have ears to hear Him and to prepare them to escape the tribulations that

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were now certain to come upon the people. As for the temple, with its adornments of beautiful stones and gifts, *the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down* (Mat 24:2; Luke 21:6).

These are the things revealed concerning God's people under the Old Testament and how that Age was closed up. The same things are repeating themselves in relation to the New Testament Church in these closing days of the Church Age.

Chapter Three

JUST HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Introduction

The prophet Isaiah once asked, how is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards... (Isa 1:21-23).

In the last chapter, we noted that the apostasy we are seeing in the visible church world at this time of the end has a prophetic pattern in the things that were seen in the midst of the Old Testament church at the closing period of that Age. Consequently, the divine activities at that time indicate what the Lord will be doing in the midst of the New Testament Church at this closing period of the Church Age. We shall be looking at this more closely in the remaining part of this little Book. Our burden in this chapter, however, is to identify the roots of the terrible perversions that we are now witnessing in

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today's church systems. How did it all started; how did it evolve; where do we go from here?

A Parable of the Kingdom of heaven

We need not go far in finding answers to these questions. The words of the Lord in Mathew 13:24-30 give us insights. Accordingly, we have reproduced the passage below for our mutual profit.

²⁴Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: ²⁵But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. ²⁶ But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. ²⁷So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? ²⁸He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? ²⁹But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

This parable and the other five that followed in this chapter are about the *kingdom of heaven*. They refer to what began to take place after the first parable given in verses 3-9 (the parable of the Sower). In the Parable of the Sower, we are

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told that *a sower went forth to sow...* Those activities of the Lord (and His servants) in the planting of the gospel of the kingdom in the hearts of men and women (Mark 1:15) led to the emergence of a people He could call His own (His vineyard or field). The subsequent parables that follow the parable of the Sower (six in number, covering verses 24-50) focused exclusively on this body of people (all who have through repentance and faith accepted the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ), that is, the Church. They bring out certain things about her growth and development.

Notice the particular way these parables begin: *The kingdom of heaven is like...* So they reveal certain developments among the Lord's people over time. But then, what exactly is the "*kingdom of heaven*" and why is the church so described? The *kingdom of heaven* is a kingdom that God has purposed to establish which shall rule over the nations and destroy sin and all its effects (as well as sinners) from the earth thereby fully restoring the knowledge and true worship of God among men (Dan 2:44; Num. 14:21; Isa 11:9; Hab. 2:14; Mat. 6:10; Rev 21:24-27). Those that are called into that kingdom are to reign as Kings and Priests of God.

In Revelation 21, the *Kingdom of heaven* is shown to be *the Bride* in union with her Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. Thus, the *Kingdom of heaven* when installed will be a kingdom of Priests and Kings (Lords) consisting of the Lord

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Jesus Christ, who is the Supreme Head, and all the glorified saints, who together constitute His Bride, members of his Body.

Now, given the great task that is to be carried out by those called to the glories of this heavenly kingdom, it is necessary that they are prepared, perfected and fitted for this assignment. The entire course of the Church Age was actually marked out by God for that great purpose. It would be a time to call all who will share in that inheritance through the preaching of the gospel and to prepare them for it. In other words, during the course of the church age, all that have become the Lord's own, because they have hearkened to the voice of the gospel of the kingdom, are to be trained in the service of God. Priestly disposition and character, as well as kingly graces, are to be built into them. These transformations will be accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the environment of the word of God as they fellowship with Him and with one another and open up more and more to His rule (1 John 1:5-7; 2 Cor. 3:18).

They are also to be first proved as to their worthiness. They are to be tried, tested, and if faithful, perfected, before they will be made to sit and reign with the Lord Jesus Christ in His throne (Rev 3:21). These steps are mandatory for all called into the "*kingdom of heaven*". Even the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Head, as a pattern Son, was first tested and proved before given the full glory and responsibility of the kingdom (Heb.5:4-10; 12:2; Rev 3: 21).

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The Church (the body of believers that have been called out of the nations and joined together in fellowship with the Lord and with one another and are being prepared for the heavenly glory) is represented in these parables as “*the kingdom of heaven in the time of preparation*”. When the preparation is complete, that kingdom will be fully set up to commence its reign and those (*and only those*) among all that were called who proved faithful (including those that have slept in the Lord and those alive and remaining) shall be raised up to take their place in the Kingdom (1 Thess. 4: 16-18). Thus, ultimately, *the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, the kingdom of heaven installed* (Rev. 21) would consist of only those from among the Church who proved their love and faithfulness to Him in the midst of the oppositions of the present world.

So the *kingdom of heaven* has the time of its **introduction**, the time appointed for its **preparation**, and the time when it shall be **installed** in rulership over the earth. And as we said earlier, one of the primary purposes of the coming of the Lord in His First Advent was to set up (or introduce) the *kingdom* (Heb. 2:9-18). He came to raise up His Bride (His body), the many sons that will share with Him in the glory of His calling. He introduced the call into the kingdom by the preaching of the gospel. Since then, the work of calling men and women to partake of the glory, preparing and building up those that have been called, and testing and proving them to ascertain their worthiness, have been ongoing.

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Yes, the church is *the kingdom of heaven in preparation* and the six parables that follow the parable of the Sower in Mathew 13 relates particularly to her. They are parables concerning the *kingdom of heaven*, not in its finished picture, but at the time when it is still being formed (constituted). They convey to us certain things that would happen in the midst of the church world during the course of the Church Age. As we look at them and look back into the history of the Church up until this time, we can be able to trace certain developments that were indicated in one or the other of these parables.

With this background, we can now examine the scriptural passages before us, Mathew 13:24-30. *The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field...* The reference is to the field or vineyard of the Lord, the Church which the Lord set up and is cultivating with a view to making it a city in which will be found the river of the water of life and the tree of life (Rev 22: 1-2). This vineyard will bring forth trees whose leaves will be for the healing of the nations.

The Lord Himself established the field. Together with His servants, He sowed in it good seed. He also raised up ministries to continually water and nourish it in expectation of a great harvest. But it was not long when the enemy came in and sowed another kind of seed, an evil seed, in the field. As any true lover of God would, the disciples were obviously very troubled by the words of this parable. So after the

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multitude had dispersed, they came to the Lord and asked him, “*Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field*”. Let us hear the things that the Lord said to help their understanding. Mathew 13: 37-43

³⁷He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; ³⁸The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; ³⁹The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. ⁴¹The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; ⁴²And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

We will attempt to gather the thoughts in the Lord’s response. He that sowed the good seed is the Lord; He waits for *the precious fruits of the earth* (Jam 5:7). “*The field is the world*”; not a reference to the earth or the world of humanity, but to *the church world*. This field is His field which He planted (a people that have received the good seed of the word of the kingdom). It is different from the “undefined space” where the Sower went forth to sow in the first parable (Mat 13: 3-

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10), which in its primary application may be considered to be the world of mankind.

Then we are told that the “*good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one*”. This is a description of things as they stand ultimately. At its basic or beginning form, the seed is the word of the kingdom (Mat 13: 19), the principles of the doctrine of Christ (Heb. 6: 1) by which men are to come to the life of the kingdom; the principles of truth that are to guide the operations and development of *the kingdom of heaven*.

At a secondary level, the “*good seed*” speaks of the lifestyle of the kingdom: the moral and spiritual disposition and conduct that is expected of all those that have embraced the kingdom, and the “*divine order*” that spells out the way the church as God’s kingdom is to operate and conduct her affairs (2 Tim 3:17). This kingdom lifestyle is the subject of the Lord’s teaching in Mathew 5, 6 and 7.

Then, at the tertiary level (the level at which the parable is interpreted in verse 38), the “*good seed*” refers to those among the Lord’s people who have *whole-heartedly* embraced the word of the Kingdom and allowed the lifestyle indicated to be measurably (concretely) formed in them through habitual submission to His rule. These are “*the children of the kingdom*”.

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The above illustrations help us to understand what the tares are. They are primarily false or erroneous doctrines, teachings, principles and emphases which come from the mouth of the devil (that ancient serpent: Gen 3:1-5). They are the fruits of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which man must not partake of. Once accepted, they opened the door for satanic influence and control. Secondly, the tares are moral and spiritual practices that reflect the rule of man, the rule of the flesh over the soul (an indirect expression of Satan's rule), rather than the rule of the Spirit of God.

Thirdly, the tares are men and women who though profess to belong to Christ, have been taken over by the works of the flesh. Their continuous exposure to ruinous doctrines and practices, feeding on the fruit (seed) of that evil tree, has produced in them a lifestyle that reflects the rule of sin. They are professed believers but in deeds, they are the "*children of the wicked one*". As the Lord showed in verse 21-23 of Mathew 7, not every one that says to Him, "*Lord, Lord*", shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but they that do the will of His Father. There are many professed believers who do many "*wonderful things*" in His name but are described by the Lord as "*workers of iniquity*". The Lord did not deny the wonderful things done in His name but simply said to them, I never knew you. There was no intimate relationship between these believers and the Lord.

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We are shown that the tares were sown into the Lord's field "*after men slept*". This implies two things. First, it means the event took place after the passing away of some persons whose presence prevented it from happening. "*Sleep*" is often used to connote the death of the saints (1 The. 4:13). Secondly, it was made possible only because many in the Church who should be faithfully keeping watch and standing to protect and advance God's interest became measurable unfaithful in their commitment. To sleep in another connection, is to lose sight, focus and complete engagement in the performance of the will of God and become involved in other things. Many times, these "*other things*" may be good works. It is just that they are not exactly the burden of the Lord for the time, and hence, do not really advance His interest in the earth. In yet another sense, to sleep may involve the believer being overtaken by sin and worldliness (Eph. 5: 14-17; 1 The. 5: 6-8; Luke 12:35). If "*men*" had not slept, the enemy would not have been able to sow tares into the Lord's field.

But take note that despite the concerns and thoughts of some of His servants who were bewildered at what has become of the field; the Lord commanded that both the true seed and the tares should be allowed to grow together until the time of harvest. We are later told that the harvest will take place at the closing period of the Church Age. "*The harvest is the end of the world*". The word translated "*world*" here is the Greek *ahee-ohn'* and it means an "*age*", a period of time in human history that is defined by the particular activities that God is

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carrying out in relation to the redemption of the human race. The reference here, of course, is to the Church Age.

Thus, the parable gives us a clear picture of what happened to the Church at a point in her history, how the deviation and mixture came about, and what the situation will be at the time of the end just before the work of harvest sets in. At the time of the end, the field will contain diverse seeds. And since tares naturally grow faster than wheat, it is safe to assume that it will be disproportionately filled with tares. In other words, present in the visible Church world at the time of the end will be a large dose of erroneous (satanic) doctrines, teachings and evil practices sprinkled with some measure of truth and godly practices. There will equally be a *relatively* few number of believers who fear the name of the Lord and love Him with sincerity of heart in the midst of a *large number* of professed believers, including many professed “*servants of God*”, that are “*workers of iniquity*”. It will be a “*great house*” with diverse sorts and one tending more and more towards wickedness. This is a very sobering thought.

This “*great house*” scenario was already beginning to unfold even in the days of the Apostles and Paul said something about it in 2 Tim 2:17-21 which we now read:

¹⁷And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; ¹⁸Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the

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resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. ¹⁹Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. ²⁰But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. ²¹If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

Notice how verse 17 begins. There is a reference to words, some strange doctrines, teachings and emphases. That is where it all begins. The seed is first of all “words”; either the word of the kingdom or that which proceeds from the mouth of the serpent. Once the evil seed is taken in, it begins to corrupt a man’s belief system and eventually his moral and spiritual conduct...*it will eat like a canker* until the man himself becomes the seed of the evil one. Thus, there is a reference also to men who have unwittingly made themselves messengers of Satan, even though they profess, and may even be considered by many, to be servants of God ...*of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus*. And the sad thing is that these men may not even have known the amount of damage they were bringing upon the field of the Lord. But all those who will find acceptance before Him must purge themselves from all things that do not agree with the truth and lifestyle of the Kingdom. The mingling of diverse seed is alien to the commandment of God (Lev 19:19). It is called confusion. It is also the generic word for Babylon: *Babel, confusion* (Gen 11).

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Now, we must observe and reflect deeply on the fact that it was not the Lord that sowed tares in His field. Rather, it was the ancient serpent. He (the Lord) never sponsored or desired that tares be sown in His field. He planted the seed of the kingdom; a proper seed. He knew the kind of harvest He wanted and that which will satisfy the Father. In other words, there are *well-defined boundaries* set out by the Lord in His word to guide the beliefs, moral and spiritual conduct as well as the operations of the Church as the *kingdom of heaven in preparation*, and which **must** never be compromised. To deviate from them and institute another is to court divine displeasure and heaven's wrath. It will be a journey to perdition.

If the above is true, why then did the Lord allow the true seed and the tares to grow together in His field until the time of harvest, you may ask. We answer that it is because the evil associated with certain things may not be obvious to His people while yet these things are in their formative stages. Without adequate light, many of God's people will call good evil and evil good (Isa 5:20; 7:15-16; Heb. 5:14). To attempt to root out the tares while in their formative stages as the servants suggested in Mathew 13:28, may mean rooting out even some of the good seed. This will lead to crisis in the field! But when things have grown to their full proportions and light is made available from the presence of the Lord that which is evil can be easily recognized by all sincere ones for

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what it is. Notice that both the tares and wheat have their different characteristics. But these different characteristics are only visibly manifest in the kind of fruit they bear, so the bible says, by their fruit you shall know them.

This is the wisdom in the words of the Apostle, Paul, in 1 Cor 4:5 *“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts”*. The bright shining light associated with the coming of the Lord at the time of harvest (Mat 24:7) shall give perfect understanding to His people to be able to separate between that which is the Lord’s perfect will and that which is not but have only been accommodated by Him all this while. It shall allow things to be seen in their true form as they stand, not before men, but before God. The *“hidden things of darkness”*, the *“counsels of men’s hearts”* will be made manifest. Because the evils represented in the tares will be fully grown, they will be visible before all eyes. The direction things are going in the visible church world will at that time be very obvious to many.

The Lessons of History

The scriptures reveal that the activities of the enemy sowing tares into the Lord’s field started not too long the Church was instituted and took a more-determined form after the departure of the Apostles from the scene. Certain erroneous doctrines and practices were already coming up in the days of the Apostles. For example, among believers in Corinth,

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strife, division and fractionalization were brewing (1 Cor. 1:10-17). In some assemblies, a few brethren were beginning to seek preeminence wanting to lord it over God's heritage and get followers after them (1 Pet 5:1-4; 3 John 1:9). As we saw in 2 Tim 2:17, false teachings and emphases capable of subverting the faith of the believers were being introduced in some quarters (see also 2 Cor. 11: 13-15; Gal 5:1). And the wicked appeared to have made some progress because many years later, Jude found it necessary to stir up the faithful to contend for the true faith that was once delivered to the Church (Jude 1:3).

Despite the admonition of Jude, by the time the Lord Jesus Christ came to examine the Church in AD 90, about fifty seven years after it began, many of the assemblies were already in a fallen condition. Many believers were not as faithful in their devotion of love to the Lord. Though full of activities, they had left their first love, they were asleep (Rev 2:4). A significant number of congregations had a name that they were alive but were dead. Many aspects of truth and the life it ought to produce had died off. The things which remained were also ready to die. In addition, many had defiled their garments (Rev 3:2-4).

In addition, some ruinous teachings and practices had gained ground. There were the "*deeds and doctrine of the Nicolaitans*", which the Lord says He hates (Rev 2: 6, 15).

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What began as ruinous practices (deeds) was soon backed up with teachings from the scriptures, perverted to suit man's purpose (doctrine). "*Nicolaitan*", a Greek word which means *victorious over the people*, is coined after *Nicolaus*, a heretic. Thus, it is a system of things borrowed from the kingdoms of this world. The root words imply *a conquest accomplished by assuming command, charge and dominion over the people through a system of hierarchy*. Practically, it is *a system of officialdom that separates God's people into a laity-clergy distinction and empowers the clergy to conquer the laity*. This doctrine upsets a principal truth of *the kingdom of heaven*, that is, the *priesthood of all believers*, and set up an official priesthood, which arrogates to itself divinely-appointed powers as God's representative to rule over others of His people. Ultimately, it sets up man as god in God's temple.

Witchcraft and sorcery was also at work in many assemblies. The serpent had gained access even to the altar. Operating through prophecies, he gained the confidence of some servants of God and began to cast a spell of seduction upon them. Many began to embrace false and ruinous doctrines and emphases and got overtaken by the spirit of the world and moral failures. As it was in the days of Elijah, the spirit of the serpent working through organized religion, the spirit of harlotry, that woman Jezebel, seduced many of God's servants and made them to *eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication* (Rev 2: 20). And many of God's people

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were held under her spell through the ministry of these servants who serve the wine of fornication from her table.

Little wonder John at that time began to write in 1 John 2:18... *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* By these he referred to persons who were once part of the Church as servants of God but now under the influence of the wicked one and have begun to sow false doctrines and practices that brought grievous damage to the cause of God's kingdom in the earth. Paul called them the "messengers of Satan" (2 Cor. 11:15).

The marriage between the Church in Rome and the Roman Empire just about 300 years of the introduction of the gospel completed the journey of the visible Church into apostasy. In fulfilment of another parable of the *kingdom of heaven* (Mat 13:33), everything about the word and practices of the kingdom was completely leavened by the Romanise Church. Called to be the Bride of Christ, the visible Church completely abandoned the Lord and the things committed to her care and went after others; she became a stark Harlot!

The word of the kingdom was substituted with satanic doctrines and teachings. The divine order set up in relation to the operation of the assemblies of God's people was replaced

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with one that is an image of Imperial Rome (an order where man is the Sovereign, the sole “*representative of God*” before the people). In addition, a pattern of sacrifice was instituted to replace the eternal sacrifice of Christ on Calvary’s cross which was accomplished once and for all (Heb. 10:14). God’s people were made to put their faith in men who claimed to have the divine power to continually repeat the actual sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross and to decide the fate of men’s soul. All must worship the “*Priest Sovereign*” and buy from the Church salvation, forgiveness, peace and eternal life. Yes, the true sacrifice was taken away and in its place was set up abomination that makes desolate (Dan 12: 11). So dark was it that historians have coined a phrase to describe the era in which this mysterious woman held sway over the whole earth. They call it the “*dark ages*”.

Yet, even though it was totally dark, God did not leave the earth without a witness. Not only that the Lord began to recover the Church from the ruin and ashes of the “*dark ages*”. In fulfilment of other parables of the *kingdom of heaven* in Mathew 13, the truth and lifestyle of the kingdom began to be recovered. But alas! God’s people could not totally free themselves from the mysterious influence of the harlot woman.

Since after the dark ages, every circle of God’s visitation to recover the Church and lead her on in God’s purpose, have up until this time, always ultimately end up in another apostasy. After a passage of time, men build their own organized

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systems (denominational empires) and set up their kings. And gradually the same marks of spiritual decay and desolation from which they were once delivered begin to appear. In some respects, things even become worse. It has always been so.

Consider the Pentecostal movement, as it was called. It began with a great promise. At last God's people have been delivered from the yoke of organized man-worship and its names of abominations. They could now enter into the glorious liberty of the fellowship of the brethren. In its early beginning and glorious era; there was much hunger for more of God and distaste towards the kind of things and arrangement prevailing in the orthodox system which had brought ruin and desolation. The Lord was everything; there was emphasis on His headship, the rule of the Holy Spirit, the simplicity of the fellowship of the brethren, the priesthood of all believers and equality of all before the Lord. All sang of the "*one body, and one Spirit, one hope of our calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all*" (Eph. 4:4-6). There was no reason for any to be puffed up or exalt himself beyond measure. All strove to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called. Ministries served in fear and trembling with all lowliness, meekness and longsuffering, preferring, forbearing and submitting one to another in the Lord. They walked as servants, not lords over God's

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heritage.

But it did not last long. Ego and ambitions began to take over and men and women began to see vanity and dream false dreams (Zech. 10:2). It was the beginning of a spiritual decline that would overtake the apostasy that had become the lot of the orthodox system. Today, there appears to be more sanity in the graveyard quietness of orthodoxy than in many “*Pentecostal*” assemblies. Littering the street of religion is an ever-increasing number of denominational systems each with its king supreme, all striving to build their kingdoms. There is no difference in deed between the once-loathed “*mother of harlot and abominations of the earth*” and the *daughters*. They all constitute a system of things that God is reacting against at this last hour.

Let it be sounded clearly for all to hear; the spirit of the great cathedral is a terrible beast. It kills anyone and anything that embraces it no matter how high and holy. Denominationalism, “*organized churchianity*”, man’s rule in what is supposed to be God’s kingdom, a system of things where man assumes headship over the assemblies of God’s people exercising absolute authority and even attempting to rule over various congregations at different places, is completely strange to the *kingdom of heaven*. It is a seed sown by the evil one. Such a system is a graven image. Once created, a form of worship sets in that increasingly displaces Christ and enthrones man.

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Many sincere servants of God had thought that the course of the *kingdom of heaven* cannot advance without this form of organization. Alas, many have also realized that the word of God is true. Once you create a graven image, you become confounded and brutish by it (Jer. 10:14; 51:17). There are things you must keep doing to keep it going; which things even you yourself may not approve of. There are things that become part of you which will not have been if you had not assumed to yourself authority beyond that which the *kingdom of heaven* permits for each of them that have been called, if you had remained the humble, faithful believer he made you, serving him together with the brethren in all lowliness and humility. Men begin to call you “*father*” (Mat. 23:8-12), that is, give you such reverence reserved only for the Lord. They begin to worship you indirectly (and even directly) and you will not even be able to control it. You have sown the wind, you must reap the whirlwind (Hos 8:7).

The situation that was just developing in the early Church at that time and which the Lord was reacting against in Revelation 2:20, has become fully grown at this time of the end. The grapes of the clusters of the vine of the earth are indeed fully ripe (Rev 14:18). Of course, the symbolisms in that passage (that is Rev 2:20) were drawn from the history of God’s people under the Old Covenant. There was a historical figure, a natural woman, Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, the king of Israel, who by her sorceries brought the whole nation of

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Israel into a false worship. Thoroughly seduced, the people worshipped Baal thinking they were worshipping God (1 Kings 18: 21). It was a most terrible situation; a whole nation of God's people engulfed in a strange worship while professing to be worshipping the true God; Satan at work through a system of worship reared up by seduction and witchcraft.

But when the Lord in Revelation 2:20 made reference to Jezebel and the events surrounding her as something that was already emerging in the Church of the New Testament, the thought is not that there was one physical woman named Jezebel operating in the midst of the churches. Rather, He implies that the same spirit and power that operated through that woman, Jezebel, had gained access to the Church and has begun to operate in and through a significant number of persons. Through these persons and ministries entrapped under their spell, the Church was being led away from her Lord and Husband unto another. This is spiritual fornication (Hos. 2:2; Jam 4:4).

And because the Lord could see the end from the beginning, out of His abundant love and compassion, He warned of the terrible judgement that will come if His people do not repent and deliver themselves from this evil hold (Rev 2: 21-23). As Jezebel of old was severely judged so that nothing of her remains could be picked up for burial, so and even much more, will this woman (system of things and all those

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through whom Satan's corrupting influence is spread in the midst of God's people) be terribly judged of the Lord (2 Kings 9:30-37 ; Rev 17:16).

However, it is obvious that despite the divine rebukes, repeated warnings and the longsuffering of God towards His people (2 Pet 3:9), that system of things never really left the visible Church. *She repented not.* What started with the Church in Rome was reproduced again and again in many spiritual movements over the course of the Church Age; the **MOTHER HARLOT** producing her kind, giving birth to many **HARLOT DAUGHTERS**, who though bear other names, operate just like her, each with its own king in his little kingdom. This mysterious woman, Jezebel, is now sitting upon many waters; which are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues (Rev 17:15)

BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH, drunken with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus whom she either through sorcery brought under her captivity or else killed because they would not bow their knees to her (Rev. 17:6; 18:24). Is it not strange brethren, that that which began as a golden cup in God's hand (Jer. 51:7) ended up as the greatest threat against Him, His people and purpose in the earth? It reminds one of what the Lord Jesus

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Christ said concerning the nation of Israel in Mathew 23:34-35:

...Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

When a people who profess to belong to God will not yield to His several and repeated warnings to repent and embrace His words, something else that is beyond them (the mystery of iniquity) soon take over and the consequences are only better imagined. May we not be part of this unfolding evil, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ our Lord; Amen.

Chapter Four

HARVEST TIME IS HERE

Introduction

In chapter three, we saw how the visible church world came to be in the situation we now find it at this time of the end. Indeed, our considerations so far shows that the things that were observed concerning God's people at the closing period of the Old Testament Age and the Lord's activities among them are shadows of what would be revealed in a greater measure in these closing days of the Church Age.

This was a very important point that the Lord wanted His disciples to note in His discussion with them in Mathew 24 and Luke 21. When in those chapters, He spoke of the destruction of the Old Testament Temple and the judgment of the "holy city", they were perplexed. For such a thing to happen, "*it must mean the end of the world*", they thought. And so they came to Him and asked "...*Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*" (Mat 24: 3). The Lord's discuss in what followed not only addressed their concerns as it

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related to the Jewish Temple and the close of the Old Testament Age but also related the issues to His Second Advent and the close of the Church Age.

So we find some parallels in the Lord's discussion in these chapters. For example, there was a "*great and dreadful day of the Lord*" that was to close up the Old Testament Age (Joel 2:31; Mal 4:5) during which there will be a terminal judgment on iniquity and wickedness. In a *flood of tribulation*, the Temple and Nation will be overthrown, the people killed and the remnant carried captives into all nations. But that event would be a partial fulfilment of the "*great tribulation*" that would close up the Church Age (Mat. 24:21). As the physical Jerusalem was trodden under foot by the gentiles (Luke 21:24), concerning the Church world, we are told in Revelation 11:2b that *the "holy city" shall they tread under foot forty and two months* (Rev 11:2b; Rev 13: 7).

Again, the Old Testament Age ended with a work of harvest; so also the Church Age will close with a harvest. The time of harvest was set apart by the Lord to accomplish His purpose in setting up the Old Testament arrangement among those of His people that are faithful unto Him (*a remnant*) and to prepare the unfaithful ones for judgment.

During the harvest period, the Messiah gathered out of the courts of religion unto Himself those who yielded their hearts to Him (Mat 9: 37). He confirmed to them the covenant and promises made to their fathers. He taught them again the

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word of the kingdom, the meaning behind all that was contained in the Law of Moses. He gave them rain; He restored to them the years that the cankerworm hath eaten, the locust and the caterpillar (Joel 2:23-27). His activities among them led to the outpouring of His Spirit upon them. This was in fulfilment of the age-long promise of the Father (Joel 2: 28-32; Acts 2:1-41). And by this empowerment, they went forth in ministry to bring the remaining of the Lord's people "*who should be saved*" into the kingdom so that the work of harvest that was started by the Lord may be completed (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:1-41).

While all these were ongoing among those who heeded the ministry of the Lord, something else was happening among those of His people who rejected His message. The true way to eternal life having been opened by the sacrifice of the Messiah (Heb. 9: 8, Mat 27:51), the Old Testament sacrifices had become even more abominable. The rebellious and foolish who failed to understand continued in it but it was an *overspreading of abominations that will make it desolate, even until the consummation* (Dan 9:27; 12:10). Their defiance only served to prepare them for the overthrowing judgment that would come like a storm.

For about 40 years, that work of harvest continued until the Old Testament Age was finally closed up when the Temple was destroyed and the nation of Israel overthrown in AD 70.

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It was a very remarkable period in the history of the Old Testament Church, a moment that determined the fate of *each* and *every one* of God's people alive in that generation!

The same things are upon the Church world today! We are now in the appointed time of harvest of the Church Age. And the things fulfilled in the harvest period of the Old Testament Age foreshadow the activities of the Lord among His people at this time. This is the burden we will be examining in this and subsequent chapters. Mathew 13:39 says concerning the Church, "*the harvest is the end of the world*", that is, the harvest will not only take place at the closing period of the Church Age; it will also lead to the final collapse of the present world and open the way for the introduction of *a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness* (2 Pet 3:13). May we turn our hearts unto Him therefore as we examine the things that are revealed in the Scriptures concerning this great work of harvest.

The Harvest of the Church Age

What do we find in Mathew 13 concerning the harvest work? First, at the time of the harvest, the Lord, the Owner of the field, comes to **put things straight**. Until then, He had endured the condition in His field. "*Let both the tares and the wheat grow together, give it time*", He said. But then, His purpose in setting up the field must be realized. And at the time of harvest, He comes to put in order and accomplish that which must be done for the glory of God to be revealed in the

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earth. This work of “*putting in order*”, “*restoring and bringing God’s purpose for the Church to completion*”, is mentioned in Acts 3:20-21.

²⁰And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: ²¹Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

The Lord who came in His first Advent to introduce the Kingdom is sent again at the *times of restitution of all things*. The word “*restitution*” means “*reconstitution*”. It emphasizes the particular work that the Lord comes to accomplish at the time of His Second Advent. The “*reconstitution of all things*” has to do with the recovery and restoration of that which had been lost and putting in place the additional elements that will make it complete. In a nutshell, it relates to the completion of God’s program in the redemption of the human race. He is the *Author* and the *Finisher* (Heb. 12:2). That which He began in His first Advent, He comes to finish in His Second Advent.

You will note that in Acts 3:21, the word “*time*” is in plural: *the times of the restoration of all things*. So there are various dispensations or time periods in the general time period of His Second Advent and in that work of “*restitution of all*

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things". Each period has its own characteristics, focus and emphasis. This observation is important and we shall revisit it later in the next chapter.

The scriptures show that the work of restitution of all things begins with the Church... *Judgment must begin at the house of God*, the Apostle Peter said (1 Pet 4: 17). This is not surprising since the recovery, perfection and full glorification of the church must take place before the kingdom of God can be established over the nations. The time period appointed for the judgment of the nations shall come. But first, the Church must be perfected and raised up into full union with Christ.

So the immediate attention of the Lord at the "*times of the restitution of all things is His field.*" He comes to carry out a work of harvest involving a process of judgment. He has before Him His eternal plan which He comes to fully execute.

¹¹Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. ¹²He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. (Isa 40:10-11).

The eternal plan to raise up a Bride that will be united with Him in His glory cannot be compromised. That is the whole essence of the introduction of the *kingdom of heaven*. At the

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end of the Age, in the time of harvest, He comes to take unto Himself a church that is *without spot, wrinkle or blemish*; a church that is standing in His own image and likeness (Eph. 5:27). This is a far cry from what He meets at the time of His return; a field that is full of tares with some measure of wheat. There are many false doctrines, teachings and ruinous emphases, as well as terrible practices that have been there for centuries which nevertheless are not according to His will. He has endured with all these all through the Church Age. But now, He comes to deal with them, to purge the Church of all things that do not meet divine standard with a view to perfecting her and raising her up to sit with Him as a fitting Bride in His throne.

And in Mathew 13:30, 40-43, we are shown the processes by which that goal is going to be realized.

³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn... ⁴⁰As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. ⁴¹The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; ⁴² And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom

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of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

There is going to be a work of judgment involving separation between professed believers, and the cleansing and perfection of the faithful ones so as to bring them into the full glory of the kingdom. The separation would be carried out at two levels. First, there will be a gathering of the “*wheat class*” out of the field into the Lord’s barn side by side with the gathering together of the tares in preparation to burn them. This is the first level of separation.

The second level of separation emphasizes the cleansing work accomplished among those that are gathered to Him (gathered into His barn). He gathers out of the midst of them “*all things that offend and they which do iniquity*”. The purpose is that the righteous may shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. In other words, the “*wheats*” that are gathered into His barn are to be processed. The chaff (strange doctrines, beliefs, emphases, character disposition, moral and spiritual practices) that have attached to them (as a result of long association with the tares) are to be removed and burned off, while the pure grain is grinded and passed through fire in order to become bread to feed the nations. In the process of doing this, some who cannot endure the refining fire of the Lord and would not allow Him to take away from them the things He does not approve of are sifted out, while those who fully submit to His rule bringing moral and spiritual transformations, are led on to perfection and the fullness of

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Christ.

A scripture that comes to mind in relation to this second level of divine activities is John 15. We read just the first two verses. The Lord was speaking to His disciples, those that have been gathered out of the disorder that has become of the Old Testament worship, out of the city of religion, unto Him, and have become His elect because they hearkened to the voice of the prophetic ministry that went ahead to prepare His way. He says to them...*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

Of course, in emphasising that He is the true vine, the Lord was drawing their attention to the fact that there is a *false vine* and a degenerate vine which professes to be what she is not and serves wine that brings people under strange influences (Rev 14: 19; Jer. 2:21). It is from the *vine of the earth*, that the Harlot system draws her wine. But His people to whom His words are being addressed here have been delivered from the false and brought into the **TRUE VINE**. And we are shown that every branch that does not bear fruit over a period of time in which the Lord labours among them is taken away, while those that show evidence of progress are assisted unto further cleansing and growth so that they may bring forth

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more fruit. May this latter condition be our experience, in Jesus mighty name; Amen!

Not all who were gathered unto the Lord out of the courts of the religious system of those days continued with Him, many went back (John 6:59-71). They could not endure the words and the demands of the Kingdom. They were sifted out. The activities of the Lord among the gathered-out ones also show to us the manner of the Lord's activities in His barn. He teaches them the word of the kingdom bringing out the meaning behind what they have heard and leading them unto all truth. He cleanses them by His word. He confirms the covenant unto them bringing them into the enjoyment of the provisions, He gives them rain making His presence known in a convincing manner; He prepares them for the latter rain which shall bring them into the fullness of the Spirit life.

From the above, we can say that the two levels of separation associated with the work of harvest are to be accomplished by two levels of ministry that the Lord will carry out among His people at the time of the end. The first, the prophetic ministry which prepares His way (Isa 40:1-5; Mal 3:1; 4:5-6; Luke 1:3), fulfilled in those days by John, will accomplish the first level of separation among the covenant community, dividing them into two classes (the symbolic wheat and tares). Those who hearken to the voice of the calling to repentance are gathered out of the Church systems with its now visible sign of apostasy and treachery, unto the Lord, while others who harden their hearts are left to continue in their treacherous

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walk in preparation for judgment.

The second level of ministry is that of the Lord in His capacity as the Messenger of the Covenant who comes to do a further work among those that had been gathered unto Him bringing them into the perfection and fullness secured through the blood of Calvary. Concerning this ministry Mal 3:1b-4 reads

¹...And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. ²But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: ³And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. ⁴Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

This aspect of the ministry of the Lord is very intensive and takes quite some time for the purpose to be worked out. As the words suggest, it is not something that is hurried over. ***He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they***

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may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. He shall purify doctrines; He shall purify lives (moral and spiritual conduct and attitudes). He shall gather out of the kingdom all things that offend and they which do iniquity (those who will not submit to the cleansing processes required). And the process will continue until the willing-hearted and faithful are brought to a state of moral perfection. ...Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Let us note some things about these two levels of ministry. One, just as the ministry of John and that of the Lord Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh went on side-by side until a point when the former was swallowed up in the latter, these two ministries of the Lord in the midst of His Church at the time of harvest will be going on at the same time. In other words, at any point in time during the harvest period, there will always be some that are just being gathered out of the religious systems by the prophetic ministry into the barn of the Lord; there will also be others that have already been gathered and are being processed by the Lord in His barn.

Secondly, throughout the appointed time of harvest there will be many that are being brought into the Lord's barn at various points in time while there will also be others who are being sifted out because they will not submit to the dealings and processing that the ministry of the Lord brings upon them that are gathered unto Him. Thus, it will be a dynamic process in the Lord's barn; many being brought in while some are being

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sifted out.

Thirdly, associated with the Lord in these two levels of ministry is a body of servants prepared by Him and made to share with Him in the work of harvest. They are called “*angels*” in Mathew 13:41. The word “*angels*” in this context refers to human messengers given the commission to preach the gospel of the kingdom. It is often used in the Scriptures to describe God’s people who serve Him in one capacity of ministry or another, and especially those that play leadership role in the Assemblies of His people (see Rev. 1:20).

In relation to the harvest work, the angels se are said to be “*the reapers*”. The work of sowing (planting the gospel of the kingdom of heaven in the earth and raising up a people -the Church- to express that call) was carried out by the Lord through the instrumental agency of servants whom He raised up and anointed for the task (Matthew 13:27; Eph. 4:7-16). In the same manner, at the time of the end when the Church is to be perfected and brought into fullness, the Lord raises up servants particularly fitted by Him to labour in the work of harvest. And the invitation is open to all; we all in varying degrees can share with the Lord (the Lord of the harvest) in this great work as we open up ourselves to His burden (Matthew 9: 37, 38).

The detailed and deliberate work of the Lord accomplishing

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the two levels of separation among His people as shown in Mathew 13:30, 40-43, reveals the overriding importance of the purpose He comes to execute in relation to His field at the concluding period of the Church Age and how He would not compromise on this mission. He must get to Himself that Church that is without spot, wrinkle or blemish or any such thing, a matured and thoroughly beautified Bride made ready to unite with Him in His glory.

Two Alternate Bodies Arising From the Work of Separation

The work of harvest in the midst of the Lord's field at this time of the end shall lead to the emergence of two alternate gatherings (bodies), both professedly associated with the Lord, but one being led to glory while the other is on the path to destruction. The gathering of the tares together in bundles will be associated with the building of a religious house for the advancement of satanic interest and worship; something Satan had always sought to do since the fall of man. But the gathering of the wheat into God's barn will be associated with the final aspect of the raising up of God's Temple, a holy habitation of God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:20-22); a body of people coming forth in the perfect moral image and likeness of Christ and in whom God will be pleased to reveal His fullness.

While the fact of the rearing up of God's Temple at the time of the end may be easily appreciated, the idea of the raising up of a temple for satanic worship is not easily discerned. We

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will therefore examine some scriptures that establish the thought. The Lord will certainly not want us to be ignorant of the things going on in our days and how we are to react to them. He is also committed to the full salvation of all who turn their hearts to Him.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, two gatherings are mentioned after which (from verse 3) focus is placed on the less understood, the one that emerges from the gathering together of the tares. We read verses 3 and 4:

³Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁴Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

At this time of the end, there will be the full unveiling of the “*man of sin*”; man exalting himself above all that is called God or worshipped, sitting in the temple of God and conducting himself as God. This is the full expression of the working of the mystery of iniquity through men and women in a Church-like setting leading the world into satanic worship. And we are told that the great falling away in the visible Church world, which has led many to reject the truth and take pleasure in unrighteousness, is what will pave the

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way for this to take place. Many professed believers shall open up to a “*strong delusion*”, a flood of extremely overwhelming satanic doctrines and influence that shall carry them away along with the rest of the world.

Further insights are provided in Revelation 13:11-18. There, we see the full emergence of a beast from the earth having two horns like a lamb (showing that it can be identified outwardly with the Lamb of God and will operate in a Church-like setting using the scriptures and claiming to do everything by the Spirit of God). But it is actually a false prophet. It goes on to lead the world into a false worship and to make war with all those who will want to identify with the true Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, note that this phenomenon is not altogether new; it has always been there through the Church Age. The beast, the creating of images to express the kingdoms of this world, men exalting themselves and attempting to take the place of the Lord in His temple, the marks of the beast etc. have always been realities that the faithful among the Lord’s people have always had to contend with since the enemy began to sow tares into the Lord’s field. That was why Paul could say in 2 Thessalonians 2:7...*the mystery of iniquity doth already work*. John also said in 1 John 2:18 ... “*Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists...*” In addition, and as we noted in chapter three, the world witnessed a particular expression of these things in the “*dark ages*”.

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But what is shown in Revelation 13:11-18 is a much more (fully) developed form of things emerging out of the visible church system at the time of the end: it is a system of things completely hijacked by Satan and led by persons, who though professed faith in Christ Jesus have fully opened up to satanic incursion, operating by an anointing from the evil one.

Zechariah 5:5-11 gives us some further insights into these issues. The context is the completion of the building of the house of the Lord under the Old Testament but it is a prophecy of the completion of God's purpose in relation to the perfection and glorification of the Church and certain things that will be taking place at the time when this is due. In verse 5, we are shown *something going forth*, a "behind-the-scene" movement in the visible church world at the time of the end, which is initially not seen or understood by many. Even the prophet Zechariah did not know or understand it. It is a determined working of the mystery of iniquity, a progressive move of Satan to produce something in the earth which is not openly revealed at this point but will be fully manifested in its time, as Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:6.

We are shown that these subtle move and "*maneuvers*" of the evil one shall lead to the raising up of a house for the full expression of wickedness (the mystery of iniquity). The house of wickedness will be built in the land of Shinar....*It shall be established, and set there upon her own base* (verse 11).

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What a revelation; Satan's determination to build his house in the land of Shinar!

Shinar is Babylon. And the things we find in Genesis 11: 1-9 assist us to understand some of the thoughts communicated: a people called by His name who began to journey away from His light (the east from whence the bright shining presence of God's light emanates) and eventually **settled** in a plain (a low land) in the land of Shinar. The Bible will later talk about the cities of the plain all about Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 13:12; 19:29). Then in the plain, they got a vision driven by worldly ambition and fleshly lust, which was to build a city and a tower whose top *may reach* unto heaven. They wanted to make for themselves a name in the earth. God would build His own city after His Son, Jesus Christ (Rev 21); He would build a Temple for His worship in the earth; He will give to His son a name above every other name that all may worship and honour the Son (John 5:23; Philip 2: 9-10), but these ones either deliberately or inadvertently set themselves against God's plan and purposes. And since they have departed from the light and rejected the corner stone (Mat 21:42; 1 Pet 2:6-8), they began to build using materials that do not meet divine standard, brick burnt thoroughly instead of stones and slime instead of mortar. These are false and erroneous doctrines, teachings and emphases as well as injurious moral and spiritual practices, well designed to achieve their objectives. They build emphasizing unity and one world under the rule of man!

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Now, that house which was started in Genesis 11 and would have served the interest and worship of Satan, ended up not being fully built at the time. But the expression of its partial existence is seen in the confusion of tongues in the earth today (a fitting description of the various divisions in the court of religion as expressed in denominationalism). As mentioned in chapter three, denominationalism is an aberration, something entered into either as a result of a deliberate ploy of man to build his own kingdom and make a name for himself in the earth while claiming to be leading men to heaven's gate (as the name *Babel* indicates) or arising from an error in judgment.

It was the same with Abraham at a point in his life. With his wife, they taught that God's work cannot be done and the promises fulfilled without man's arrangement. So it is with sincere servants of God who have ventured into empire-building. But as it was with Ishmael and Hagar, what is created cannot deliver God's purpose, even though for a while it may give joy and receive God's blessing and favour. It ultimately ends up an enemy of God, opposing His purpose and persecuting all those who seek the true vision of the Kingdom (Gal 4:21-30).

However, as Genesis 11:1-9 suggests, denominationalism is in itself a middle-of-the-road position. A man may yet deliver himself by pulling down the foundations of the house of

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Babel and returning to the divine order where Christ is truly the foundation and only Head. Otherwise, there is cause for worry; because the house whose building was left unfinished in Genesis 11 is now to be fully raised up on the base of the increasingly unfaithful denominational Church systems of our day. More than two thousand years after the events recorded in Genesis 11, in Revelation 17, we are again brought face to face with BABYLON, now a MYSTERIOUS WOMAN, a Harlot, a phenomenon associated with the Christian world. Staring from a holy beginning where she was still being examined in her Husband's house, her unfaithfulness and unbridled lusts had driven her out. Like the Old Testament Church (Hos 2:5-7), she ran after her various lovers (rivals of her true Husband). And at the time she is pictured here, she has become *totally (irredeemably)* strange, the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, the habitation (house) of devils and the hold of every unclean birds (Rev 18:2). What a description!

The parallel nature of the activities that closed up the Old Testament age and the things we are now seeing and shall yet see in these closing days of the church age are illustrated in the Table below. May you not be found in the midst of the unfolding wickedness in the Church world at this time of the end. May you be clean delivered out of the denominational Church systems before things come to the full measure that the scripture assigns them in these last days, in Jesus Mighty name; Amen!

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Table 1 The closing periods of the Old Testament and Church
Ages: Some parallels

	Old Testament Age	Church Age
Harvest	Harvest of the Old Testament Age- realizing the fullness of the purpose for which the age was set up	Harvest of the Church Age- realizing the fullness of the purpose for which the age was set up
The condition of the Covenant community	Apostate Judaism	Apostate Christendom: the “great falling away”
The ministry of the Messenger preparing the way of the Lord	Fulfilled in the ministry of John: accomplished a first level of separation ; led to the gathering of a remnant out of apostate Judaism unto the Lord	Fulfilled by the Lord through His servants, the angels (reapers): Accomplishes the first level of separation between the tares and the wheat. Leads to the gathering of the elect out of the visible church systems unto the Lord
The Ministry of the Messenger of the Covenant bringing the obedient into the full realization of the promises in the Covenant	Fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ in his First Advent. Cleansing and purification of the gathered-out ones; leads to a second level of separation Giving of rain: teaching of the word of the kingdom, outpouring of the Holy Spirit bringing to life, power and supernatural abilities, empowerment to complete the work of harvest.	Fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ in His Second Advent along with His servants Cleansing, purification of doctrines and emphases, moral and spiritual transformations with a view to bringing about moral perfection; leads to a second level of separation. Giving of rain, early and latter rain: complete unveiling of the truth of the kingdom, outpouring and great manifestations of the working and power of the Holy Spirit.

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		<p>Empowerment to realize God's purpose in the harvest work.</p> <p>Activities leading on to full union with Christ in His glory</p>
<p>The Age ends with a flood of tribulation, the "great and dreadful day of the Lord"</p>	<p>Destruction of the Temple, overthrow of the nation of Israel, occupation and control of Jerusalem by the gentiles, persecution, killing and scattering of the remnants of the Jews into servitude in all the nations of the earth.</p>	<p>The trampling under foot of the holy city by the gentiles: persecution of the saints in the great tribulation,</p> <p>Overthrow and destruction of religious Babylon</p>

Chapter Five

UNDERSTANDING THE FIRST LEVEL OF SEPARATION I

Introduction

*I*n the last chapter, we took note that at the concluding period of the Church Age, which is described as the time of harvest, the Lord comes to set things in order in His field and to fulfil the very purpose for which it was planted. He comes to reap the full harvest. We said that this involve a work of judgement, the separation of the tares from the wheat.

The separation is carried out at two levels. First is the gathering of the tares together in bundles with a view to burning them and a corresponding gathering of the wheat into HIS barn. The second relates to the work He carries out among those He has gathered unto Himself. He cleanses and purifies their belief system, moral and spiritual conduct; He assists them to take on more and more of His image and likeness; and ultimately, He brings those who submit to the

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refining processes to perfection and fullness of life. Our primary focus in this and the next chapter is to examine in sufficient details the first level of separation and the implications for us as individuals who profess faith in Christ Jesus and have been called as members of His body.

The Lord's Coming and Our Gathering Together unto Him

The scriptures speak in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 of the coming of the Lord in His Second Advent and our gathering together unto Him. The word “*coming*” in this passage is translated from the Greek word, *parousia* (*par-oo-see'-ah*) which generally means “*presence*”, though it could also be rendered as “*coming*”. The reference in the passage is to the time of the Lord's presence in His Second Advent.

The teachings of the Lord in the synoptic gospels, attested to in other New Testament writings, show that there are different phases in the general time period of the Lord's presence (Second Advent). It is important therefore that we understand the particular aspect of His coming that is the concern in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 and the other passages we will be looking at, so that we can better appreciate what He is doing in the midst of the Church today.

The general time period of the Lord's presence in His Second Advent is likened to the “*days of Noah*” (Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:26). Viewed in a general way, there are three phases in this time period. The first is *the days before the flood*. It

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covered a time span from when God revealed to Noah His intention to destroy the world, commissioned him to build an Ark and gather together into it all those who hearken to the call to repentance, until the time when the flood came upon the world. This was a fairly long time. The scriptures suggest it spanned about 120 years (Gens 6:3-22; 1 Pet 3:20).

The second phase in the “*days of Noah*” is *the days of the flood*. It covered the time period in which the floods of divine judgment were upon the earth up until when they fully receded (Gen 7:10-8:12). Then, we have the final phase when the foundations of a new world were brought forth and God entered into a Covenant of perpetuity with the human race (Gen 8:13-9:17).

All of these are figurative of the activities of the Lord in the time of His Second Advent. As it was in the days of Noah, there are three phases in the general time period of the Lord’s Advent and each has its character and peculiarities. For example, in the first phase (likened to “the days before the flood”), the presence of the Lord is not generally known; the world is totally unaware of His activities. Majority of professed believers are also ignorant of what the Lord is doing. Mathew 24:38-39 says

³⁸For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe

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entered into the ark, ³⁹And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming (parousia: presence) of the Son of man be.

The time period is also likened to “*the days of Lot*”. “*Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded* (Luke 17: 28). Other scriptures likened it to the evening period of the day of the Lord (Luke 17:34). The emphasis here is the fact that there is much darkness and ignorance among men, including professed believers, concerning the Lord’s activities in that period. Many believers are found sleeping, unaware and uninvolved in what the Lord is doing among the faithful (1 Thessalonian. 1-7). But the scriptures also show (and we shall establish this in the course of this mediation) that the Lord comes to give abundant light to all those who hearken unto His call in that hour of darkness. ...*At evening time it shall be light* (Zach. 14:7).

The activities of the Lord in the first phase of His Second Advent are focused on the Church, His field. That is where God’s judgment, aimed at establishing His claims over the earth, begins (1 Peter 4:17). At this point, the Lord is not so much concerned about the nations (except as their activities interfere with what He wants to do in the Church). Their time will come and very soon too. But before then, there are enough issues to be sorted out and things to be accomplished in the Church of His purpose. And she (the Church) will be in

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a ready state to judge all disobediences when her own obedience is complete (2 Cor. 10:6).

Thus, relative to the world of mankind, the activities of the Lord in this phase of His Second Advent is more of a secret work. Everything is veiled from the eyes of the world and from those who profess to know Him but are “*workers of iniquity*”. While knowledge shall be increased and many of His people that submit to Him shall be purified, made white, and tried; none of the wicked among His people shall understand (Daniel 12:4, 10). In addition, it is only the believers who partake and profit by means of His activities in the Church at this time that shall be saved from the tribulation judgments that will come upon the world (Revelation 3:10). For others, the events of judgment will take them unawares as “*a thief in the night*” (1 Thessalonian. 5:1-10; 2 Peter 3:10).

It is in this sense we are to understand the reference to Noah and Lot in relation to the activities of the Lord in the first phase of His Second Advent (Matthew 24:38-39; Luke 17:28). Both are in this context representative of believers who have a testimony that they love the Lord (Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet 2:5, 7-8). But while one was **perfectly saved** from overthrowing judgment along with all his household, the other was only **scarcely saved** and suffered much loss with a part of him becoming a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26; 1 Cor. 3:10-15). Two representative believers, both righteous on account

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of covenant relationship with God (the standing of justification), but one took on the spirit of consecration and so proved to be wise, while the other did not really purge himself of the love of the world and thus proved to be utterly foolish.

Of course, the Lord does not want us to be “*scarcely saved*” like Lot. He has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain full salvation (1 Thessalonian 5:9). But this will be only if we fully submit to His activities in the secret phase of His Second Advent. Lot had seasons of divine interventions to save his soul, but he always went back to Sodom and pitched his tent there (Gen 14:1-16). Even though his soul was continually vexed in seeing and hearing (2 Peter 2:8), he just could not leave the honorable seat at the gate and the thriving commercial activities of “*the great city*” (Revelation 11:8) until it was too late.

The second phase of the Lord’s presence is described as “*the day in which the son of man is revealed*” (Luke 17: 30). We are told that it is typified by “*the day that Lot went out of Sodom and fire and brimstone were released from heaven upon that city to destroy it*” (Luke 17: 29). Verse 27 of the same chapter also likened it to “*the day that Noah entered into the ark and the flood was released upon the world*” (see also Matthew 24: 39).

The word translated “*revealed*” in Luke 17:30 is the Greek word *ap-ok-al-oop'-to*. It means to *take off the cover*, that is,

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to disclose. Thus the “*day of the revelation of the Son of man*” implies a time of unveiling of that which has been covered. It suggests the **public manifestation** of the outcome of the secret activities of the Lord in the first phase. In this time period all things are publicly revealed as they stand; that which is perfectly according to the Lord is glorified while that which is evil, and indeed seen to be evil by all, is judged.

This phase is also referred to in other scriptural passages as “*the time of His appearing*” (1 John 3:2). This “*appearing*” of the Lord has different implications for those of His people who have been faithful unto Him and for the rest of humanity. 1 John 3:2 and other passages show the implications for the faithful. In particular, 2 Thessalonians 1:10 says He shall come *to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.* For the rest of mankind however, His coming is revealed in tribulation judgments as shown in Luke 17:29 and also in Revelation 1:7.

There is yet a third phase of the Lord’s Second Advent when He comes in the kingdom the antitype of “*the days after the flood*”. But a consideration of that is not needed for our present purpose. Our focus is on the first two phases and how they relate to the work of harvest, with emphasis on the first level of separation. This is the burden we will be taking up in the next chapter. In the remaining part of this chapter,

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however, we will just emphasize two important points already mentioned in passing relative to the gathering together of the Lord's people unto Him at the time of His Second Advent. The first is the fact that not all professing believers are gathered to Him. The second is that the gathering is out of the visible Church systems of our day.

Concerning the first point, we read Psalm 50. The whole chapter is relevant and should be read but for space consideration, we will reproduce below verses 1-6.

¹The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. ²Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. ³Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. ⁴He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. ⁵Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. ⁶And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.

At the time of His coming, the Lord calls to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. This is a prophetic description of both the leadership and entire congregations of His people. All who profess faith in Christ

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Jesus are to be judged by the Lord, irrespective of their status; for the Lord is no respecter of persons. Then we find an instruction in verse 3, which indicates aspects of the work of judgment that He carries out: “*Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice*”. This echoes the instruction we find in Mathew 13:30:

³⁰And in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Note that the instruction to gather His saints unto Him is given unto the reapers, whom we have already identified to be His servants raised up to labour together with Him in the work of harvest. The reapers carry out their assignment by the declaration of the word of the kingdom in the power of the Holy Spirit.

But notice the emphasis in Psalm 50:3. The angels (reapers) are to gather unto Him not all professed believers but “*they that have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice*”. The reference is to believers that have cultivated the spirit of the fear of God, who tremble at His word and have learnt to live, to a large extent, in submission to His rule.

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Thus, the ministry of the “*reapers*” brings about a separation; it sifts all professed believers, separating them into the wheat class and the tares by causing each person to manifest his or her true state. While the “wheat class” is able to understand and respond positively to the ministry of the reapers and is saved by it, the tares, on account of their heart attitudes towards the Lord, reject the message and harden their hearts even the more. It is by the ministry of the *word of the Kingdom* that the wheat are separated from the tares.

We see this same thing accomplished through the ministry of Isaiah. The Lord told him. ...*Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed* (Isa 6:9-10). And when the prophet asked “Lord, how long will that continue?” He answered, *until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,*

It is interesting to note that the Lord made a reference to this passage in Mathew 13:10-16 before introducing the parables of the *kingdom of heaven*, thus showing that it is a characteristic of His work among His people. While the ministry of the reapers is as a “*writer’s inkhorn*” with which those that habitually fear the Lord are sealed in their foreheads, it is from another perspective, a slaughter weapon

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by which the wicked are overthrown (Ezekiel. 9: Revelation 7:1-3). May the Lord help us all, in Jesus' name.

The Flight Out Of the City Of Religion

So in Psalm 50:5, the Lord instructed the angels (reapers), "*gather my saints together unto me...*" The saints are to be gathered unto the Lord at the time of His great presence. But from whence are they gathered? we may ask. We are shown in the scriptures that they are gathered out of the visible denominational Church systems of the day. Let us begin our consideration of this with an examination of the Lord's words to His disciples in Mathew 24:15-28. For now, we will just take verses 15-18 which are reproduced below

¹⁵When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)¹⁶Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:¹⁷Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house:¹⁸Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

You will recall that we said that the Lord's teachings in this and the related passages (Luke 21; Mark 13) relate to the close of the Old Testament Age as well as the concluding period of the Church Age. So the things written have fulfilment in the two time periods and come to full realization

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in our days. In those passages many things that belong to the two time periods are itemized, though the listings do not necessarily follow chronological ordering. And here in Matthew 24:15, the Lord says “*when ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place...*”

The application is first to the Old Testament Temple and the city of Jerusalem. The reference to the prophecies of Daniel is quite instructive. There was a historical event the Jews could relate to (Daniel 11:31); there was also a future event that would come upon them as God’s Covenant people (Daniel 9:26-27). The historical event, which happened about 168 years before the Lord Jesus Christ came in His First Advent, had to do with the desecration of the Temple by a Greek king who invaded Jerusalem, erected in it a statue of the Greek god, Zeus, and sacrificed a pig on the altar of incense. The future event (which was the main focus of the Lord’s discussion as far as the Jewish Temple and the Jews are concerned), refers to the destruction of the Temple and overthrow of the nation by the Romans, an event that took place about 37 years later in 70 AD.

It is believed that the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, their entrance into the Temple (thereby defiling it according to Jewish customs), the further defilement of the Temple by placing in it Roman standards and pagan symbols, were all aspects of the fulfilment of the prophecy. Some accounts have it that shortly after the armies broke the

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resistances of the Jews and entered Jerusalem, the Roman general Titus placed an idol on the site of the Temple.

Apart from the activities of the Romans, there were strange things going on among the Jews. The siege lasted between six and seven months during which, according to historical records, multitudes died of famine and corpses were literally stacked in the streets. Mothers ate their children to keep themselves alive. Warring factions of Jews engrossed in bloody fights for supremacy and unmindful of the advances of the Roman armies sought control over the Temple and the city. There were also, at least, three false messiahs among the people who were claiming to be the Christ.

And as the true disciples of Jesus Christ noticed all these things (the siege by the Roman armies and the events taking place in the city), they remembered the words of the Lord in Matthew 24:15 and Luke 21:20 and were able to take advantage of a season of reprieve to flee out of Jerusalem.

All these help us to understand the things that are before us as God's people at this time of the end. In speaking of the abominations of desolation in the holy place, the Lord said "*whosoever reads let him understand*". Thus there is a clear reference to the spiritual reality which these things stand for in the closing period of the church age. The phrase is a figurative expression of the perversion of holy things. And

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just like it was with the Old Testament Church, erecting of man's image, man-worship, unholy practices, strange offerings, idolatry and cultic worship, are things that have completely taken over the courts of the visible Church systems today. The "*holy place of the Tabernacle of the Most High*" (Ps 46:4), a true description of the Church, is rapidly being desecrated, and there shall soon emerge an order of things that men never thought could be possible among a people that profess to belong to God. In addition, it is becoming increasingly obvious that judgment is imminent.

And the Lord said when ye therefore shall see the abominations that makes desolate standing in the holy place, let His people; all who love Him and have opened up their hearts to His voice, begin to flee out of the city of religion in order not to be caught up in her terrible judgment.

As mentioned earlier, the flight of the faithful out of the visible Church systems, as commanded by the Lord, is assisted by the ministry of the His servants (the angels, the reapers). This is clearly brought out in Matthew 24: 30. *...And he (that is the Lord) shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* The "**heaven**" here refers to the church world. The Church is positioned in the heavenly places; that is her normal sphere of existence, living and operations (Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20). From the four corners of this heaven, from across the Church world, in all the nations of the earth, wherever His

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people are found, God shall gather His elect unto Him. By the ministry of the reapers, the obedient at heart shall be assisted to flee out of the city of religion and be gathered together unto the Lord. They shall be assisted to hear and hearken to the voice of the Lord saying unto them “*Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues!*” (Revelation 18:4). May the name of the LORD MOST HIGH be praised forever!!!

Chapter Six

UNDERSTANDING THE FIRST LEVEL OF SEPARATION II

Introduction

*I*n the last chapter, we began to look at the gathering of the Lord's people unto Him at the time of His Second Advent. We showed that this is an important aspect of the work of harvest and is associated with the first level of separation among the Lord's people. By the ministry of His servants (the angels, reapers) the Lord gathers out of the visible church systems those of His people who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice, who sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done therein. They are gathered out and unto the Lord so that He can fulfill His redemptive purpose in their lives.

In this chapter, we will be taking a further look at this. In particular we want to examine the reasons for and the nature of this gathering. Why must the Lord gather the willing-hearted among His people out of the visible church systems

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of the day? What are the motivations and goals; what are the implications for the believer as an individual?

The Nature of the Gathering unto the Lord

Matthew 24:15-28 and Luke 17:20-37 reveal certain things concerning the gathering of the Lord's people out of the visible Church systems unto Him at the time of His Second Advent. As emphasized in the last chapter, not all who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour are gathered unto Him. The Lord says in Luke 17:34-36 says "*I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.*" In other words, there is a separation that will be carried out among the Lord's people. Two believers, servants of God, or company of believers are found in the city of religion outwardly doing the same thing but with different heart attitudes towards the Lord; among them, one is taken out of the city and delivered from the coming destruction, while the other is left for judgment.

From other scriptural passages, we are made to understand that the ones taken out of the city are chosen by the Lord because of their heart response to Him. In Psalm 50:5, a passage examined in the last chapter, they are described as a people who have by a choice of life, themselves made

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covenant with God unto sacrificial living. They have taken a decision to live for God and His interest alone. In Matthew 24:28 and Luke 17:37, they are said to be *eagles*, a reference to the fact that they have their affections and desires set on things above (Colossians 3:1-3) and are measurably open to the workings of the spirit of prophecy. They could see and relate with the things that belong to the coming of the Lord. Then, in Matthew 24:31, they are said to be God's *elect*. God made a choice of them because they made a choice of Him above the world and all that is offered by the systems of men.

There is yet another description in Matthew 25:1. Verses 1-30 of the chapter present two related parables of the "*kingdom of heaven*" which are fulfilled specifically at the concluding period of the Church age, at the time of harvest. The things revealed are offshoots of the activities of the Lord in the secret phase of His Second Advent. They flow from the discussions of the Lord in Matthew 24. So we are told in Matthew 25:1 that "***At that time***" (at the time of the Lord's second Advent when the event of Matthew 24:31 is being fulfilled), *the kingdom of heaven shall be likened unto ten virgins who took their lamps and went out of the city of religion, out of the visible church systems of the day, to begin a spiritual journey to meet the Bridegroom.*

The elects that are gathered from the four corners of heaven by the ministry of the angels (the reapers) in Matthew 24:31

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are here described as *virgins*. We notice that this is a quality that must be found in all those who will share with the Lord Jesus Christ in the fullness of His nature and glory (Revelation 14:4). It describes bridal fidelity to the Lord, separation from the spirit of harlotry as it has become institutionalized in the religious systems of men (1 John 2:15-17).

We have seen the character of those gathered. It is important to observe that the gathering of these saints is unto the Lord; there is something He wants to do in and through them. As clearly shown in Luke 17:21-24 and Matthew 24:23-27, the gathering is not unto a man or a system, neither is it confined to a particular place. They shall not say, "*Lo here! or, lo there, For as the bright shining that shineth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.*" It is to this great light of the ministry of the Lord in His Second Advent that the elects are gathered. And the gathering shall be seen in every part of the earth because the light of the Lord's ministry shall reach the ends of the globe.

This is a very crucial observation, because at the time of the end, many false prophets and false Christ shall arise claiming to be the ones around whom the Lord's people should gather to experience the deliverance promised for the last hour. Some will even show great signs and wonders.

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Concerning this, the Lord warns ahead of time. ...*Behold, I have told you before, wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not* (Matthew 24:24-26). It is the Lord and He alone at this time of the end. Not a gathering to a “*special prophet*”, a “*special man of God*”, a “*special Messenger of the last hour*” or to a particular place where all must go BUT a gathering to the Lord, whose presence and ministry is to be witnessed by the faithful ones in all nations of the earth. May the Lord cause us to heed His counsel, in Jesus name; Amen.

Matthew 24:28 and Luke 17:37 reveal two motivations and characteristics of this gathering unto the Lord as it will be expressed in all nations of the earth. In the first passage, we are told ...*For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together*. Typically, eagles gather to feast on meat, carcasses of animals. So we are shown that a major motivation for this gathering of the eagle saints is food, the meat in due season as the Lord puts it (Matthew 24:45; Luke 12:42). This is representative of the word of God that is relevant to the hour and unveiled in the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is a meat, a food, a feast that the Lord comes to serve unto His people at the time of His Second Advent (Luke 12:37; Revelation 3:20). This food is to thoroughly enlighten them in relation to the matters that belong to their

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perfection and full union with Him in glory. It is also to stir up in them deep longings and desires for the things revealed and enable them to mount up with wings to higher and higher grounds in their encounters with Him. **This is the spiritual journey of the virgins** (Mat 25:1); taking on more and more of His image and likeness, receiving moral and spiritual transformations, getting to know Him and the power of His resurrection in an increasing manner until they awake in His likeness (Isaiah 40:31; Philippians 3:10, 11). And what makes this growth and ascent in the spirit possible is spiritual food; the meat due for the hour. Glory to the name of the Lord forever!

Yes! Food is a crucial matter at this time of the end. A different kind of food and eating brought about sin, dying and death (Genesis 3). The food of God eaten will cure man from these woes and bring a people into the full glory of Christ's life. And we are saying that there is the food of the eagles, which the Lord has prepared for the time of the end. Aspects of this relates to the marriage supper (Revelation 19:9). But that does not come *in full reality* at the beginning point of the journey; only those who have made themselves ready by proving measurably faithful in their quest to meet the Bridegroom are granted access at this level (Matthew 25:10).

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Yes, God will realize His eternal purpose of raising up a Bride for His Son, a people in His own perfect image and truly after His likeness. And food will play a crucial role. The food that God has prepared for His people at this time of the end when fully eaten will bring them into incorruptibility and life. It will cause death to be swallowed up in victory (Isaiah 25:6-8). Praise the name of the Lord forever!

So food is a crucial matter in the gathering of the eagles. There is a famine that is increasingly consuming the visible church world. As the prophet puts it, it is not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD (Amos 8:11). The food being served in the visible Church systems can never satisfy the longings of any true virgin for the Lord. It only makes God's people babies forever, clutching to feeding bottles even at old age and subject to the dominion of men and the weak and beggarly elements of this world. Yea, in some assemblies the vomit being served as food even inflames earthly and sensual passions and makes many of God's people to sleep the "*sleep of death*" (Ephesians. 5:14).

The craving for food, the burning desire for more of Christ, the feeling of a sense of emptiness; the search of the soul for reality, something beyond the veil imposed by organized religion, is what drove the eagles out of the city of religion and caused them to be gathered to the light of the Lord's

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ministry (Songs of Solomon 1:7). It is also necessary for the Lord to gather His people out of the disorder of the denominational church systems because the supper of the last hour cannot be served in the courts of men. The religious order cannot accommodate it because so many things that serve man's purpose will have to be given up. You cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land (Psalms. 137: 3, 4).

This is the first observation. Wherever the eagles are truly gathered, there will always be found the prophetic word (2 Peter 1:19) that relates to the Lord's present activities. There will be found a deep longing for more and more of the life of Christ, strong desires and passion for the Lord revealed in a life of consecration, and Holy Spirit-enabled intercessory prayers, worship and high praises. These are defining characteristics of the gathering of the elect unto the Lord at His coming.

The second motivation and characteristic, revealed in Luke 17:37, has to do with the structure of their gatherings. The disciples had wanted to know where those that are delivered out of the city of religion are taken to. So they asked the Lord, "*Where, Lord?*" He provided an answer to their question in the statement that follows...*And he said unto them, wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.* The Greek word, *so'-mah*, translated

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“*body*” here is not a reference to just any kind of body. It refers to a “*sound body*”. The eagles are gathered unto “*a sound body*”. This again is a very important point.

The Church is the body of Christ in the earth. The expression of that body is to be found in every place where the Lord’s people gather together to fellowship (1 Cor.12:12-14). As the local expression of the body of Christ in a given place, there are things revealed in the Scriptures about the operations of the Church. They gather unto the Lord, who is the Head, to fellowship with Him and with one another. They come looking up to Him, the Author and finisher of their faith, to build them up in His image and likeness. They deliberately open up to His Lordship through the Holy Spirit allowing Him to minister to them by His word coming from ministries He places among them and by the diverse operations of the Holy Spirit flowing through all vital members of the body. This arrangement allows for their continual growth and increase until the time when the Lord Himself shall come to bring them to perfection and fullness of life in Him (Eph. 4:1-16).

This simple, but powerful, spiritual structure that God gave the Church, has been largely discarded by the Church systems. Another order has been set up, which enthrones man and allows him to exercise lordly control over the Lord’s people, controlling their minds and hearts. But at the concluding period of the church Age, at the time of harvest

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when things are to be put straight in order for the fullness of God's intentions to be realized, there is a restoration of the true (divine) order so that the Church may be moved *beyond that* into the full glories of the Kingdom.

The implication of all these is that the Lord is causing to emerge in the earth again a true reflection of the body of Christ. In every place, there will be found a people gathered out of the disorder of the organized visible Church systems, being exposed to the bright shining light of the Lord's present-day ministry, and who are meeting together in fellowship with Him and with one another after the order that God has instituted for His body. Man is not in focus, the Lord is everything to them; He is the sole object of their gathering. Hunger for the food of God, desires for Him, passion for His appearing, submission to His rulership and to one another in the Lord, are things to be found in a growing manner in such gatherings. The Lord leads them on to greater and greater expression of the mystery of the body as He prepares them for full union with Him.

While this will be so among the Lord's people that are truly being gathered to Him at this time of the end, things are to get from bad to worse in the denominational church systems until the stage is set for the full unveiling of the "*man of sin*" (2 The 2:3-4). May you be in the right place at a time such as this, in Jesus name; Amen!

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Two Time Periods in the General Time of Harvest and Two Categories of Saints

We will conclude this chapter with yet another observation in Mathew 24: 20- 21, 32-33.

²⁰But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: ²¹For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

³²Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: ³³So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

He that gathereth in summer *is* a wise son: *but* he that sleepeth in harvest *is* a son that causeth shame (Proverbs 10:5)

Now, the harvest work, including the separation among believers with the obedient ones being gathered out of the apostate city unto the Lord, takes place **during the first phase and continues into the beginning period of the second phase of the Lord's Second Advent**. However, the implications for the believer are different, depending on which time period he or she takes his or her flight from religious Babylon.

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In the passages above, the first phase of the Lord's Second Advent (the time of His great, but veiled, presence among His people) is described prophetically as "*the time of summer*". In the natural world, this is the normal time of harvest, the most auspicious time for the harvest to be gathered. Spiritually speaking, it is an opportune time, a time when *any repentant soul* can still tap into the abundant grace, mercies and divine support available through the ministry of Christ to make it to the highest honours in the kingdom of heaven and become part of those described in Revelation 14:1-5 as *the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb*. It is also a time when the believer can take his or her flight out of the city of religion without suffering any damage.

In contrast, the beginning period of the second phase of the Lord's Second Advent ("the time of the revelation of the Son of man") is a *winter period*, spiritually speaking. Even though the harvest work is still accomplished in the period, it is carried out under very grievous conditions. (Even in the natural world, making a journey in the winter has its risks). Because the mystery of iniquity will be fully revealed at the time, believers attempting to take their flight from the religious city will meet with very severe oppositions; they will have to endure a great tribulation (Rev 12:17; 13:7, 15). In addition, they would have suffered the loss of the opportunity to make it among the "*firstfruits*".

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The Lord wants us to know the day of our visitation; He wants us all to know when summer is nigh, be gathered to Him at such a time, and gather fruits unto eternal life by allowing Him work His purpose into our lives. The time of winter will be too late for a believer to begin to gather. It will be a very precarious journey; for then, there would be terrible persecution against the saints who will not worship the image of the beast (Rev 13:7, 15). The believer cannot be looking for the Lord whom her soul loves in the city of religion at such a time (SoS: 5:6, 7).

The summer period is the time when the Lord is near and can be found (Isa. 55: 6, 7). The riches of the divine nature are not held out unto men forever; neither does the call to the throne endure to all generations (Pro 27:24). In the winter period, the door to full union with Christ in His glory would have been shut (Mat 25: 10), that is, the call to sit with Him in His throne would have elapsed. No amount of seeking and knocking would reopen the door. And even though believers may still make it to the *kingdom of heaven*, it will be only at a secondary level.

This is the reality before all true lovers of god at this time. Unfortunately, there will be many among the Lord's people who failed to heed divine counsel. As symbolised in Noah and Lot, there will be two categories of saints revealed at the closing period of the Church Age. Take note, by "saints" we do not mean just professed believers, but

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believers who truly love the Lord. They contrast with many others in the visible church world who do not really know and love Him and who will be carried along **without resistance** by the flood of ungodly activities that shall sweep through the church world. The focus of the Lord is not so much on this category of persons; they merely swell the numbers in the courts of religion. The concern is on the true saints. And we are saying that there will be two categories revealed at the time of the end.

Like Noah, there will be those who being moved with godly fear hearkened to the voice of the Lord, fled the religious systems of men, were gathered to Him in the time of summer and allowed Him to fully build them up into a fitting Temple, a habitation of God by the Spirit (Heb. 11:7; Eph. 2: 22). As Noah built the ark to the saving of his soul and it was sealed against the waters of tribulation (), the Lord will build these ones up and seal them against the coming judgment (Rev 7: 3).

Then there will be others who though have some love for God either tarried too long in the visible Church systems, or like the foolish virgins in Mathew 25, did not make use of their privileges even though they were gathered to the Lord early enough. As it is said in Proverbs 10:5 these ones slept in the time of summer and brought shame.

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Like Lot, this second class of saints did not totally deal with the love of the world. They also loved the city of religion and the opportunities it offers. It was in “*the day of the revelation of the Son of man*”, when things begin to appear in their true and fully developed state, that their eyes were opened to the necessity to flee religious Babylon, or to begin to seek the Lord uncommonly as the foolish virgins discovered. But alas! It was already too late. The hour of great mercies was over; the day of visitation (“*the days of the son of man*”: Luke 17: 22) had been despised. They will still be given a place in the kingdom of heaven, no doubt, but they must now of necessity go through the fiery tribulations that will prove their resolve to follow the path of truth and loyalty to the Lord even in the face of the threat of death. The experiences will also provide them an opportunity to make their ways right with God and be purified.

While the first five verses of Revelation 14 shows the estate of the firstfruits company who made effective use of their privileges in the time of summer, verses 9-17 presents the second category of saints who gathered in the winter period, a people that have to go through tribulations for their preparation to have a share in *the kingdom of heaven* to be complete. By the sheer weight of tribulation, they eventually learnt to wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14). This is not because it is the best way God deals with His people or because it was His will for them. Rather, it was because they despised divine warnings and followed the path of foolishness.

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The same class of believers are described as the “outercourt” of the Temple in Revelation 11: 2. They were left out of what God was doing at the time of the secret phase of His Second Advent. They could not be measured; they did not partake of all the testing, cleansing and purification work the Lord was accomplishing in those who yielded to Him in the first phase of His Second advent because they did not fully open up to the Lord at that time. They eventually became part of the Temple (the *kingdom of heaven*) when fully constituted; howbeit, just the outer court. They do not occupy the place of pre-eminence; they do not sit with Christ on the throne in that kingdom but stand before the throne to serve those who sit on it (Rev 7: 15). It is a glorious estate but a far cry from that to which they were called. May the Lord help us all.

The Table below attempts to summarise the main points in this and the preceding chapter. The Lord Most High bless you and cause you to be part of the wise and faithful ones at this time of the end; in Jesus name; Amen!

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Table 2: The Harvest of the church age and the end of the world: Phases and Categorization.

	Harvest Work relative to the Church Age	Destruction of all opposition to His rule	“A new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness”
Second Advent of Jesus Christ	“The days of Noah”, “The days of Lot” :The days before the flood	“The day in which the Son of man is revealed” : The days of the great flood	Time of His coming in the Kingdom :The days after the flood
Characteristics	Hidden phase Time of His great, but veiled, presence; time of His “bright shining” in the church, from one end of the heaven to the other	Time of His Appearing Public manifestation of the fullness of the mystery of iniquity; Public manifestation of the fullness of Christ (His presence, power and glory) to crush all opposition	Time of His reign in glory
Focus	The Church In particular, the “hidden ones”; the firstfruits : Gathering of the elects (eagle saints), spiritual journey of the virgins to meet the Bridegroom in full union.	The remnant of the church (the “afterfruits”): their tribulations and final preparations	Destruction of religious Babylon , overthrow of the kingdoms of the the nations
Prophetic season	Summer Main period appointed for the	Winter harvest work in the midst	

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	harvest: Harvest work gradually builds up taking over the church world	of most grievous persecution		
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Chapter Seven

A CONCLUDING NOTE: “THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS AWAY TILL ALL BE FULFILLED”

*W*e have laboured under a great burden to bring this word of the Lord to you. A careful study of the prophetic scriptures concerning the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ suggests that **the time period is already upon us**. And the Lord said that the generation of mankind alive in that time will also witness the things that have been marked out to be fulfilled in the first two phases of His presence. In other words, they will witness the events of the summer and the winter seasons. ...*Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled* (Mat 24:34; see also Luke 21:32 and Mat 23:36). Just like all the things spoken by the Lord came upon that generation that was alive at the time of His First Advent (Mat 23:26) so also will all these things come upon this generation.

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How long is a generation you may ask? The minimum time revealed in scriptures is 40 years (Num. 32:13; Psalm 95:10); the maximum is 120 years (Gen 6:3). But whatever the time duration, what is certain is that we are in a generation that will fully fulfil prophecies, one upon whom the ends of the world are come (1 Cor. 10: 11).

And why the burden? If you read the words of the Lord to His people in Revelation 2 and 3, you will discover two things in relation to His activities among them. The first is that we are judged as individuals. *“To him that overcometh”* is the tenor of God’s word (Rev 2:7; 11). He says again *“he that hath an ear to hear let him hear”* (see also Mat 13: 9).

The second is that the Lord places much emphasis on the state of the assemblies of His people. This is because while it is true that we are judged as individuals, our spiritual progress is, to a large extent, determined by our spiritual environment. We cannot go far with the Lord if our spiritual environment hinders growth. And, as we showed earlier, this is one of the reasons why the Lord has to bring His people out of the visible Church systems at the time of the end when perfection and fullness is in view.

Thus, deliverance from the organised church systems is a crucial beginning step in the journey of the believer to meet the Bridegroom (the journey to the fullness that the Lord

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comes to give) in this last hour. Though what follows thereafter will depend on the extent he or she is faithful and submissive to the Lord, it is a first step that all believers that are alive at this time and mindful of the glory of the Lord **must ultimately** take.

There is no middle ground at the time of the end! It is either the believer who claims to love the Lord follows on to know and meet with Him in the fullness of His glory or slides back to the outercourt where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in regret. If you fail to heed the call of the Lord in this time of *summer*, as long as you are truly His and you remain physically alive, you will be **forced** to do so in the *winter* period when the judgments of God are upon the earth. But that will not be good for you.

This word is coming to you because the Lord loves you and cares for your soul. The LORD Himself will raise up against the “*great city*”, the city of religion, **and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against Him**, a destroying wind (Jer. 51:1). He does not want you or any of His beloved ones to be caught up in the evil and judgment that is fast approaching. May you then deliver your soul and flee from the judgment that is soon to come.