

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

Two months of the new year, and decade, have come and gone. Calendar time moves so rapidly. The big question confronting us all is: Are we spiritually keeping pace with this incredible evaporation of time? Or does the same need befall us as existed in the case of the Ephesians and Colossians? That need was literally to buy back, through extra effort and diligence, lost time!

The days are incredibly evil. They will only get worse. There is no hope of conditions' improving, this side of the return of Christ and the establishment of a world-ruling government under His personal surveillance.

For us to even make it, we must prove by our daily lives that obedience is required in place of acts of insubordination, rebellion, and indifference. To become a usable instrument in the hands of Jesus Christ requires maximum, dedicated, consistent effort and mastery.

Now is the hour! The hoopla of the past was a mere barrage of words. The reality of generalized prophecies of the last days is becoming increasingly clear. Only the naive and wishful thinkers will remain blinded to the times.

If you can read political jargon, you are aware that the calamitous events of the present are not accidents. They are controlled — controlled to gain specific results from a gullible and unsuspecting populace. And such knowledge can indeed be troubling unless we mightily call upon God for a greater portion of His Holy Spirit — the power to effect personal mastery and to conditionally accept the times and events which are daily transpiring.

Will, now, to endure to the end. As we have stated so many times, no one knows who will make it to the conclusion of the last-day affairs. Therefore, do not become alarmed if people will, individually, to depart from the way. Remember, they are doing only that which they personally want to do. NOW is a time of severe and critical testing — testing of the faith, continuity, and will of us all.

Who desires to be a loser? Tears of regret and sadness flow down the cheeks of Olympic athletes who fail to achieve their objectives — objectives which result only in a temporal crown of glory. How will we feel if we — having been given the chance to be successful servants of God — throw it away of our own volition? That means throwing away the hope of a crown of glory just to please the self for a moment. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For, all too many will fail. You do not need to be one of them! Do you possess that faith?

For this month, we are back to the series of Monthly Letters dealing with the subject "The Two Facets of Divine Revelation." It is recommended that you carefully keep these letters in order and review the earlier ones to set the stage for the current one.

May you have a meaningful and educational study! So now to the study.

Truth Is Spiritual — Eternal!

The Truth of God is spiritual — an area of comprehension beyond the physical capability of man. Physical man can and should comprehend the letter application — that is, obedience to the letter of the law. But simple obedience to the letter of the law is inadequate to obtain eternal life. To any enlightened mind, spiritual obedience is not contrary to (in opposition to) letter-of-the-law response. On the contrary, it is plainly evident that the spiritual endeavor arises superior to and is built upon the letter-of-the-law dimension. Spiritual obedience is a requirement more intense and demanding. It is of the heart — the very motives and thoughts of all human beings. Spiritual obedience is a unification of letter obedience and obedience from the heart and mind — the ability to restrain oneself from sin of the heart and mind, as well as from letter-of-the-law transgression.

Before we proceed to evaluate the above subject, one other factor needs to be taken into consideration: Not all truth is spiritual. Accurate facts of science and other disciplines are true. But such information is physical — of the human domain. It can be understood by study and observation. Such "truth" is not of the spiritual domain. Yet, the accuracy of the physical is never in opposition to or contrary to the immutability of the spiritual (Rom. 1:20). When physical knowledge is accurate and properly understood, it is found to be in complete harmony with — and to absolutely substantiate — spiritual knowledge. The spiritual is absolute. It must be revealed. There is no other way to know or comprehend it.

Because the spiritual is not naturally known — since it must be revealed — human beings, born of flesh with natural minds, tend to

evaluate things inversely. That is, they use the observable physical domain as the basis of evaluating all beliefs and practices. For example, God is spirit. He cannot be known naturally (John 17:2-3). He must be revealed (Matt. 11:27). Yet, because He cannot be known except by revelation, natural man is deceived into creating a host of fabricated gods which are not gods at all. Despite the creation of his own gods and the related conceptions — created from a physical fabric — man evaluates everything on the basis of this conjured-up knowledge, convinced that he is always right. Only the called of God can KNOW what is the divinely revealed Truth. Those not called will "confidently" live in the sanctuary of their ill-conceived knowledge and belief.

To put it more directly, physical knowledge must be judged by the spiritual. And spiritual knowledge cannot be humanly acquired — it is given to man from a benevolent God. The physically codified knowledge, the Bible, cannot speak contrary to any other revealed knowledge. The two types of knowledge are in harmony. But the only ones who will understand the Bible are those called of God — those to whom this very unique revelation has been given. All others will corrupt and pervert the Truth on the basis of physical expectation, desire, or emotional requirement.

Now, brethren, let us see the Biblical clarification of the above concepts. Truth is spiritual — eternal. It cannot be altered or changed. It is absolute — regardless of the time, conditions, or people involved. That is, it does not change on the basis of crossing any arbitrary date line or time line. What God made eternal is eternal. His Truth — all of it — is eternal. The greatest Satanic deception is the conception that what was made eternal could be destroyed, annulled, or changed by the death of Jesus Christ (Matt. 5:17-18). It is physical things that are transitory and relative — they can change. But spiritual things are eternal and cannot change. Such is the decree of the Everliving Creator God.

Jesus Christ knew the natural tendency of man. He had a part in man's creation. Because of that creation, Jesus had to die to make it possible for man to be forgiven — and for man to have a change of heart, desiring to obey the unchanging Word rather than attempting to change it to conform to his own natural proclivities.

Spiritual Things Must Be Revealed

As stated previously, things of God are not naturally known to man. Being spiritual, the things which are of God cannot be observed, touched, or handled. They cannot be subjected to any of the rationale processes of man.

Paul makes it clear to the various peoples in his day that those spiritual things which have to do with salvation — the only hope of man —

have been hidden from the beginning. He wrote to the Romans, ". . . to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel . . . according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Rom. 16:25). Further, he said to the Ephesians, ". . . see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God . . ." (Eph. 3:9). Those hidden things of the past began to be revealed to the called of God in the day of Jesus Christ. Subsequently, the apostle Paul was called and commissioned to continue the proclamation of the very same things Jesus taught and lived.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that those hidden things of God were being revealed to them (I Cor. 2:10). They could then comprehend the spiritual on the basis of that revelation. By the Holy Spirit, the Corinthian people could understand another level of knowledge — a level not known to man naturally. They were privy to the Truth — the form of knowledge by which they could evaluate all other knowledge. Now they could grasp the meaning of an otherwise closed book — The Holy Bible. For, natural man cannot understand the things of the Bible in its true spiritual dimension. Such knowledge must be revealed. Again, let us emphasize, the letter codification of the spiritual Word may be read and obeyed in the letter by natural man. But the letter application is insufficient for salvation. Man must obey the spiritual intent of God's Word. Such spiritual obedience is not possible except as the result of a call from God and subsequent receipt of the power of God's Holy Spirit. Notice carefully what Paul taught the Corinthians — a people who had previously or were now accepting the human concept that one can grasp and understand anything he wills to comprehend. Paul said, ". . . the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

Spiritual things are hidden until God wills to reveal them. The concealing of Truth is applicable in terms of both times and individuals. It was hidden in a general way until the day of Jesus Christ. Individually, it is and will continue to be a mystery until God calls and reveals it to any specific human being. Spiritual things belong to God alone. They remain hidden with the God Family and the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote, ". . . what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2:11).

Who Will Understand?

All men are spiritually blind as they exist in the natural state — in the flesh and with only the natural mind (I Cor. 2:9). They cannot comprehend spiritual things.

To do so, man must first be called of God (Rom. 8:28; John 6:44, 65). Once called, he must be responsive to that call (John 1:12). He must reject the self — repent — and then accept Christ and be baptized (Acts 2:38). As a result of this act of obedience, the Holy Spirit is given (Acts 5:32). With the aid of God's Holy Spirit, the called and baptized can comprehend another level of knowledge — the spiritual (I Cor. 2:14; 2:12).

This procedure fulfills the will and purpose of the Father. We must remember that one cannot of his own accord come to the Father. The whole purpose of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was for the express purpose of reconciling us to the Father. The process of conversion is essential to the reestablishment of a close relationship between God and man — a father-son relationship. Jesus explained this principle in His day: ". . . the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

Natural man cannot please God. Only those truly repentant, called, and chosen of God — those who have received the Spirit because of willing obedience — can come to Him. They alone can comprehend that superior level of knowledge. They are the ones who understand that plane of knowledge which transcends the natural knowledge of man (I Cor. 2:9). They are the ones who truly love God. The proof of that love is implicit and total obedience to all things spiritual.

What Are the Spiritual Things?

As has been pointed out, spiritual things cannot be comprehended by the natural, carnal mind. They are spiritually discerned only. And obedience to them is an obvious manifestation — to the enlightened — of conversion, change of heart and mind, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Contrariwise, rebellion against and/or rejection of those spiritual principles is a manifestation, too — a manifestation of carnality. But what are those things of the Spirit — those things by which man will be judged?

Foremost, spiritual things comprise the Truth (I John 5:6). The Truth is not just a truth — that is, an accurate fact! It is the Truth — both specific and exclusive. That Truth is knowledge of the spiritual domain. Most important of all, it is the knowledge of the basic requirements for entrance into that domain. These include keeping the Law (Rom. 7:14). Under no circumstances can one justify the belief that Romans 7:14 applies only to the Ten Commandments. The term "law" is not exclusive, but always means all law. This means the entirety of the Word of God (Ps. 119:160; Isa. 40:8). God's Word is spiritual. The only

exclusion is that portion of God's Word specifically called "carnal" (Heb. 7:16 and 9:10). What is carnal? The Greek word used in Hebrews 9:10 is sarx. In nearly all places where the word is used, it is translated "flesh." The only exceptions are Hebrews 9:10 and Romans 8:6-7. In those verses, the word is translated "carnal" or "carnally." Further, the word used in Hebrews 7:16 is sarkikos. This word is translated both "carnal" and "flesh." It is a cognate of the root word used in Hebrews 9:10 and Romans 8:7. These words, then, have a common root affinity.

From the above, we see that the "carnal" ordinances of Hebrews 7:16 and 9:10 refer to laws or regulations which involve the flesh. They are related to animal sacrifices and other types of tangible sacrifices. Common sense should tell anyone that such ordinances cannot include the Holy Days and the other statutes of God. All statutes and judgments of God are a part of the spiritual Law which is eternal. They are an important part of the Word of God — a tried and proven word which will endure for all eternity. The conception or belief that Christ nailed such laws to the stake is NOT of God. What was nailed to the stake was the body — the flesh — of Jesus Christ. He became the sacrifice for us. He paid the price for our rebellion against the TOTAL Word of God — against the spiritual way.

Where is any proof that a Holy Day, a judgment, or any other law is of the flesh? What animal was the Feast of Trumpets? If it is not of the flesh, then it belongs to the eternal, spiritual domain — that domain which is unchanging.

The Spiritual Cannot Change — Why?

Jesus emphasized the eternal character of God's laws and words. He said, ". . . Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18). Certainly, heaven and earth have not passed away. Therefore, the Law (all, not just a part) has not passed away. It is still inexorably binding and will form the basis of man's appointed judgment in the day of Jesus Christ.

Next, God bound His Word to chosen servants throughout the ages. Promises and assurances, some unconditional, were given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Any change or alteration of these historical agreements would make God culpable. One must of necessity ask, "Who desires to accuse God?" Any of today's beliefs and practices which require change or rejection of promises, assurances, and agreements of God as given to the patriarchs do not proceed from God and are unauthorized. God and His Son Jesus Christ are not liars (Titus 1:2; Num. 23:19). They do not change (Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17; Heb. 13:8). Why not? Because their way is tried and proven. Because their way is perfect — one cannot improve upon it.

For the above reasons, Jesus emphatically stated, ". . . it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law [all of it] to fail" (Luke 16:17). It is bound and certified for all eternity. It cannot and never will fail. Man can place his hope and trust in it. But the perfection and certainty of that way of life is contrary to the way known to man — change, alteration, doubt, confusion, and indifference.

We should recall the confidence and enthusiasm of the Psalmist David, when he wrote: "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me" (Ps. 119:49-50). To the truly converted, the whole of God's Word is an anchor of hope. It is the basis of all hope and trust. It is the whole of God's Word — not mere sections, parts, or divisions usually accepted on the basis of preferred belief. All the Bible is valid and binding upon the converted. The true Christian is not partial in his acceptance of the total Scripture. And in this is the manifestation of true and genuine conversion. Such human beings, called and chosen of God, do not sectionalize the Scriptures — do not argue with the total requirements of the Bible — but on the other hand are responsive to all the dictates of God.

One other thought: Jesus was the whole of God's Word made flesh (John 1:1, 14). He does not change (Heb. 13:8), because the Word does not change. Our hope of eternal life is Christ in us (Col. 1:27). Therefore, the manifestation of Christ in us — our hope — is obedience to the total Word. For, Christ is not and never will be partial. He is either in us wholly or He is not in us at all. Once He is in us, of course, we will grow up to the full maturity He possessed in His own body. But such growth does not mean doctrinal change — only additional knowledge and character perfection, in union with what is already understood.

The perverted conception of change does not proceed from God. God has bound Himself otherwise. His Word is perfect. He has given assurances and promises to chosen servants throughout the ages. Any change, therefore, would devastate the will, plan, and purpose of God. Also, change would reduce God to the human plane. Only one power would ever induce men to believe in such change.

In conclusion, let us once again emphasize the fact that **SPIRITUAL THINGS ARE ETERNAL**.

Jesus said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17-18). Heaven and earth are still here, and the plan of God has not yet been fulfilled. Therefore, the conclusion is clear. The Law (all) and the Prophets of God are still binding upon us today. As stated earlier, "the law" does not refer to a specific instrument but to the first five books of the Bible.

Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). Christ was the Word of God made flesh. But He was quickened by the Holy Spirit. The Word which was manifested in the fleshly form of Jesus Christ, and quickened by the Holy Spirit, cannot change — for it is the same historically, currently, and in the future.

The Psalmist David was inspired to write, "For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth [God's Word] endureth to all generations" (Ps. 100:5; note also Ps. 119:21). And again, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89). Can there be any doubt? David knew, and as a result appealed to God on the basis of the unchanging nature of His Word, assurances, and promises. David will not be disappointed, for God remembers His agreements even if most humans do not.

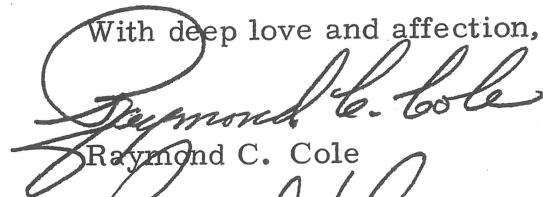
The Scriptures are the laws, statutes, judgments, promises, and assurances of God to His created subjects — mankind. That Word is absolute. It is tried and proven. It cannot be broken (John 10:35). Yes, indeed, spiritual things are eternal. Whereas those things created, the physical realm, are temporal. They are transitory — here today, but changed or gone tomorrow. Man makes a great mistake in failing to differentiate between the glorious, eternal knowledge and the physical — transitory, ephemeral, and changeable. Because of this failure to recognize such a monumental difference, the avenue has opened for many diverse explanations of Scripture.

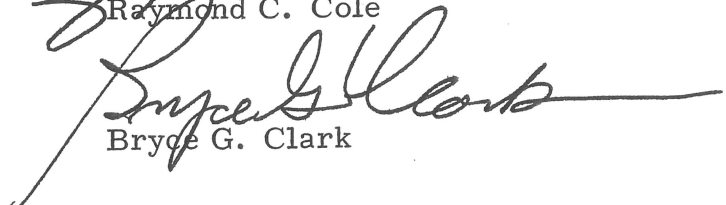
The duty incumbent upon us is to recognize God's priceless gift in this day — the revealed spiritual knowledge, the knowledge of a way of life. The ultimate question with which we all are faced is this: Do we have sufficient faith to weather the storms of doubt and misgiving which assail us? Many have proven they cannot be faithful! Only tribulation of the worst sort will bring them back to that faith. If we can continue faithfully in the knowledge initially delivered, we need not be subjected to the final trial.

May God's great blessings and love be upon you. We are living in times of ever-increasing trouble and evil. Take heart and do not lose faith. God will not forsake you if you will not to forsake Him.

Next time, we will cover these subtopics: What Is the Word of God? What Is Man? What Things Can Man Comprehend?

With deep love and affection,


Raymond C. Cole


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