

Church of God, The Eternal

P. O. Box 775
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July 1981

Dear Brethren:

A warm, special greeting to you all. We do pray God's great and inspiring blessings are received by all.

Another winter has come and gone. God's Holy Day plan is in progress—the passing of Passover, Unleavened Bread and Pentecost. With the advent of spring comes new optimism and hope. People, in general, just feel better. Ready to take on the challenges of life.

We do not wish to become trite by singing the old, worn-out slogan, "It's later than you think." Yes, all of us KNOW that time is short. Just how short, however, we have no specific idea. Having some idea now of the plans and aspirations of men, it does seem the dark foreboding days of last-day prophecies are just about upon us.

If God deemed it necessary to admonish His people to be ever watchful and spiritually alert in the days spoken of by the apostles Paul, Peter and John, most certainly we need to prepare for those inevitable days, *NOW*. For with the passing of every single year, we are just that much closer to the final hour of man's independent and rebellious existence.

Have we become as one—the one body in mind and heart? Are we the loving, compassionate, merciful and tolerant people we should be toward others? Are we as demanding and determined personally to master and overcome the self as we should be? Have we achieved the level of perfection which God has made possible? Do we still react and emotionally respond to pressures, circumstances and conditions on the basis of flesh and not the Spirit of God?

In all cases we must be about our Father's business—the business of *personal* mastery. The biggest doubt—do we have the faith, courage and conviction to see us through to the end? Can we effectively resist all the pulls and temptations of Satan and his demons? Will any of us be caught in the web of heresy? Just how strong is our faith?

Remember, we are a part of those people called and to whom God has given the light and knowledge of Truth. The final test is a test of faith. Can we endure any test of that faith—the conviction and belief of that Truth to which we were called? The test of time is indeed revealing!

For this month we hope to clarify other facets of the concept: "The Two Facets of Divine Revelation." Let us move directly into the subject.

Times When Spiritual Truth Was Codified or Manifested

Synopsis: In May '81, we analyzed the topic, "Man Cannot Naturally Comprehend Spiritual Things." Previously we have covered several introductory topics: A. "Two Kinds of Knowledge: Physical and Spiritual." B. "Biblical Truth Is Spiritual." C. "What Is the Word of God?" D. "What Is Man? Carnal, Flesh." E. "Natural Man Can Comprehend the Physical Only."

Understanding the fact that God's Truth has been a mystery kept secret from the beginning—until revealed during Christ's time—the logical progress of the subject under consideration requires an explanation of the *times* God spoke, directly or indirectly, to peoples of the past. Did they not understand the laws, statutes, truths—a way of life given to them? If spiritual obedience is possible only since the time of Christ, what was the status of Israel and the Jews from Moses' day until the time of Christ?

Let us now understand. To lack knowledge in this area makes an understanding of God's awesome purpose and the actual historical events which surround the existence of both Judah and Israel impossible. Further, without it an understanding of the will of God revealed in the "New Testament" is impossible. Precisely, it is a misunderstanding of the ancient manifestation—codification—of God's Law which has resulted in much assumption, corruption and perversion of all Scripture.

Let us get the facts together in logical sequence and with an eye to historical relevancy. Failure in these objectives will, without doubt, leave us in the abyss of spiritual darkness. But God's people are called to understand—they are the enlightened.

How God Made His Will Known

The Word of God was codified hundreds of years before Christ. How? And to whom did He make His will known?

Paul wrote, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son . . ." (Hebrews 1:1–2). God spoke! He spoke through the prophets to His people. What He spoke was His Word. He gave them His Word—the eternal truths. But there is no indication—even here—that these people had the individual and personal ability to obey those words.

It is interesting to note, Jesus Christ was appointed to speak for God the Father, in these last days. What did He speak?

Time and time again Jesus emphasized the profound fact that only the words of the Father had been spoken by Him. Not one word which had not been given by the Father had Jesus presumed to speak. He said the Father had given Him a commandment of what to speak and do.

A careful review of what Jesus Christ spoke quickly reveals the fact His messages were an amplification of what had been delivered earlier—by the prophets to God's people. This very fact makes two principles quite obvious. One, the *whole* requirement of God's Law was *not* even known at the time of its initial delivery. Two, obedience was not possible prior to the time of Christ. Why? How can one properly obey (the dimension given by Christ) the Truth when it is not fully known or understood?

Further, Christ's first mission revolved around this early codification of the words of God (Luke 24:44–45). Implicit obedience was absolutely essential for the fulfillment of every work and purpose of Christ from the time of His death, burial and resurrection on to our day.

What God spoke through Christ was not new. It was a definite and specific amplification of what had been codified earlier (Hebrews 4:1).

The Words of God Are Spirit and Life

Moses heard the voice of God. He wrote what God had delivered to him—what God had uttered. Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and all the Old Testament authors had merely recorded the words which God had spoken. Those words form the writing of the pages of the Bible. They were *physically manifested*—written, codified in recorded fashion. But they were far more than physical words. Jesus said, ". . . the words that I speak unto you [amplification of the words originally spoken by the prophets of old], they are *spirit*, and they are *life*" (John 6:63).

Spirit cannot be seen. It is not tangible. By miracle then, God had made what was spirit into something tangible, codified—something which could be seen, held and read. Yet it could not be obeyed spiritually. As we shall see later in this letter, only physical obedience was possible.

Let us take a look at this subject from another perspective. By remembering what we have covered—what is plainly written in the Bible, not the mere interpretations of men's minds—the clarity of this matter will be quite obvious and comprehensible.

The Word Made Flesh

Words are audible. The words vocalized by God are spirit and life. They are the very words originally delivered to the prophets of old.

As long as the words of life remain spirit—and they cannot change—and man remains carnal, an impasse exists. The way into spiritual obedience does not exist. It is because of this impasse that Jesus Christ came into the world. It was one of the significant reasons for His first appearance. By that first appearance, what transpired?

Jesus Christ was the Word of God—that which is spirit and life. In the Greek He is called the "*Logos*"—the Word. He was the very Word of God made flesh. He was that which is inherently spirit and life living; functioning and behaving in the flesh. John wrote, "In the [a] beginning was the Word [*Logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Continuing, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) *full* of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Many years later, the Apostle John had this to say, "That which was from the *beginning* [words which are spirit and life], which we have heard [words vocalized], which we have seen [manifested form—for spiritual things are not seen] with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled [tangible—a physical reality], of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you [the called of God only—John 14:17] that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard [the truths which Christ had taught the disciples, the same Word which existed from the beginning, that Word which was manifested to ancient Israel and Judah, the eternal spiritual Truth of God] declare we unto you [the New Testament Christians], that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:1–3).

God is Spirit. His words are spirit and life. In the process of time, as God wills, those words were delivered to chosen subjects, who in turn recorded (codified) them for the physical benefit of the intended recipients.

At a later time, Jesus Christ was sent to this earth as a Messenger of God. He was that same Word made flesh. What He lived and spoke was the *spiritual amplification* of the Word which was historically codified for a reason. What should be obvious is this: What did not initially exist as spirit cannot be made spirit. Christ was of the spirit world. He was made flesh—the Word made flesh—so that flesh could be condemned for what it is and the way into the spiritual realm manifested.

Let us not lose sight of our real objective in this study. There were times when the spiritual—that which is eternal—was codified or manifested.

The Law Codified—at Time of Israel as a Nation

The Law is spiritual. It is holy, good, righteous, perfect. It is eternal. Being eternal, it has always existed.

Why, then, did the Apostle Paul write, "Moreover, the law *entered*, that the offence might abound . . ."? What did he mean? When did the Law enter that sin might be exceeding sinful—abound? And was this the first time the Law ever existed?

Paul clarifies! Let us note the context of Romans, chapter five. The way out of ultimate death is being explained.

In verse 8 we read, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). For whom? From what point in time?

Continuing, verses 12–14, ". . . as by one man [Adam] sin [that which is the pursuit of the natural flesh, Romans 7:23, 25] entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For *until* the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression [break one commandment and you have broken them all], who is the figure of him that was to come."

Before analyzing the meaning, let us consider one other text which plays a significant role. In Romans 3:20, Paul stated, ". . . by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

The Law defines what sin is. By breaking it, eternal death ultimately results. However, where there is no law, sin is not imputed. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses. It is obvious the Law existed long before the time of Moses. In fact, it preceded the days of Adam. For Adam sinned—that is, he broke the Law. Death resulted!

What then did Paul mean by the expressions: 1) "For *until* the law" and 2) "Moreover, the law entered?" Once and for all time, the Bible establishes the fact, these expressions cannot mean the first appearance, the enactment of law.

Again, consider: The Law is spiritual, and spiritual things are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18 and John 14:17). Yet, we are informed that ancient Israel was required to render only *letter* obedience to the Law (Romans 7:6 and 2 Corinthians 3:6).

There was only one possible way that Israel could do this. The Law had to be codified. It became the legal constitution of that newly established nation. Paul refers to it as its *entering* or *establishment* as law.

Letter obedience was required, yet *real* obedience was never possible. God expressed this fact to Moses. He said, "O that there were such an heart in them [remember the heart of man, Jeremiah 17:9?], that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever" (Deuteronomy 5:29)! And Joshua understood this matter very well. He said, at the time of renewing the covenant agreement between God and Israel, ". . . Ye *cannot* serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins" (Joshua 24:19).

So at the time of Moses, the Law was codified. It was written and became the legal constitution of the nation of Israel. Yet it existed prior to the time of Adam. It has always existed because it is spiritual and spiritual things are eternal. Spiritual things have always existed and cannot be destroyed.

The giving (entering) of the Law can be reviewed by reading Exodus, chapters 19 through 24. In chapter 19, elaborate preparations are made in anticipation of this monumental event. Then, by the very mouth and voice of God, the Ten Commandments—the foundation of all covenant law, Exodus 34:27—were powerfully and earth-shakingly uttered in the hearing of all Israel. Finally, the sealing and ratifying of this national constitution was accomplished in chapter 24. To this agreement, all Israel was to respond unanimously. This the people did—Exodus 24:3.

Exodus, chapters 19–24 speak of the initial entering—codifying—of the Law. On several occasions the Law was reaffirmed by Israel. In fact, the book Deuteronomy means the second Law—the second ratification of the Law, the national constitution.

To codify means to systematically arrange and set down in written form. Why did God want His Law to be written in letter form?

The Law Codified as a Witness

God had thunderously *spoken* into existence (nationally speaking) the Ten Commandments. But that was only the beginning. A short time later (after the Mt. Sinai experience) God met with Moses. In this meeting, the Almighty Creator God detailed the required construction of a mercy seat. Among other things this mercy seat was to serve as a place where God would sit and communicate to Moses subsequent laws, statutes, judgments and ordinances He willed to give Israel periodically. In Exodus 25:21–22 we read, "And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of *all things* which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."

What Moses received from God he was to deliver to Israel, God's chosen people. Also, these words were to be written—recorded. Let us note a number of examples of this writing.

Concerning God's initial *verbalization* of law: "And Moses came and told the people *all* the words of the Lord, *and all* the judgments: *and all* the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do. And Moses *wrote all* the words of the Lord . . ." (Exodus 24:3–4).

Exodus 34:27—The time of the second writing of the Ten Commandments by the finger of God: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel."

Note: What words God intended is not too clear in this text, unless what Moses was required to write were the same words God was to write on stone the second time by His own finger. This will be apparent shortly. Regardless, the subject under consideration is plain. Moses was to write down the detailed instructions of God.

All God's Law—His words of life—were written in a book. They were written for the benefit of His people (Deuteronomy 30:10).

The record is precise. All God's Law was recorded as God instructed in Deuteronomy 31:24.

Also, those words which God spoke to all Israel He recorded. They were written in rock—about as permanent a substance as obtainable here on earth. A number of references are given for study and thought.

Exodus 32:15–16—"And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were *written* on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they *written*. And the tables were the work of God, and the *writing* was the *writing* of God, graven upon the tables."

Exodus 34:1—"And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will *write* upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest." Compare Exodus 34:28.

Deuteronomy 10:1–2—"At that time the Lord said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood. And *I* [God] will *write* on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark."

What is commonly called the Old Testament was written out completely. As the words were personally uttered by God, they were written down by Moses. And as time elapsed, other servants of God received words from God. These words were recorded, too. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Micah and others received direct instructions from God. All were recorded. Why? The answer will come later.

The term "law" is quite expansive. None other than Jesus Christ referred to the book of Psalms as a part of the Law: In John 10:34, He said, "Is it not *written* in your *law*, I said, Ye are gods? . . ." (a quote from Psalm 82:6).

Scripture (that which is written) had been compiled. Yet Daniel did not understand it. It had been put down in letter fashion. But a recording of letter-of-the-law information does not reveal intent, meaning and purpose. Note the statement of God to Daniel. He said, ". . . I [God] will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth . . ." (Daniel 10:21). These scriptures had been previously written. But, they were not understood. So letter-of-

the-law codification does not equal understanding. Such comprehension of Scripture can come of a *spiritual revelation only*.

This principle is once again dramatically reinforced in the life of the prophet Daniel. In the last part of Daniel, the prophet himself was told, ". . . O Daniel, shut up the words [already written], and seal the book [the Bible], even to the time of the end . . ." (Daniel 12:4).

Spiritual knowledge of the contents of the Bible—God's Holy Word—is revealed at God's appointed times. Reading the Bible does not constitute understanding. And letter application does not fulfill the spiritual intent. We shall understand this principle better a little later.

The Old Testament was codified—written. But it was not understood.

In exactly the same way, the instructions of the New Testament were written down—recorded, codified. Luke spoke plainly of this endeavor. He said, "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding [present with Christ the full length of His personal ministry] of all things from the very first, to *write* unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luke 1:1–4).

At some time in the life of the Apostle Peter, he was inspired to canonize the New Testament scriptures. He wrote, ". . . I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things [the Truth in which they were instructed] always in remembrance (2 Peter 1:15).

And the Apostle John was inspired to write of himself, ". . . Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that *readeth*, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are *written* therein: for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:1–3).

Both the Old and New Testaments were written—codified. Spiritual things—the words of God—were reduced to letter.

Why? As we have already seen, it decidedly was *not* for the purpose of *spiritual* obedience. For obedience from the heart and mind were not possible.

First, the Law was set before Israel as a witness. Moses was instructed of God to write, "See, I have set [codified] before thee this day life and good [better obedience], and death and evil [disobedience]" (Deuteronomy 30:15). In verse 19 he continues, "I call heaven and earth to record this day *against* you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

As previously indicated and which will be elaborated upon, this obedience required was of the letter only. And *this letter obedience was the physical application of a spiritual law*. Letter obedience did not result in everlasting life but it did afford them favor and blessings nationally.

What is important to remember, here, is this: The Law—eternal Word of God—was codified (manifested). Yet spiritual obedience was not possible.

Secondly, the children of Israel were called of God and given the codified manifestation of the Law. They were told that they could not obey it from the heart and mind. But, years later, through the Apostle Paul, the real reason for this past experience of Israel was to *write indelible lessons for those to be spiritually called at an appointed time*. Paul said, when speaking of Israel's problems and sins, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples [examples]: and they are *written for our admonition*, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). To the Romans he elaborated, "For whatsoever things were *written* aforetime were written for *our learning*, that we through patience and comfort of the *scriptures* might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

Succinctly stated, Israel received a codified version of God's Law—His eternal, spiritual Word—so that a book of their experiences could be written for us. Much of the Bible is the recording of these experiences—thus forming a substantial part of the Word of God—historical lessons which most refuse to accept today. Consequently they are making the same mistakes and will, therefore, have to pay the same price as ancient Israel.

In exactly the same way, the New Testament is a series of spiritual lessons—lessons of disobedience on the part of those called of God, given the words of life, and this time afforded the power of the Holy Spirit whereby they could obey from the mind and heart. At the same time the New Testament is a record of the faithful and the rewards promised.

Jesus Christ, Himself, was the eternal Word of God made flesh. He was a manifestation of the word of life in action. Yet human beings have denied Him in every conceivable way. If they could not see and respond to the actual manifestation of the *Word of God*, how is it possible for men who have never seen Him to respond and obey God

Himself? The fact remains, they cannot. Until God calls, reveals the Truth and supplies the spirit of faith by which to believe, obedience of men is not possible.

In summary, the Old Testament is a codification of the words of life—the laws, statutes and judgments of God. Also, it is the history of a physical people given the Word of God, but due to fleshly weaknesses were unable to perform. And the writing of both the laws and the history is for the specific benefit of those called in the last days—that they might not sin as Israel did and receive the same consequences.

Further, Jesus Christ came as a manifestation of that eternal Word in action. He was the Word made flesh. By God's design and spirit, Christ became the spiritual dimension of the Word of God—living in the flesh.

The four Gospels are a basic spiritual magnification of the letter-codified Law of Israel's day. Christ came to live it, not destroy those ways.

Then as a result of His life—living the Truth—in the flesh, this death—destruction of the old self and His resurrection to life by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ can now take up His abode in each one called to perform the will of God (Colossians 1:27). By that means, the eternal Truth—Word of God—can be lived in the lives of all mortal men. The remainder of the New Testament (beyond the four Gospels) is the history of men called of God and their faithfulness or disobedience.

The Old Testament is the recorded history of weak men—given the codified Law—and their consequential failures. Jesus Christ is the example of letter and spiritual obedience—the Word in the flesh. And the New Testament is the history of man afforded the power of the Spirit and his subsequent faithfulness or *willing* rejection of the Truth.

There is but one inevitable conclusion: Though the Bible is codified—in written form—it does not mean it can be either comprehended or obeyed. After all, people did not see or respond to the life Christ lived, even though He was the Truth of God living in the flesh.

What were the promises for obedience to Israel?

Longevity of Life Only for Physical Obedience

In Deuteronomy 30:15–19 are God's final instructions to His people. They were informed of the absolute responsibility of physical obedience. And for that obedience they

were promised a long life. Notice the promise God gave, through Moses, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, *and the length of thy days . . .*" (Deuteronomy 30:19–20). There was no promise of everlasting life for obedience to the Old Covenant—only length of days.

The better promises were reserved for the New Covenant. Years later the Apostle Paul wrote, "But now hath he [Christ] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Hebrews 8:6). The most significant "better promise" is that of eternal life promised for spiritual obedience to the Law versus the promise of long life for letter obedience to the Law.

Under the terms of the New Covenant, the same eternal laws are to be obeyed. The difference is in the "how." The terms of the Old Covenant required letter obedience only (Romans 7:6 and 2 Corinthians 3:6). But the terms of the New Covenant require spiritual obedience—from the heart and mind (Romans 7:6; Romans 8; 2 Corinthians 3). And such obedience is not possible without direct revelation and assistance from God (Luke 24:44–45).

The Bible is the codified Word of God. It is called "The Scriptures"—that which is written. Yet, as was the case with the called disciples of Christ, understanding of what is written is not possible without divine intervention. People who say all they need in order to understand is the Bible have missed one of the most fundamental truths. *Comprehension of the Bible is a matter of revelation.* And continuity of that comprehension is a matter of faith.

Who, Then, Really Knows Spiritual Truth?

"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ *is* come in the flesh is of God" (1 John 4:2). And who was Christ? The Word of God made flesh (John 1:14). He is unchanging and immutable (Hebrews 13:8). He is Truth and the way of life. The called of God receive Christ, through the Holy Spirit. They receive Him at the time of baptism. The life lived in those who have crucified the self is that of Christ. It can expand and grow but it will not change doctrinal Truth. The spirit which indicates a need to change doctrine is the spirit of error (1 John 4:6). The spirit of faithfulness is the spirit of Truth. By this one eternal standard all men can be evaluated.

A false spirit (or spirits) has goaded many people to presume Biblical understanding based on letter-of-the-law application. These people are prophetically indicated by Isaiah. He states, "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their

mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men . . ." (Isaiah 29:13). These are people influenced by what they can see. They look to the physical—the letter. But such application of *presumed* obedience is not acceptable to God.

In conclusion, let us reiterate: The Word of God, though eternal and spiritual, has been codified or manifested at various times. It was established by God for specific reasons. One of these reasons was *not* the offering of opportunity for life everlasting. Letter obedience will not produce life. Spiritual obedience is not possible except by a call from God and the receipt of the necessary power to make such obedience possible.

The eternal words of God were codified for ancient Israel. But spiritual obedience to these words was not possible.

Christ was the Word of God made flesh. But those not called of God did not know who He was or what He was.

The Scriptures are the eternal words of God in written form. But until revealed, man cannot understand them (Luke 24:44–45).

Next time we will cover the subject: "Flesh Cannot Obey the Spiritual." We have commented about this concept, but in the next *Monthly Letter* written from Eugene, we will thoroughly document the subject.

Please receive all our love, concern and affectionate thoughts. Our prayers are with you daily.

We do love, admire and respect you for your continual obedience and faithfulness to God.

In much love and care,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the text "In much love and care,".

Raymond C. Cole