

Church of God, The Eternal

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A Very Warm Greetings To All:

Babylon says a new year has begun. The world listened very carefully, for it has followed her dictates from its inception. It is most strange how human beings will follow the dictates of the natural mind but will ardently refuse to listen to or adhere to the dictates of the supernatural -- God Himself. Worse yet, humans will design a religion on the premise of the natural mind and then ascribe it to the supernatural. What confusion and deception! What a revelation the day God allows man in general to understand the basis of his own concepts and beliefs. Such a revelation is a certainty, for God has said the time is coming when He will remove the scales of blindness from the eyes of humanity. Then they will return to God with loathing and abhorrence for themselves.

As God's Holy Days depict His great spiritual purpose, so the days observed and the customs practiced by natural man characterize man's confusion, bewilderment, and rebellion. What good can be said for a year which begins in the dead of Winter? It represents nothing of a constructive or positive nature. The time neither begins anything nor concludes anything. It has no fundamental orientation or purpose. It just happens in the course of events occurring in the transition of time.

How different regarding the calendar of the Eternal God. It makes physical as well as spiritual sense to those who understand the great purpose of God. For the called, faithful, and obedient children of God the Sacred Calendar is a thing of beauty. It is admired and respected. It is not subject to the whimsical interpretations of men. We can all thank God that He has allowed us to understand, and thereby enabled us to conform honestly and accurately to the will of our Maker.

The ravages of weather throughout the world most certainly indicate something of significance. It may be only the cutting edge of what is prophesied to come. We cannot tell exactly and must not begin to interpret the times and order of events which God has reserved for Himself. At the same time, we are instructed to be observant -- aware of the times in which we live. The further march of time will be most revealing. Let us in patience watch, refusing to ascribe any definite specifics to the events which are occurring. All circumstances and events have serious meaning to those of understanding. They will be examining themselves and overcoming their own problems. They will be washing their own robes in willful self-mastery, mastery achieved by faith in the powerful intervention of Christ and God who back up personal will when it is right in Their sight.

Let us now move on to the real purpose of this Letter -- the revelation of God in both historic and prophetic times. First a synopsis of what has been covered.

Synopsis

In November, we detailed an explanation of the revelation to and commission of the Apostle Paul. In his case we saw that the purpose of God had not changed from the beginning. As He had called the patriarchs and commissioned them, called the prophets and commissioned them, so He called and commissioned Jesus Christ and the apostles which followed Him. Truly, God has never changed. In Him there is not even a shadow of turning, as we are told by James. The God family is consistent. They are trustworthy.

What should we expect in the last days? It is the only other era of time specifically mentioned in the Bible in which a spiritual activity occurs prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. Was a work done during that period of time? Let us examine the record carefully -- the words of Jesus Christ and those who followed Him, who were inspired to make a number of comments regarding the days which immediately precede the second coming of Christ. Without conditions or "what if's" can we accept the simple straightforward statements of the Bible? Revelation is absolutely essential to understanding the Scriptures. And revelation is in no way contrary to the codified word of God -- the Bible itself. The Scriptures are the written words of God. They have existed in printed form for many, many years. Yet they were not understood until, by a miracle, God made them known -- understood -- by those whom He had called. That being an inherent fact, it is obvious that a revelation must first occur, and then the written word will begin to make sense. How else can one explain the fact that many people read the Bible, but few see the Truth and understand the spiritual intent?

Now we are ready to review some of the Scriptures which deal with this matter in the last days. Let us take them at face value.

Some Work Had to Occur in the Last Days

At the end of Christ's ministry, just before His return to heaven, He made some rather interesting and significant statements. Let us consider them carefully.

Matthew records these words of Christ: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19-20). What a far-reaching command and promise of Jesus Christ.

To whom did Christ make this promise? Could the above texts apply exclusively to the original twelve apostles, with addition of the

Apostle Paul? Or, does the language require something far more inclusive?

The "you" (ye) of verse 19 cannot apply exclusively to the twelve apostles whom Christ was addressing at that very moment. Those twelve chosen servants of God are not still living somewhere on this earth. They died natural deaths like all other human beings. Once dead they were buried and await the resurrection just as others who died prior to their time. Yet, Christ said the "you" (ye) of verse 19 would still be alive and at least, initially, doing the will of God at the very time of the end. The term "the end of the world" is identified in Matthew 24. On one occasion, on the Mount of Olives, the disciples manifested deep concern about the prophetic statements of Jesus. They said, ". . . Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3.) By Christ's own response He made it known that His second coming was synonymous with the end (consummation) of the age.

The "you" (ye) of Matthew 28:19 are in existence in the very days of the consummation of the age. What would that group -- the "you" -- be teaching in those critical days? Of them Christ said, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. . . ." And what was it that Christ taught to the Twelve and others whom He had called? He taught them only the words of God -- the Word which existed from the beginning. Those words are called the Gospel. Note what Christ said about the beginning of His own ministry. Right after the terrible trial of Christ, at the hands of Satan, He began to preach (Matt. 4:17). Of Him it was said, ". . . Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. . . ." (Matt. 4:23). Christ preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God -- the fact that in an acceptable time the God of heaven would set up a Kingdom which will not be destroyed, nor left to the devices of carnal human beings. The Gospel which He preached was about government -- a universal government which will affect the lives of all human beings regardless of nationality, race, or what have you.

This Gospel -- the Gospel of the soon-coming Kingdom of God -- must be preached unto all peoples just before the coming of the consummation of the age, the time synonymous with the second coming of Christ (Matt. 24:14). There are many ways by which that Gospel will be preached to all peoples before the second coming of Christ. Among those ways by which the Gospel will be preached is a body, made up of called human beings, commissioned to preach the same words Jesus taught during the time of His earthly ministry. Can there be any other explanation for Christ's statement in Matthew 28:19-20?

Christ definitely called and commissioned -- sent -- the original Twelve. They taught the exact same Gospel Jesus preached during His earthly ministry. But, Christ made it clear that body of which the Twelve formed an early part would proclaim that same message in the last days -- days culminating in His second coming.

If Scripture cannot be broken, it is most obvious that a work of some kind was to be done in the last days. That is a fact beyond refutation. We all must settle that fact, first, in our minds. Once

we have accepted that irrefutable fact we can begin to understand the meaning of John 13:20. John quotes Christ. He said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." Someone was sent in the last days. In a prophetic statement, Christ said so. In the days of the proclamation of that same Gospel, it was the duty of those called to hear and accept the one whom God had sent -- the one to whom He had revealed His Truth for the purpose of carrying out the responsibility of proclaiming that message.

Simple logic tells us that someone did proclaim the Truth. It was a promise of Jesus. Further, others responded to that proclamation and became obedient, in faith, to that Gospel message.

A last-day work did exist. The very fact of its existence makes other principles of Truth obvious and apparent.

A Work Implies an Initial Revelation

As we have seen in all previous issues of this Letter covering the subject of "Great Works in God's Appointed Times," a servant had to be called by God, the specific words had to be revealed, and he had to be commissioned. If these factors are any different in this particular time -- time of one of the major works -- it requires conclusive proof that God changed His own method of operation. All history speaks of one single manner by which God handled these responsibilities.

One may contend that Moses had to have a specific revelation because there were no known Scriptures for him to use in his time. In part this may be true. However, the same contention cannot be used at any other period of time -- from the days of Moses until the present. Yet it can be amply demonstrated that the great prophets of God did not simply use the written Scriptures in the times of their commission. On the contrary, even though they proclaimed the words of the Law, the actual intent of the message was a direct revelation from God -- the very words God desired to have proclaimed to His people. These prophets did not read the Scriptures and decide for themselves that someone had to go forth to warn and censor the people for their sins. They were the direct recipients of required words and instructions from God -- received before they went forth to proclaim the message given.

How extensive were the statements of Christ that He did not bring His own message. The Father had given Him the words which He was to proclaim. Yet all available Scriptures were known to Christ. Yes, even those which were not yet written, for He is the Word of God made flesh. The messages of Christ were not impressions aroused by personal study of the written Scriptures. What He taught was the very word of God which had been given to Him.

In exactly the same way, the apostles which followed Christ did not teach their impressions resulting from personal study. We have conclusively proven that the words which they were to proclaim had been given to them -- by some form of direct revelation.

What is intended here is that man of himself -- by the capability of his own mind -- cannot come to the knowledge of the Truth. Why? Because the natural, carnal, mind cannot understand spiritual things. Truth is from another domain. It is spiritual, not of the flesh.

Therefore, the claim that man has the Scriptures alone to which he can resort today is not a valid concept. Those same Scriptures were available at times of other significant works, yet special revelation was required. Further, until a man is called of God and the intent and purpose of the Scriptures revealed man cannot know the meaning. Thousands are holding to false concepts and performing strange works -- works not ordained of God.

Yet, as we have seen, a great work did occur in the last days. The very fact that a work did exist implies an initial revelation.

Paul said, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the purpose of the Gospel was kept secret from the foundation of the world until the time of Christ and the apostles (Rom. 16:25-26). The Scriptures were available and read much earlier than the time of Christ and the apostles, yet they were not understood -- for the intent was kept secret from the foundation of the world. The meaning of the Gospel is, and will remain, unknown to man until God elects to reveal it.

The real essence of coming to know the Truth is comprehending who God the Father and Jesus Christ are. How does this knowledge come? What does it mean to come to the knowledge of Christ?

Let us note the very words of Jesus Christ Himself. He said, ". . . thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. 11:25-27). The knowledge of who the Father and Son are is a matter of revelation -- a revelation to those whom the Father will call. The remainder of mankind will remain in spiritual ignorance. And who is Christ? He is the Truth, the Way of Life.

If Christ is the Truth and the Way, then knowledge of the Truth must come by direct revelation. There is no other way.

Any work to be performed has one basic purpose. It is the revelation of God and the Son and Their purpose. Therefore, a work today specifically implies a revelation in our time.

When writing about our very day, the Apostle Peter made a very far-reaching statement: He said, ". . . if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ [How did that knowledge come?], they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning" (II Pet. 2:20). Clearly someone in the last days had been given the knowledge of God and Christ. From the lips of Jesus Christ Himself, we are informed that such an acquisition was by revelation and

by no other means. The conclusion? A revelation has occurred in our day.

I am not talking about the broad proliferation of Bibles and religious material. I speak of an inspired revelation only. That revelation was given to someone. But, the question is: To whom?

To understand the above, it is essential to understand a few imperatives. First, Christ was the Truth, the Way of Life. He was the message of life personified. Second, the Truth given to Him and which He proclaimed is called the doctrine (II John 9) -- the doctrine of Christ. Third, those who do not have that doctrine do not have Christ. Fourth, those not called to understand this Truth cannot have the faith to really believe, practice, and remain loyal to that revelation. Even those called must exercise constant vigilance. Jude said, ". . . it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Fifth, most of those claiming a relationship with God and the Son, Christ, regardless of dedication and conviction, are deceived. Only the called recipients of the revealed Truth know Christ -- those who are living the doctrine of Christ, that is, have Christ living in them. Those who believe and have that faith are in a single body -- they are one. When writing to the Ephesians the Apostle Paul said, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith [the faith for which we must contend, the doctrine of Christ], one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

There is only one doctrine. Only one body. When initially called the chosen are given the faith to believe that Way of Life -- the acknowledgement of Christ. It is that faith initially given to us by God for which we must contend on a daily basis.

Those called and to whom that faith is given know the Truth. But they cannot prove it to carnal minds. Those natural minds remain in their original darkness. Until called they cannot understand. How then can anyone prove the basis of his conviction? Only God can call and make one know the Truth.

Those called will KNOW. All others will remain in absolute darkness until God wills to reveal His way to them.

There is no doubt a revelation did occur in the last days -- the knowledge of Christ was given to someone. The Way of Life was proclaimed. That will be substantiated by a very negative fact which occurred in the body in our time.

An Apostasy Occurs in the Last Days

In II Peter we read that some had been given the knowledge of Jesus Christ and had separated themselves from the concepts of the world. Yet, due to some alien influence these called and chosen servants had turned back to the world -- as Peter put it, "again entangled therein, and overcome. . ." (II Pet. 2:20). He leaves no doubt about

it in verse 21. "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." The Truth, "commandment," had been delivered to them. It was not something these people had achieved on their own. On the contrary, the Truth had been delivered to them. But regard for these spiritual principles was so low that they were willing to turn away from them. Even priceless things are deemed worthless unless true inherent value is recognized. It is that recognition which is granted with revelation. Until such recognition occurs, one will either remain in or return to that natural darkness.

The faith is that for which we must contend in the last days. Why? And what is the faith from which some have turned? When writing to Timothy, the Apostle Paul made the matter of "the faith" and a departure in the last days quite plain. Let us note what he wrote. ". . . the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils [demons]" (I Tim. 4:1). What was prognosticated to transpire? A departure from the faith! How did these servants turn from the faith? By "giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils [demons]." If the departure occurred by turning to strange doctrines, it follows that obedience to the faith is essential obedience to the revealed doctrines. The only logical explanation for the first couple of verses of I Timothy 4 is: The Truth, faith, was given to someone. For strange reasons, there was a departure from that revealed Way. But those who turned away from the Truth did not turn away from religion. No, they turned to the influence of another power which was working upon the minds -- seducing spirits and demons.

The important point to remember presently is that a departure did occur. There was an apostasy from the faith once delivered. A departure from faithful obedience is impossible unless there was an initial obedience. Obedience is impossible unless God calls and the initial faith is given.

The Holy Spirit impressed the matter of the apostasy firmly upon the minds of certain Biblical authors. The Apostle Paul when again instructing Timothy relevant to the last days said: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom: Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers; having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables" (II Tim. 4:1-4). Some of the people itched for change. Certain of the ministry were willing to accommodate because they had no real love for the Truth. These who departed from Truth fabricated doctrines -- "fables" -- from the fertile fields of their own minds. These fables were a direct contrast to the revealed Truth, Truth which had been delivered to them.

Many years ago God's servant and prophet Daniel had something to say about this departure in the last days. Read Daniel 11:30-40. We will note only excerpts. In verse 30 we note that some do forsake the

holy covenant. In order to forsake it they first must have had a relationship with it. In verse 32 we are told that those who forsake the Truth will do wickedly against the very concepts and people whom they once knew. However, those who remain faithful to God will be greatly useable in His hands. In verses 33-35 we are informed of a major time of tribulation and refinement. Some who knew the Truth will be subjected to severe trial, and thereby be brought back in faith and confidence. Why be brought back unless there was a departure in the first place -- or, perhaps, a degree of lukewarmness which is unacceptable to God?

Referring to our very days, the servants of God, both in Old Testament and the New, specifically wrote about a major apostasy. An apostasy is a departure from something which had been originally delivered. It is not the failure of an individual. An apostasy refers to a departure by an entity or body chosen to do the work of God.

First, the Truth was delivered. It was given to some called and chosen servant of God. Second, that servant did proclaim that Truth -- the Way of Life. There were many who heard and responded. In due time that servant, along with others, turned away from the commandment delivered to them. Why?

A Special Revelation: Why then a Departure from that Truth?

As the old saying goes, men do what they do because they want to do it. For the most part human beings are not coerced to act contrary to their own convictions. When we are forced to make life-and-death decisions, our true allegiance emerges. For those who love God and His Truth more than physical life, the decision is not difficult.

Why, then, a departure from the Truth, the revelation of spiritual knowledge otherwise unknown to any man? There seem to be four very significant reasons. Let us note and evaluate them.

First, men tend to trust their own physical minds, even above any revelation received at an earlier date. When writing to Timothy, Paul said, "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth . . . these . . . resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (II Tim. 3:7-8). They turned to minds which had been corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ. Constantly studying and attempting to ascertain Truth, they never came close to it. They were reprobate concerning faith -- the faith which will be delivered only one time.

To the Romans Paul wrote some texts which are definitely applicable to our time: ". . . When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations [reasonings of the carnal mind], and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:21-22). These are people who turned to their own powers of mind and thereby turned away from revealed Truth -- when they knew God.

Second, for whatever the reasons, some do not have any real love for the Truth. It seems to be offensive to them. As Christ said, some

would stumble because of Him -- for He is the Truth. Paul spoke of this problem when writing to the church at Thessalonica. He wrote: ". . . all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth. . ." (I Thess. 2:10). To remain faithful requires a real love for the Truth. If we are not fully spiritually oriented we are not going to love God's Truth as we should.

Third, far too many people will respect men before they will God. Men are seen; God is not. Most human beings will do almost anything to justify a relationship with other human beings. Spiritual things are not a reality for the present. Peter addressed this matter. We read, ". . . there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in [to the church] damnable heresies [false doctrines], even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (II Pet. 2:1-2). The many turned away from the Truth because of the power and influence of some specific individual within the church -- an individual who turned from the Truth delivered to him. He turned to heresies.

Fourth, some turned away because of the strong desire to live the dictates of the flesh. Peter was inspired to say, ". . . they [false teachers of our day] allure through the lusts of the flesh . . ." (II Pet. 2:18). There is a strong desire to live according to the whim of the natural mind and flesh. Notice how Paul put it when writing to Timothy. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. . ." (II Tim. 4:3). For the benefit of their own natural minds and lusts, they want the delusion of humanism.

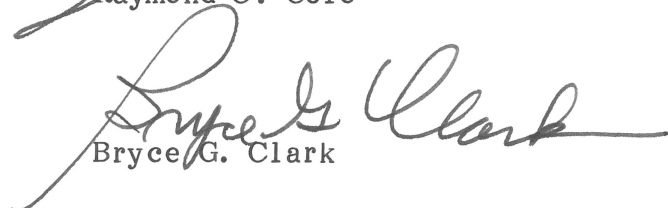
Yes, Truth was delivered in the last days. To someone that Way of Life was given. It was proclaimed. But, in due time, an apostasy occurred. The majority turned away from that Truth because of the four cardinal reasons given above. Where will you and I stand in this day of the final test? It is a very serious and sobering question. Make no mistake about it, the Way of Truth will not change. If we hope for everlasting life, we must remain faithful to the Way delivered to us.

Next time, we will cover a number of significant questions which relate to our time -- and directly apply to the above condition and circumstance regarding the Truth.

Much love and respect always,



Raymond C. Cole



Bryce G. Clark