

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren,

Last month you were instructed relative to several inappropriate manifestations—manifestations of character defects, spiritual problems, and other circumstances with which we are all faced. One of these problems was addressed in the March issue of this letter. This month the second of a specific list of such difficulties will be covered. God calls it a condition in which some of the called fail to manifest a real and genuine love for the truth.

## **2 Thessalonians 2:20**

The Apostle Paul was inspired to write:

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let 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; Who 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. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the

truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle (2 Thessalonians 2:1–15).

Before we analyze the substance and meaning of the concept of "no love for the truth," let us establish a number of absolutes as indicated in the quote above.

- 1) The time element is precise—the time of Christ's Second Coming—(v.1).
- 2) The message is to a select body—the called children of God—(v.1) "brethren."
- 3) The setting of these events seems to be the beginning of the fulfillment of other Biblical prophecies (Matthew 24:29–35, 1 Thessalonians 4:14–18, Psalm 1:1–5).
- 4) The need to be mentally resolute, faithful, and courageous is imperative (v.2).
- 5) The potential for deception is very great (v.3).

Note: Though the significance of verse three was paramount in the dissolution of Worldwide Church of God (in the 1970's), it emphatically retains significance until the actual advent of Christ (compare verses three and eight). The revelation of the man of sin and the Second Coming of Christ have not yet occurred. These events are still future.

6) Someone, or something, is an effective barrier against that revelation—the son of perdition—until a specific time (v.6).

7) Whatever that barrier is will be removed and the revelation of the son of perdition will occur (v.7).

8) Related to and somehow involved with that barrier is what God calls a "mystery of iniquity" (vv.7–8). That mystery of iniquity is already at work.

9) The force and inspiration of the mystery of iniquity is Satan and his demons (v.9).

10) Those who do not possess a genuine love for the truth will be swayed into error—resulting in destruction.

11) Because these last days are a time of severe trial—trial to determine loyalty and faithfulness, even God adds to the depth of the test (vv.11–12).

12) These trials are coming upon those initially called of God—called for salvation if proper decisions are made (vv.13–14).

13) The summary: Hold fast the traditions (doctrines) which you were taught from the beginning (v.15).

14) We can derive great comfort, consolation, hope, and firmness of resolve, in faithful obedience (vv.16–17).

### **The Time?**

That which must be kept in mind is the time of this troubling prophecy. When will it occur? And, to whom or upon whom will it come?

Though the time element of some prophecies is general the one here in Second Thessalonians is quite specific. The events are activities to occur in the days which lead up to the Second Coming of Christ. Since the apostasy of the body God empowered in the last days (Matthew 28:19–20) is a benchmark in itself (Matthew 24), we know we are living in the last generation—the time in which these troubling events will occur. The specifics of time and positive identity of those involved cannot be given with any degree of accuracy. Yet, the general application is of sufficient clarity to make it possible for the faithful to make necessary judgments. That is, they do not need to walk in the way of destruction. Certain things they can know. By this comprehensible knowledge they are able to avoid the depth of perversion and deception implied in this last-day prophecy. The deep deception which will adversely affect some members is limited to those who have no love for the truth. The implication is inevitable. These members are those who were a part of a larger body of believers but who in various ways manifested no love for that which they supposedly believed being diabolical in their thinking, they manifest some form of defiance and rebellion. As a result they become subject to even greater influences of compromise and deception. Yet, these very members will believe and practice with some level of conviction

the deceptive concepts God Himself is forcing them to face. They will practice these deceptions sent by God and they will callously attempt to force others to believe and practice the same lies and perverted ways. By careful analysis, it becomes quite apparent to the spiritual mind that God does not want the called to assume an arbitrary premise. He wants His children to believe and practice that which is absolute. That is, the truly called must know the truth. They must know who they are. And they must know those who practice that revealed way of life. Short of absolutes, how would it be possible for anyone to avoid the deceptions and perversions prophesied for these last days? At the same time, one must remember that a deceived mind also believes it is right. The claims of any individual are not valid unless certified by fact. What are the irrefutable facts made apparent in the New Testament prophecy?

1) Some received the truth but did not really manifest a strong appreciation for that which was received.

2) Having little respect for the truth given an insidious effort existed whereby the truth was constantly subjected to compromise, change, or some element of perversion.

3) Though to be covered a little later, it is fitting to mention now the fact truth refers to the Word of God (John 17:17) not to concessions regarding holidays of this world. Much more will be given later.

4) Because of the person(s) by whom the truth is denigrated (2 Peter 2:2) many will follow him (them) into error. The way to avoid this calamity is to know and adhere to that which was first taught. The Apostle Paul makes it quite clear members who are not firmly anchored by faith and conviction will be mentally troubled (2 Thessalonians 2:2). At the same time, we are informed of the source of much of this deception and evil influence—either from the spirit world or evil and hateful letters. Paul warns all members of the necessity to be firmly resolved in faith and conviction (2 Thessalonians 2:3). This is an imperative responsibility incumbent upon all who are called of God. A duty which will exist until the day of Christ's return (verses one through three). The successful ones will be those who made necessary decisions long before becoming encumbered with extraneous material which only generates doubt, confusion, and turmoil. It is almost an impossibility to come to sound and definitive Biblical conclusions at the time and during the manifestations of circumstances and conditions which require employment of those conclusions. For this reason I have personally (now Mr. Brisby and I are endeavoring) endeavored to give God's people, over the years, foundational information upon which the

necessary judgments could be made as they relate to these last days. Conditions in the world as well as the events which affected the Church of God, make it plain we are in those times called the last days (Matthew 24:32–39). It is during this very time some will begin to deny the proximity of Christ's coming (2 Peter 3:1–4). To deny the nearness of Christ's Second Coming is to deny the very "work" of which we were a part and the foundation of revealed truth. We are, brethren, living in those last days; therefore, the generalized events prognosticated for these days are happening. We are seeing the unfolding of those conditions and circumstances. By keeping this factor in mind, you will be able to see and to understand the events and to make judgments as they relate to your future. You saw and experienced the apostasy. Related to that event are other conditions of which you must be aware if you are to avoid the negative implications. Bluntly stated, we are facing the reality of Second Peter Two and Jude. As stated earlier, it would not only be presumptive on our part but also hazardous for us to attempt specific identity. Even so, a generalized understanding is sufficient to warn us against making costly mistakes of judgment. The conditions of Second Peter and Jude are happening now and will continue to unfold up to and including the time of Christ's glorious Second Coming (2 Thessalonians 2:7–10).

Tragically those who manifest doubt, uncertainty, and are of a compromising nature will be set forth and will experience strong delusion at the very hands of God (2 Thessalonians 2:8–12). The called must not assume a non-committal orientation. Real and genuine knowledge and faith are manifested in confidence and positive action. Further, how can one who exists in uncertainty and doubt fulfill the exacting command of God found in 2 Thessalonians 3:6? "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." This is a command for us today who are in the church. It is a separation of brothers and sisters of the body. It is a separation of those who love the truth of God from those who once knew but have for carnal, worldly reasons either lost or turned from the love which they once had for that truth. They now manifest little if any regard for that truth which they once knew. The tragic part is found in the very reason for which God is sending strong delusion. No one is going to be allowed to exist in these days of turmoil with a "wait-and-see" attitude. We are clearly told the reasons for the strong deception relates to God's final judgment. The Apostle Paul writes: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12). Those who do not acceptably honor that truth are destined to pay the ultimate price.

## What is the Truth?

The context of Second Thessalonians along with several other very revealing New Testament scriptures make it very clear someone had the truth in these last days. It further makes plain the undeniable fact, some within that body did not love the truth and therefore began to compromise the way of life by perverting and changing truth once believed for personal, carnal advantage. Paul said they "had pleasure in unrighteousness" (v.12).

What is truth? Christ said, "thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Further, he stated of Himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life . . ." (John 14:6).

How could Christ say such a thing of Himself? The answer is plainly obvious when we carefully note an earlier statement John was inspired to write of Christ. He said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not . . . 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 1:1–5, 14).

Christ in the flesh was the physical manifestation of the Word of God which had existed from the beginning. In His body He was the actual personification of that Word—The Truth.

Therefore, the rebellious of Second Thessalonians manifest a hateful and denigrating attitude toward Christ. As we are elsewhere informed, such people hate Christ Himself. Further, since the only hope of righteousness and salvation is by Christ living in the called, that same hate and disrespect will be exhibited toward those in whom Christ lives and works. This behavior is another fulfillment of a prophecy stated by Christ (John 15:18–23). And this very prophetic behavior is most revealing. Why? Because such behavior does not come from the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit is a spirit of truth and righteousness—that which those of the world cannot receive (John 14:16–18). With these thoughts in mind we can begin to understand why John a few years after the ascension said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus

Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:1–6). God's Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. By that Spirit Christ lives in the called. The proof of that Spirit—the Spirit of Truth—is in the confession that Christ *IS* living in the flesh, that He is come in the flesh (For an exhaustive explanation of the Greek grammar be sure to hear an upcoming tape in my series on Second Peter Two and the book of Jude).

In the context of this unique problem, note what Jude wrote in verse nineteen. Referring back to those who had crept into the body (v.4) but who later had separated themselves (v.19) we are informed that they have not the spirit. Whatever happened in the past notwithstanding those who fulfill these last-day prophecies do not have the Spirit of God. The obvious implication is that they are motivated by a spirit of error. This very fact necessitates the usage of the test which God gave to us through the Apostle John—"try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1). Candidly, we have yet to hear of anyone practicing this responsibility. Is that an indication that even some of the faithful of God do not want to draw a line respecting belief? If so we are setting ourselves up for real trouble in the future. You could be entertaining unwanted spirits. Remember there are many false spirits prophesied to go out into the world—not later or in some other part of the world than that in which we live. On the contrary, those who profess to believe the truth of God will face this challenge here and now. Those who practice what God requires, remaining absolutely faithful to the unalterable way of Christ will hear the faithful servants of God (1 John 4:6). Those who are influenced by false spirits are hardened and indifferent. They cannot be taught—for they simply will not hear.

These are the last days. We are seeing many of the signs which Christ gave to us. Signs by which the called know the general time in which we live. The very basis of the separation mentioned was and is a lack of love for the truth which was delivered. What is that love which God requires?

### **The Love Which God Requires**

Though the length and breadth of genuine love is a subject which we hope to address completely at a future time, just a few comments are fitting and appropriate at this juncture. First, the love implied in 2 Thessalonians 2:10 is the equivalent of that love which God had

for the whole world—the love expressed in the sacrifice of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. The Greek words are exactly the same. It is the love God requires, by command, we exhibit for Him. That command requires our surrender of mind, body, and being (Matthew 22:37, Luke 10:25–28). It is the kind of concern and deep feeling we must exhibit toward even our enemies (Matthew 5:38–48, Luke 6:26–38). The kind of love required within the body (1 John 3:1–24). The love a true servant of God has for those he serves (Mark 10:21, 17–27). The ultimate expression of that love was seen in the action taken by God (John 3:16). And Christ's concern for the called (Luke 11:5–13). The natural inclination of mankind is to love things of the flesh, of this world (1 John 2:15). God wants us to come to hate the things of this world and to come to know, appreciate, and understand the love of the spiritual. For that one who loves the things of the world—flesh—does not have the love of God abiding in him (James 4:4).

The context of Second Thessalonians is troubling, distressing, and revealing. But, as a part of God's Word it must be read, studied, and understood. Ignoring it, or attempting to hide our eyes from it would be the epitome of foolishness. Our purpose in attempting to help you to understand these prophetic warnings of the last days is a significant manifestation of that same love. Even as the final judgment is a manifestation of love. How? One way, and one way only, will exist throughout eternity. If any manifest contempt for that way now, how can they live in peace and happiness for all eternity doing by force that which they dislike? In love God will simply eliminate them. Please remember, it is Satan who grossly rebelled against God that continues to defy and resist the will of God by influencing the called into acts of that same defiance and rebellion. As we were long taught by God's servant of these last days, "that person who refuses to be ruled by God and His way will not be admitted into the Kingdom."

### **Who are Involved?**

At face value, the undeniable facts are these: The time in which these events are occurring is these last days just prior to the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And, secondly, the warnings are written to and for the benefit of the called (2 Thessalonians 2:1–3). They are the brothers and sisters of the common faith (2 Thessalonians 2:13–15). Finally, within the body of believers are some who do not really love the truth of God. On the contrary, they are more enamored with unrighteousness—the things of this world (2 Thessalonians 2:12).

As stated earlier, the ability and courage to differentiate are imperative. How can you possibly abide by the instructions of God if you do not know the difference. Some seem to



feel they would be wrong to so classify people. How wrong they are! First, we all must observe and make that determination. It is God who requires us to evaluate and make this decision. Is rebellion against God a manifestation of love? We think you know the answer. Further, catering to those who would destroy you is not an act of love toward you or those who desire support in this rebellion. Obedience to God and then praying diligently for a change of orientation and return to the body of Christ is a true manifestation of love and concern. Real godly love is found in faithful obedience not in any manifestation of maudlin sentimentality popularized in this world of deceptions. We have confidence in you to make the right decisions. As the called, the Spirit will guide and inspire you. We do not want to think of those and the ultimate fate prognosticated. We do have a much greater love for you all.

### **Consequences**

God who is the epitome of love has given us ample warning and the opportunity to change. Therefore, we will simply and concisely mention those results—consequences of vacillation—which He gave to us. How can we be condemned for doing the same things our Father does?

God clearly tells us that those who vacillate regarding the way of life—the truth first given (2 Thessalonians 2:10)—will without question experience directly from Him a form of strong delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:11). They will believe a lie. Therefore, a belief or conviction individually is meaningless. What really counts is a firm belief in that which was first taught.

According to the duties and obligations imposed upon true ministers of God, we have done all that we can do. We have warned. We have given you the depth of our conviction and love. What else can we do? We do pray for you all. God forbid that we should cease to pray that your faith and resolve will be unchanged. That you will not waver in that moment you need to be strong and courageous and find that the will and purpose are not there.

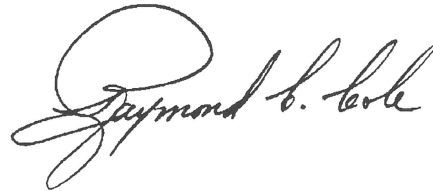
### **Conclusion**

As indicated in the first letter addressing these issues of the last days, there would be several of special relevance. The one you hold in your hands is the second. God willing, the third of that list—not necessarily in sequence—will be analyzed. Until then, we convey

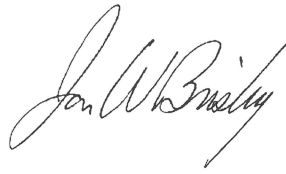
this material with the hope that you, the people of God, will study it carefully. We are living in the time when many have presented themselves as teachers of the way, yet they are speaking from a premise of error and/or prejudice. All the more reason for you to exercise the responsibility incumbent upon you—the duty of trying the spirits.

All the love and affection of the faithful until we come to you via the next issue of this *Monthly Letter*.

Your servants in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the text "Your servants in Christ,".

Raymond C. Cole

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the name "Raymond C. Cole".

Jon W. Brisby