

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

One of the most unique teachings we received from God through the ministry of Mr. Herbert Armstrong was that we were all created to become members of the God Family: to share the glory, power, majesty and all that it means to be God as God is. This is a doctrine which is not only unique to the true Church of God, but absolutely despised as blasphemy by other religions that call themselves Christian. Even some called within God's very own true church have had a difficult time accepting this particular truth because we have all been indoctrinated by so many of this world's false concepts since childhood. It just does not seem "right" to think we will truly become God. But brethren, when we finally shed the deception of Satan's false concepts and come to accept that God is truly reproducing Himself through human beings, that knowledge provides the foundation for structuring our entire thinking about true religion, and our mission and obligation as converted children in His master plan.

Yes, the firstfruits of God's harvest will include the ones He is training now to join that Family at Christ's Second Coming and to become Kings and Priests in His Holy Government. Only Spirit Beings who are themselves God will share those duties with the Father and our elder brother, Jesus Christ. He has not ordained us to become like the angels. Mankind will never be resurrected to be angels, a lower order of spirit beings. That is a lie perpetrated by Satan himself. You were all made in the image of God because becoming God is your very reason for existing, and that is what your future holds if you pass the training course set before you today.

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever (Revelation 1:5-6).

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy

blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9–10).

### **Crown Princes in Waiting**

When we stop to consider the true ramifications of our calling, the fact we are being trained now to become future Kings means we are already royal family members today, by virtue of the begetting of God's Holy Spirit. We are already God's beloved children!

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:26–27).

That status as children is *real*, not just some insipid platitude He bestows upon us like favorite pets or playthings. God made all living creatures to produce after their own kinds (Genesis 1:21–26). The offspring of cows are cows. The offspring of bears are bears. Giraffes have offspring that are likewise giraffes and nothing but. And so God as a royal sovereign Spirit Being will be producing offspring who are to be exactly like Him: royal heirs of His Kingdom, eternal children to rule with power and glory over the entire universe:

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:29).

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together (Romans 8:16–17).

When we put all these pieces together, it proves that we are even now considered royal heirs to those thrones to be established under Jesus Christ, making us all Crown Princes right now. What is a Crown Prince? Within historical human kingdoms, assumption of the throne most often has come by hereditary succession. Lineal succession conventions in ancient Europe usually provided that the eldest son (or in some countries, the eldest child whether male or female) would succeed the current monarch at his or her death. This eldest royal son, by the rules of primogeniture (firstborn birthright), became the Crown Prince—the next in line for kingship. He was not yet a king, but he was a future king—the heir apparent—waiting for the time of his ascendancy to the throne. This is exactly the position that each one of you now bears as children and heirs of God's Kingdom. You have been provided the right to become Kings by an unmerited gift of God.

## Heir Apparent, Conditionally

Even as a new baby son finds himself in line for succession to a human throne through no accomplishment of his own, so we find ourselves with this great opportunity through no worthiness of our own, but rather the merciful call of God. We do not know why He chose us out of so many millions, but we are thankful nonetheless and must be careful never to take that calling for granted. Why? Unlike the earthly Crown Prince who is heir apparent by human birth—merely having to survive physically (keep breathing) long enough to be assured of ascending to the throne—our promise of Kingship is conditional upon our behavior.

Human history is full of examples of kingdoms which suffered nationally after an heir replaced his father, because he lacked the character to take the reins effectively. It is rare enough to find any human king wise and disciplined enough to benefit his kingdom without being hampered by greed, excess, or foolish vices. But it is virtually impossible to expect the son of such a "good" king to continue his father's positive momentum. In most human kingdoms, ascendancy to the throne is not based upon the best qualified candidate. Even if a younger son has better character and ability, it is the eldest son who becomes king, even if he is weak and degenerate. God allowed this very principle to play out among the kings of Israel and Judah, who likewise ascended through primogeniture, not by merit.

God favored King David as a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22), and even his son, Solomon, was blessed of God as successor for many years. But Solomon's failure to remain steadfast (1 Kings 11:4–10) set in motion the undoing of the unified nation of Israel. God did not rend the kingdom during his lifetime—out of respect to David and his prior faithfulness—but He allowed the kingdom to be divided under the foolish reign of Rehoboam, Solomon's heir (1 Kings 12:1–19). Much of what David had accomplished was destroyed by his successors. The same was true of Hezekiah and his son, Manasseh. Hezekiah was a good king who feared God and brought peace and prosperity to Judah (2 Kings, chapters 18–20). But upon his death, his son, Manasseh, through his perversions and idolatries undid all his father had accomplished (2 Kings 21:1–18). There are many such examples in the lineage of Israelitish kings. A succession rule based upon birthright alone will always manifest this inherent weakness in short order.

For that reason, though Crown Princes we are indeed—waiting for the moment of ascendancy to eternal thrones in God's Family Government—we are not guaranteed to keep that status if we do not bear spiritual fruit today, demonstrating that we can become good, effective, and dependable monarchs. God will not allow any human being to ascend to that level of power and immortality who has not been proven first through the proper training regime. There will be no Rehoboams or Manassehs in God's glorious Kingdom to come.

As the called of God, your names were written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the [sonship] of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will . . . (Ephesians 1:4–5).

. . . and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world . . . (Revelation 17:8).

Most of the world has not yet had their names written in that Book of Life. They await that blessing when they are finally called after Christ's return, and that Book is "opened to them" for the first time (Revelation 20:12). But those who are part of the firstfruits were pre-appointed before the foundation of the world to receive a call from God *sometime before* the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Your *calling* was predestined, but not your *glorified Sonship* in God's Family. We will not inherit that Kingdom by virtue of primogeniture or any other human entitlement tradition.

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears (Hebrews 12:14–17).

Even as Esau had the initial "right" of his father's inheritance—but sold it for something worthless—so we are capable of selling our birthrights as well, if we do not prove we love it more than anything else. It is not our *right* to attain eternal life unless we fulfill God's expectations of us. However, if we do what God requires, God certainly gives us the right to take possession of that inheritance. Nothing can prevent us except ourselves. No one else can usurp our Kingship or supplant us. "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12). This is speaking of the aggressive will of those who value the promises of God, and work diligently at putting on the mind of Christ. They love what God has promised, and they are pulling out all stops to secure their place in that royal Family. They love it so much, they do not intend to be denied. That is the kind of zeal and determination God wants His dear children to manifest. If we do that, our place in His eternal Kingdom is assured.



In the kingdoms of men, the opportunities for kingship are limited, because there are relatively few positions available. Within a single country, only one monarch succeeds to the throne, while all of the other family members play second fiddle. Jealousy ensues, and if the king is weak, he is subject to being supplanted by assassination or some other form of treachery. Any weakness is exploited for the gain of a rival. Likewise, for the sake of exercising as much power as possible under the king, courtiers and politicians jockey for prime positions of influence. There are always many more ambitious hopefuls than there are positions of power to go around. This is the very principle the Apostle Paul addressed in comparing foot races run in this world with the race God has established for His royal children:

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible (1 Corinthians 9:24–25).

Yes, in the races of men, only one receives the prize, and all the rest become "also rans." But in God's glorious plan, He is offering *many* positions of power and authority in His Son's Government. There will be *many* Kings in that Family. In this royal family of which we are now begotten children, there is no need to be jealous of anyone else. We each have been promised great riches and power. We are not in competition with one another. There will not be only one prize, but many, and so our success will not be measured by "besting" one of our other royal siblings.

God wrote our names in that Book of Life as a confirmation of His intent to give us those offices. He did not withhold our names until we "measured up" in some way. No, He wrote them in—optimistically—in advance. This shows He is not looking for excuse to write us out of the inheritance. He is not extending a carrot to be snatched away at the last moment. He wants us all to succeed—truly. But as we have already seen, it is possible that we can fail, and our names most certainly can be stricken from the Book of Life:

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels (Revelation 3:5).

God never makes empty threats. This text proves it is possible to have our inheritance revoked, if we do not meet specific expectations in the Judgment. We are beloved children—Crown Princes, heirs apparent—but only conditionally, if we complete God's training plan and manifest the necessary character to show we can assume office and be righteous Kings.

## Threats to Our Inheritance

If God sincerely wants to give it to us, and we do not have to compete with anyone else to possess one of those royal offices, what are the circumstances which might result in our elimination from receiving the promise—having our names stricken from the Book of Life? What are the true threats to our heir apperency as Crown Princes?

Since kings become the ultimate source of law and justice in their kingdoms, a truly worthy king must show a commitment to the rule of law, and the character to judge fairly, without partiality. One who engages in situation ethics—bending the rules to suit himself at any given time—will be disqualified.

If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . . He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings (John 14:15–16, 21, 24).

Obeying God's Law is therefore a test to prove whether we value His things more than the things that entice us in this world. One who cannot show enough self-discipline to become law-abiding himself, will never become a Justice to administer the law for others.

He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Revelation 21:7–8).

This means it is not enough just to agree that God's Law is good. There are many who agree philosophically that it is wrong to lie, cheat, steal, and commit adultery. Yet how many still engage in these very practices because they are not willing to make personal sacrifices to uphold the law in actuality? The temporary pleasures of sin—of lawbreaking—are just too enticing to resist. A spoiled Crown Prince in a human kingdom might be indulged by his father and given special exemption from the law, but such a child will never hold office in God's Kingdom. Jesus Christ criticized those hypocritical leaders among His own people, who made a pretense of obedience to the law, but repudiated it daily by their actions:

But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not:

but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you (Matthew 21:28–31).

God is not judging our love of His Law based upon who makes the best pretense, or who talks the best game. The proof is in those who actually make changes in their lives, little by little, to become more like Jesus Christ. God called many out of the dregs of society, but our personal histories before conversion are not what is important. No matter where we begin, if we demonstrate a true regard for God's laws through more and more obedience over time, we will be proving to God that our profession of love and regard for His Law is genuine, and He will reward us with becoming a royal Law Officer in His Kingdom.

Going hand-in-hand with love of the law is a sincere compassion for the subjects of God's Kingdom. Monarchs in the kingdoms of men are not required to manifest love and outgoing concern for the people in order to hold office, but in God's realm, it is an absolute requirement.

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. . . . If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? (James 2:12–13, 15–16).

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:41–46).

### **Perhaps the Greatest Threat for Some**

As one of the key criteria God is using to evaluate our fitness for rulership, what about respect for authority in general? Many times in human history, Crown Princes have held

their father's laws in disdain, and chafed under that authority. As spoiled prima donnas, they see any restraint of authority as a nuisance. They may have shown little respect due a father in any case—let alone for his position as a royal sovereign—and may have worked directly or indirectly to undermine rather than to support. How many royal children have even conspired to kill their fathers so they could assume control of those kingdoms sooner? If an heir can get away with it, very often he is not penalized for treason, and still assumes the throne in spite of his rebellion and treachery. After all, once the former king is dead, the heir is still the one next in line by blood. But in God's Kingdom, no such disregard for the chain of authority will be rewarded under any circumstance.

A common question of women in God's church in decades past has been, "How can I learn to qualify to be a King in God's government, if the rules which apply to me today do not give me authority to run anything myself? As a woman, I am either under my father's authority, or a husband's. Am I not put at a disadvantage in learning to exercise leadership skills?" How did Mr. Armstrong answer this? He said that one of the best ways for anyone to learn to exercise authority is to first learn to be *subject* to authority. And God has given both men and women members of the true Church ample opportunity to learn to be subject to God-ordained authority. In fact, He structured His laws to make the respect for authority preeminent in many different aspects of our lives.

God made husbands to have authority over wives, and fathers to have authority over children. Mothers also were given authority over the children as an adjunct to the father's authority, and under the Levitical law, any older child who manifested rank rebellion against those parents was stoned to death:

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear (Deuteronomy 21:18–21).

This is how serious God was about the family authority issue. One of the very Ten Commandments accentuates this very principle as a warning to all human beings: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

God also requires us to show proper respect for the secular rulers in the world, whether their fruits are good or bad. All offices in earthly governments are God-ordained, including the office of Satan as god of this world for the present time.

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work (Titus 3:1).

Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee (Jude 9).

So all of these *venues of authority* touch our lives very much, whether male or female. And through the choices we each make day by day, God is evaluating whether or not we are learning to respect those lines of authority. A wise father who seeks to train his son to take over the family business one day, might require him to learn the business from the ground up, working for a time in each of the lowliest positions, only slowly moving up as he demonstrates understanding and mastery of those fundamental jobs. After all, even Jesus Christ benefitted from submitting to the very same program before becoming High Priest:

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 5:8–10).

If Jesus Christ—even while already perfect in character—"learned obedience" by going through His Father's humbling training program, how important should that same principle be to you and me? And if Christ—as our elder brother and forerunner to salvation—had to experience it before becoming High Priest, does it not make sense that the same Father would require that same lesson to be learned by His other beloved children before they assume offices as eternal Priests with Christ?

But what if a son decides it is beneath him to have to start at the lowest levels and then work his way up? "After all," he might reason, "I'm the owner's son. I'm too good to have to lower myself to that level. I think I have everything I need to run this business without doing the grunt work. I went to college and have a degree. That is all that should be necessary. I'll just tell Dad I refuse, and he'll still have to turn the business over to me, sooner or later." Brethren, this is the natural human rationalization. It is not only how many children of successful businessmen might feel, but especially how a child raised in a royal household of privilege might feel. Knowing he is destined for glory and honor as the heir apparent, he is very vulnerable to pride and vanity. One who becomes impressed with himself and his status is an easy mark for Satan the Devil, who is the author of that spirit.

Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear. He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride (Job 41:33–34).

God also said, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). The royal child who refuses to learn humility and submit to parental authority is destined for failure. Likewise, the royal child of God who will not prove willingness to submit to the Father's authority during that training period today, will never attain eternal life in that office which has been appointed. No matter how much He loves us, God simply will not give that honor to any child who cannot manifest respect for authority. And my dear brethren, time and time again, this has been the test which God's chosen people have failed.

### **Korah—Failed Prince of Israel**

Korah and his cohorts were not just common rabble. They were the most accomplished and renowned leaders in Israel:

Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram . . . took men: And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, *famous in the congregation, men of renown* (Numbers 16:1–2) [emphasis mine].

These men had abilities, experience, power, and prestige. They were not ones to be taken lightly. The people accepted them and revered them as their local tribal leaders. Korah was a Levite, and had special standing in the service of the tabernacle. Which ones of them, therefore, would not naturally feel that they had something valuable to offer Moses in the decision-making process for the nation? And it only made sense to believe the counsel of these wise princes should be taken into consideration, especially when the nation was facing serious threats from outside. While these renowned men of Israel had the reputations and physical bearing of strong leaders, Moses by comparison was a meek, self-effacing man, without noteworthy public speaking skills, and likely one who did not generate natural confidence in others by first impression. With all of these existing circumstances, it makes what followed all the more understandable:

And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? (Numbers 16:3).

What was Korah's mistake? Because of his status as a prince and a Levite and his renown among the populace, he became emboldened to challenge Moses, just as a prideful Crown Prince might become emboldened to challenge the rightful king. For all of his physical abilities (as human beings judge them), what was he forgetting? No matter whether Moses appeared humanly to be a strong leader or not, he was the man God had chosen to lead Israel as the physical head, and God intended to back his delegated servant against anyone who might oppose him. Contending with Moses was not just contending with a man, but because of the office he held, it was contending with God. Korah was judging on the basis of physical and political influence, not recognizing that he should have been considering God's appointed authority structure above all else. Moses replied to them:

Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him? And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up: Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up (Numbers 16:9–14).

They accused Moses of trying to make himself prince over Israel. But it was God, not Moses, who had given him that office. Because Korah, Dathan, and Abiram failed to honor God's authority regime (which had been clearly communicated to them so they were culpable), regardless of their many other capabilities and accomplishments, they disqualified themselves totally, not only from being princes among the people, but from even continuing among the nation at all.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me



to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation (Numbers 16:23–33).

The very same weakness and tendency toward poor judgment has plagued many of God's chosen children for centuries. Historically, when God sent commissioned servants to the nation to speak by God's authority, how were they treated?

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy [Spirit]: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it (Acts 7:51–53).

### **History Repeats Itself**

Jesus Christ prophesied that the very same dynamic would continue through the last days as the royal children of promise would be deceived by Satan through their own pride:

Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy

children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matthew 23:31–37).

A rebellious Crown Prince who has no regard for the rule of law or the authority structure within the nation might well still become king in the human realm according to the rules of primogeniture. But among those who have been called out to become the elect of God—with the promise of Kingship and Priesthood for eternity—such rebellion will never be tolerated or rewarded. Those who come to believe that their history, accomplishments, or status within the church gives them power to challenge faithful ministers of Jesus Christ who are defending the faith, should stop and consider the real source of the spirit moving them.

If the ministry of the group you attend is repudiating the faith once delivered, then by all means refuse to be subject to their authority. Any minister who is not faithfully defending the doctrines which Christ placed in the Church from the beginning by divine revelation has forfeited his authority to lead God's people. Christ is not backing him up. God does not appear in the assemblies of those where apostate ministers preach or condone heresy. Sacrifices made in those assemblies never reach God. You are wasting your time. He will not accept them (Isaiah 1:11–15; Amos 5:21–23). In that case, you have no alternative but to get out of there.

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: *from such withdraw thyself* (1 Timothy 6:3–5) [emphasis mine].

Conversely, if you are meeting in a group where the ministry is indeed defending those original truths and holding fast, then God is certainly backing them up, even as He did with Moses. And anyone who chooses to contend with them based upon private interpretations of doctrine, or challenges to administrative judgments, is repeating the very same mistake for which God recorded the warning of Korah. Be very careful about looking for human weaknesses and personal failings of a minister as an excuse for resistance. We are all weak and make mistakes daily. Moses likewise made mistakes, but his mistakes were not heresy. And those who sought to make political hay out of his human failings were severely chastised by God:

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said,

Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it . . . And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous (Numbers 12:1–2, 9–10).

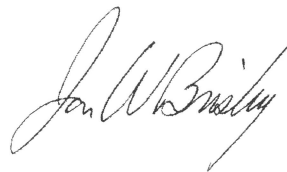
Dear friends and brethren, please be very careful how you make these personal judgments. God is allowing every one of these circumstances as part of your comprehensive royal training program, to verify whether you will make a wise, law-abiding, and judicious King for all eternity. The stakes are enormous. And God is also allowing your determined adversary, Satan the Devil, to do everything in his power to get you to make these choices as did the ancient children of Israel. Their choices were deadly, and they died in the wilderness for failing those tests. Our tests are much more significant, because we are not just talking about physical death, but having our names stricken from the Book of Life.

Yes, God is evaluating every one of those choices we are making day by day. He has to know that we will show the perspicacity to use His Spirit wisely to make good judgments:

He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls (Proverbs 25:28).

There is no reason for any of us to fail. God has provided all the tools we need for success in this royal training program. May God grant you all the determination and love required to fulfill your calling to become glorified Kings and Priests in that eternal Kingdom.

Yours with confidence and appreciation,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is fluid and stylized, with the first name "Jon" being particularly prominent.

Jon W. Brisby