

BELIEVING IN CHRIST

Reuben Warjri



There is no verse in the Bible that has gained so much of attention and popularity as John 3:16. It is the most memorized, recognized, loved and quoted verse in the entire Bible.

Perhaps, its allusion to God's love in giving His Son as a ransom to deliver man from sin, is appealing to many Christians. For others, it may be the promise of eternal life that captures their attention. Still, there are others who will attribute its popularity to repeated attempts to recite it by heart in Sabbath Schools or Sunday Schools. Whatever be the reason for its sheer popularity, I believe that this is not a matter of mere coincidence. God has ordained it to be so because this verse, though simple as it may be, outlines the vital elements of truth that define the true relation between the Father and the Son.

But popularity does not necessarily mean that when this verse is quoted or recited, that many would grasp and comprehend the message that the verse throws at the listener or even the reciter. I cannot speak for other Christian groups, but as far as the OTG movement is concerned, our focus is mostly directed to the first part of the verse which states, "For God so loved world, that He gave His only begotten Son". Our obsession over this

verse stems from the fact that these words highlight the truth that God is a singular, personal Being, who not only had a Son, but rather, **THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON** to give to this dark and dying world.

We back our belief by other verses such as: "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent", and, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." (John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6). Though much have been said and broadcast about God's true identity, and many "mysteries" have been unlocked as a result of understanding this vital truth, yet the road does not end here! Notice what the Bible says about the fallen angels.

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." (James 2:19)

"And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And He rebuked them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ." (Luke 4:41)

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Like many of us, the fallen angels also know exactly who God and Christ are and yet they are lost. Therefore, it stands to reason that, though God's people are destroyed because of a lack of knowledge, it is also equally true that knowledge alone is powerless to save us. This knowledge may also include knowing the truth about salvation, or otherwise christened as, "the message of righteousness by faith". Whereas, knowledge is good and vital, in and of itself, it becomes worthless if it does not have a practical bearing on our daily lives. This condition is not unique to modern day Christianity; this problem is as old as Christianity itself.

Through the aid of the Holy Spirit that was poured out on the day of Pentecost, the followers of Christ preached the message of salvation to those who were in Jerusalem and across the length and breadth of the Roman Empire. Like Thomas, some of them even ventured beyond the borders of the "civilized world" to carry the gospel which also included the truth about God and Christ. Through the concerted efforts of the apostles and the evangelists, and the divine power that assisted them in their work, many souls were won to Christ. Among these new converts, were the priests.

"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7)

The book of Acts also makes mention of "the Pharisees which believed", without a doubt, that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Acts 15:5; Matthew 16:16). However true and genuine their

conviction was that Jesus was the Saviour, these men were not truly converted. They only manifested a conversion of religion as opposed to the conversion of the heart. In Acts, chapter 15 and verse 1, we read the following:

"And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised in the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." (Acts 15:1)

The Pharisees were among these "certain men" from Judea who stressed on the need to observe the Levitical laws as a means to attain salvation. They even commanded that all converts to Christianity, both Jew and Gentile, should observe the laws and statutes given by God through His servant, Moses.

"But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 5:5)

Because Moses was highly esteemed in Jewish society, and anything pertaining to this man was dogmatically held sacred, the opinions of the Pharisees with regards to salvation by the observance of the Mosaic laws gained a lot of support. These men embarked on a course that was contrary to the teachings of Christ. The tone of their message was aimed at undermining what Christ had done for them and the entire human race; and they sought to replace this with human efforts and abilities as means to augment and supplement that which Christ had already accomplished for them. Whereas, they believed, with all their hearts, that Jesus was the Messiah who

came to deliver man from sin and its problems, yet this knowledge did not have a real and practical impact on their lives because true faith was lacking. Consequently, they not only sought for other avenues to acquire salvation but also taught and coerced the believers to submit to their misguided ideas.

The impact of the fallacious attempts of the Pharisees and their supporters to draw away the believers from Christ as the only way to salvation was devastating. The power that initially attended and assisted the church in its march towards its goals and aspirations was beginning to wane and, within no time, it disappeared into obscurity. The church sank into a state of spiritual lethargy and apathy that the triumphs of the former days, when miracles were wrought and souls were won to Christ, were but memories of a distant past.

While, many today have come out in the open to declare their belief about the one true God and His Son, most of them are too caught up with this issue that they fail to believe in Them. But just as John 3:16 does not begin and end with the message that God has a Son to give, even so, our journey, and the journey of those before us, does not begin and end with the knowledge we have about God and His Son.

After pronouncing the love of God in sending Him to this world, Jesus went on to say, “... whosoever believeth in Him

should not perish but have everlasting life.” This is the part that attracts very little attention and, as a consequence, it is overlooked and inadvertently being shoved into the background as a secondary and not so essential part of our spiritual walk with God. Little do we know, however, that this is the part that actually deserves most of our attention because it holds the key in ushering in a significant transformation in our lives. If only we begin to believe more in Christ, and not just more about Him, that miracles will once again be wrought in us and through us.

It is no surprise, therefore, that in certain pockets of this world, God’s people do not witness the same power that is demonstrated in other groups. Perhaps, by trusting self and in man’s abilities and capabilities, we are belittling Christ and His power to transform our lives and experiences. We only see the problem that is before us as a Herculean task and we shrink away from meeting it head-on. If such an attitude persists, we are worthy to be numbered with those whom Paul describes as people who only have “a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof”. (2 Timothy 3:5).

Jesus urged His disciples to have faith – faith that could move mountains. He is also urging His people today to have that same kind of faith. I reckon that, the first step towards experiencing this faith is to believe in Him.

THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST

Reuben Warjri



The gospel of the kingdom that is being preached is Christ living in His believers by His Spirit. This indwelling of Christ in the soul guarantees us salvation and

eternal life. In other words, it is “Christ in you” that turns a sinner into a saint. Concerning this teaching, Paul calls it the mystery which is of God which is hidden for ages and has now been revealed to the believers in Christ.

Colossians 1:25-27 “Wherefore I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; (26) even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: (27) to whom God would make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

To every fibre of truth, the arch deceiver seeks to counterfeit or introduce a strange idea that either closely resembles the truth or that is diametrically opposed to it. For instance, the false teaching about death is so similar to the biblical teaching that it is very easy for people to be misled. On the other hand, the issue of idolatry is clearly spelt out in the Bible that it is opposed to the will of God but the devil has succeeded in causing the world to believe that idolatry is perfectly alright.

Satan has not left any stone unturned and has corrupted the truth about the Kingdom of God and in the process, many are led to believe and teach a lie. Paul warns of this lie, concerning the gospel of the kingdom, in his second letter to the Thessalonians wherein he called it “the mystery of iniquity.”

2 Thessalonians 2:7 “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.”

What is the core issue of this mystery that Paul writes to the Thessalonians? What are the events leading to the fruition of this mystery? And what does Paul refer to when he speaks of this mystery?

A grave misconception regarding the second coming of Christ pervaded among the believers in Thessalonica. There were some who began to teach that they were living at the very end of time and that Christ was soon to come.

The Christians were distressed at this sudden news and they began taking rash steps to prepare for this event. Paul took the liberty to calm their nerves by reminding what he had told them in the past about events that should take place in the future which, in turn, would usher in the second coming of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 “*Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, (2) 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. (3) Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; (4) 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, showing himself that he is God. (5) Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?"

Paul, in verse 3, says that the second coming shall be preceded by two main events – the falling away and the revelation of the man of sin.

THE FALLING AWAY

The falling away, as spoken of by Paul, is the fall of the Christian church from the truth that distinguishes it from the popular religions of the day. To understand what exactly this falling away refers to, firstly a correct biblical understanding of who or what a Christian is, is necessary. Secondly, we shall briefly touch upon the history of the early church.

Who is Christian?

What qualifies a person to be considered a Christian is not a mere profession of faith in Christ. It is neither a status of belonging to a certain denomination and following a certain set of creeds. A Christian is one in whom Christ dwells. The indwelling of Christ in the soul by His Spirit is what makes a person a Christian. Christ can live in us only when we surrender ourselves to Him and in this process, we belong to Him. However, the opposite is true of a non-believer.

Romans 8:9 “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

Establishment of the Church

The establishment of the Christian church began when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place on the day of Pentecost, 31 AD, ten days after the ascension of Christ.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus kept emphasizing the fact that He would dwell in the hearts of the believers. In speaking of the promised Comforter, the Spirit of truth, Christ said that He (the Comforter) now dwelled with the disciples and in the future would dwell in their hearts.

John 14:16, 17 “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; (17) even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because the world seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

In speaking of the Comforter, Christ was referring to Himself, for in verse 18 of that same chapter, He said that He would not leave the disciples comfortless. In verse 23, He further reiterates that He and the Father would together make Their abode with the believer.

The Fall of Lucifer and Man

For as long as the spirit of man is united to the Spirit of God and of Christ, man is considered righteous. It is when man wilfully separates himself from God and His Son that he becomes a sinner. Sin is a state of being separated from God. Outside of God, there exists only evil.

Lucifer and his angels, Adam and Eve became sinners the moment they separated themselves from God. Their unbelief caused them to focus on themselves and what they were capable of achieving, outside of their Maker. They began to think that even without God they can remain good and undefiled. Notice the “I WILL” in this passage in Isaiah.

Isaiah 14:12-14 *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations! (13) For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend unto heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north: (14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High,”*

1st Century Christianity

The same problem that we just read in Isaiah that destroyed Lucifer, was the same problem that began to plague the 1st century Christians. For the first fifteen to twenty years of the Christian Church, Christ was preached and promoted. As long as the focus was on Him, miracles were performed and the church was in perfect unity. But it would not take long for the agents of Satan to bring in strange doctrines and ideas that would adversely undermine the pure essence of the gospel.

Council of Jerusalem

Among the believers of the early church, were the Pharisees. They insisted that, having Christ alone, could not guarantee a person salvation. A believer, whether Jew or Gentile, was required to keep the

ordinances of the Mosaic law if he could ever have the hope of gaining eternal life. In other words, the focus was now shifted to human works and efforts as means of salvation. This was not the gospel preached by Christ and His apostles. This caused a great row within the church and there was a danger that it could split on account of this issue. Therefore, the need to call a general meeting of all the elders, apostles and the leading members of the church arose, to discuss the problems pertaining to this issue.

Acts 15:1,5 *“And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*

(5) “But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them and to keep the law of Moses.”

Acts chapter fifteen records the affair of the council of the church leaders that was convened at Jerusalem. A heated discussion and debate took place at the council. The council was divided into two camps. The first one was the one mentioned in the above texts (Acts 15:1,5) who supported the idea of salvation by the works of the law whereas, the other camp, spearheaded by the likes of Paul, Peter, Barnabas, advocated the idea of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone.

After much discussion, a final decision was reached. It was decided that the Gentile believers were exempted from observing the law of Moses but the Jewish believers were made, by obligation, to observe these laws. But at the same time, the Gentiles were

instructed to abstain from the consumption of animals whose meat was offered to idols, blood, and meat of animals that were killed by strangling, and from fornication. However, even in the decision concerning how the Gentiles were to carry themselves, there was no mention of Christ and His merits.

Acts 15:19,20 *“Wherefore, my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from the Gentiles are turned to God: (20) but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.”*

Another Gospel

But years after this council, the Pharisees and those that backed their theology, continued to demand the Gentile believers to observe the Mosaic laws. This is evident from the letter that Paul wrote to the church at Galatia which composed mostly of Gentile members. Paul openly declared in this letter that the believers were “soon removed” from the gospel that was originally preached to them by him. The Galatians began to believe and teach that it was necessary, in order to be saved, to be circumcised and observe the laws of Moses. Paul brands this heresy as “another gospel.”

Galatians 1:6-12 *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: (7) which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. (8) But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which have been preached unto you, let him be accursed. (9) As we said before, so say I now again, If any man*

preach any other gospel unto you other than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (10) For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet please men, I should not be a servant of Christ. (11) But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. (12) For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

The gospel that Paul preached was by revelation of Jesus Christ. It is therefore logical to conclude that the same gospel that Christ preached was also preached by Paul.

Doctrine of the Anti-christ.

As the church sank deeper and deeper into this heresy, it began to believe that Christ was not the only way to salvation; that there were other roads leading to the ultimate goal of salvation. As time elapsed, their teaching evolved into one that advocated the idea that CHRIST IS NO LONGER THE WAY TO SALVATION!!!!

To remain consistent with this error, a popular idea that Christ no longer lives in the believer began to hold sway! Paul declared that this mystery of iniquity was already at work in his time. Peter and John also spoke of this issue.

2 Peter 2:1 *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon them swift destruction.”*

Peter warns that these false prophets and teachers are denying Jesus Christ. We shall take a closer look at this in a little while. But first, John refers to these false prophets and teachers as antichrists who preach another gospel which is contrary to the gospel of Christ.

1 John 2:18 *“Little children, it is the last time: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; where-by we know that it is the last time.”*

Here John says that there is not one, but many antichrists. What are these “damnable heresies” that the antichrists teach?

1 John 4:3 *“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof we have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world.”*

2 John 7 *“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”*

In both these passages, John speaks in the present tense. He says that the antichrist doctrine advocates that Christ “is not come in the flesh.” This is not speaking of Christ not becoming a man. What John is saying is that the antichrists teach that Christ does not live in the believer. (“is not come in the flesh.”) In other words, the “another gospel” is not “Christ in you.” It is rather the law that holds a more prominent place than the Giver of the law. The outcome is a legalistic, Christ-less and an atheistic religion.

This corrupted gospel is in line with the doctrine of the trinity which promotes the idea that, it is not Christ but someone else, called God the Holy Spirit, that lives in you. This doctrine takes away Christ from the believer. When Christ is no longer part of our lives, His victory is not ours. What we are expected to do, is to try, solely by our efforts, to gain that victory. What we may not be aware is that we plunge deeper into utter hopelessness and a never-ending struggle against sin.

THE MAN OF SIN

The concept of righteousness by works is in harmony with the current popular idea that man no longer needs God because he thinks he has the ability to be good without God. But the Bible teaches us that “there is none good but one, that is, God.” (Matthew 19:17)

New Age Religion

It is interesting to note that the new age movement or religion teaches that man is divine. In order that his divine traits should manifest themselves, all that this man needs to do is to meditate and channel this energy which is inside of him. This pretty much explains why yoga has become such a popular sport throughout the world.

Denying the Father and Son

One of the chief reasons that caused Lucifer to rebel against God was because he believed that he could remain good, and perhaps even better without Him. He has injected this idea into our minds. If this idea is true, would we still feel that we need God? This is what the antichrists taught and are still teaching the world

today. Here is something more about what John says about the antichrist.

1 John 2:22,23 *“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. (23) Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowlegeth the Son hath the Father also.”*

Notice what John says. He first asks the question if the liar or the antichrist denies that Jesus is the Christ or the Messiah. He gives the answer in the next sentence, that the liar or the antichrist is one who does not deny that Jesus is the Christ but he denies the Father and the Son. How does he deny the Father and the Son? Verse 23 spells that out for us. John says that the antichrist denies the Father and Son by not acknowledging the Son. Which means that he does not allow Them entrance into his life because he does not acknowledge that God has the power to turn a sinner into a saint. This explains the warning that Peter gives in 2 Peter 2:1.

A demonstration of this attitude is found in the Pharisees who were ‘converted’ to Christianity. These men accepted Christianity because they believed that Jesus, whom they crucified, was the Christ. But at the same time, they denied Him entrance into their lives. If Christ is not found living in the heart, the Father also is not found dwelling in the heart. As a consequence, the Pharisees lived a God-less life. Why did they choose such a path? Because they, like Lucifer, thought that they were self-sufficient. This attitude which persisted among certain members of the early church gave birth to the man of sin. In fact, John termed such members as those who were not of the

church. To put it in simple words, these false brethren were not Christians but only appeared to be so, on the outside.

The Origins of Popery

Let us take one last look at Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians concerning the man of sin.

2 Thessalonians 2:3,4 *“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; (4) who oposseth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”*

The man of sin declares himself to be God! In other words, this man says that he does not need God to be good. So, whatever he says or do, no one dares to raise a finger in opposition to him for fear of being ridiculed. This same scenario was displayed in the council of Jerusalem.

Even after Peter, Paul and Barnabas had given their testimony that the Holy Spirit was poured out to the Gentile believers, who never had to observe the laws and the ordinances of the Jewish economy, the council could not arrive at a decision because the camp of the Pharisees ignored all evidences that proved that they were wrong. It was until one man stood up and declared what he thought the best solution to the problem was, that the debate ceased and a decision made. This man was James, the brother of Jesus. The church leaders now held this man in high esteem and considered him as the head of the church simply because he was tied to Christ by blood.

Christ did not ordain that the church should replace Him as its leader. But sadly, this was what happened. By shifting their focus away from Christ and diverting their attention to that which is holy, just and good (the law), they began to lose sight of the true Head of the church. They eventually elected a mere mortal as its new head to replace the true Head. Thus, it was in the council that the church leaders sowed the seed of what would later evolve into the office of the pope! It is no surprise that whoever occupies this office, declares himself as one who is equal to God or, sometimes, God Himself.

What about those who are not part of Catholicism? It is true that the churches that have broken off from the Catholic system do not have a pope to rule over their conscience. But the fact remains that even in these organisations, the people are taught to look up to the pastors and the leaders for guidance. Their focus is turned away from the Him who is the way, the truth and the life. The question is: Can the pope or the pastor save you?

Many Antichrists

Another point that we should take note of is that there are many antichrists. I grew up to be taught that the antichrist is exclusively the office of the pope. This is contrary to the Bible. 'Antichrist' is a term used to collectively call those who teach that Christ does not live in the believer. (see 1 John 1:18; 2 John 7). One does not have to be a pope or a pastor or even a trinitarian, for that matter, to be an antichrist and the man of sin. The Pharisees were not trinitarians. James was neither a pope nor a pastor. All one needs to do is to believe and teach that one is self-sufficient and that, by one's own strength, one can live the law. Remember, you cannot live the law without the Living Law living in you.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

“But the anointing that which ye have received of him that abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.” (1 John 2:27)

A DIVIDED HOUSE

Reuben Warjri



The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt is one of the major historical events recorded in the Bible, in part because, it did not seem a plausible thing for the Israelites to leave. The prevailing situation in Egypt at the time was not favourable for a mass exodus from the land of bondage. The prevailing attitude of the Egyptians towards their Jewish slaves were summed up in the words of Pharaoh in his response to Moses' demand to let the people go.

Exodus 5:2 *“And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.”*

So, what made it possible for the Israelites to leave Egypt? The evidence from the Bible is too plain not to see. It was nothing but the miracles of God that He worked through His servant, Moses, that made the impossible, possible. The words of Stephen spelled out this fact for us.

Acts 7:36 *“He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.”*

Purpose of the Miracles

What was the main aim and objective of these miracles? The Israelites were in Egypt for a period of about four hundred years. Except for a few households wherein the knowledge of the true God was dearly preserved, God was lost in utter obscurity among the children of Israel. Hence, God desired that His people should once again come to the knowledge of the truth and cast their sight away from the gods revered by their Egyptian masters. By these miracles, God also intended that the Egyptians should know that He was the only true God and that their gods were false and not gods to be worshipped and esteemed. In fact, the plagues that fell on Egypt were an attack on the gods that they acknowledged, thereby bringing to their realization that God alone was the true God. The parting of the Red Sea was an example of this.

Exodus 14:1-4 *“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, (2) Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hairoth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it ye shall encamp before the sea. (3) For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, they are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. (4) And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD.”*

The above passage seems to indicate that the sole purpose of hardening the heart of Pharaoh was to let him and his fellow Egyptians know that the God of

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was the Lord. But a careful analysis of the events pertaining to the crossing of the Red Sea indicates that it was also God's purpose to confirm His faithfulness towards the people He promised to deliver.

God's children were in a dire situation. They understood that the time of complete deliverance was finally unfolding in front of their eyes. But when God led them to the banks of the sea, their hopes were shattered. With nowhere to go but forward, the way was blocked by the sea. It would take only a miracle of immense proportion to complete their deliverance from their over bearing masters. After crossing to the other side, the Israelites sang a song unto God, acknowledging Him as their true God. The following words from the song confirm that their faith and allegiance to Him was, to a great extent, a result of the miracles that were unfolding before them.

Exodus 15:11 *“Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”*

THE SPIRIT OF UNITY

After the Red Sea crossing, their next major stop was the foot of Mount Sinai. It was here that another major event in the history of Israel, as a people, transpired. God descended on the mountain and gave the law to His people. But one condition had to be met by the children of Israel for God to finally decide to give the law. That condition was the spirit of unity among the Israelites to unanimously agree to observe the covenant that God was about to make with them.

Exodus 19:3-8 *“And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; (4) ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto Myself. (5) Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine: (6) and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words that thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. (7) And Moses came and called for all the elders of the people and laid before their faces all these words that the LORD commanded him. (8) And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.”*

Because of this spirit of unity displayed by the children of Israel at the foot of the mountain, God consented to come down in a thick cloud so that all of them would be able to hear His voice when He spoke. God also commanded Moses to sanctify the people and commanded them to wash their clothes as preparations to meet Him when He came down on Mount Sinai. This, they had to accomplish by the third day, for on this day God would descend on the mountain with a thick cloud to give the law to Moses.

The unity of the people was also witnessed in the building of the tabernacle which included the sanctuary furniture, the attire of the priests and the like. All the Israelites had something to contribute towards this project whether it be in the form of freewill offerings which came by way of donation of

materials, or in the form of skills and talents that God had liberally bestowed upon them. The freewill offerings that came by way of kind, far exceeded the amount needed to complete the task that Moses had to tell the people to stop contributing. The contribution that came by way of skills and talents was also not short in supply and the work of building the tabernacle advanced at a fast pace.

Exodus 36:2-7 *“And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wisehearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it: (3) and they received of Moses all the offering which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. (4) And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made; (5) And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make. (6) And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make anymore work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. (7) For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.”*

Successful Preaching of the Gospel Demands Unity

The building of the tabernacle typifies the work of the gospel commission. Like the Israelites who wandered in the wilderness, the church of God, too, needs

to be united in order to carry out the gospel commission successfully. It is true that today we do not need to build a physical tabernacle as a dwelling place of God. But we are required to be builders of the spiritual temple, that is, the church of God.

God’s church comprises of people from different walks of life who are bound together in Jesus Christ. It is in these people or this church that God makes His dwelling place. In other words, the ‘temple’ that we ought now to build is God’s church by adding more souls to it which is ‘the body’ of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:19-22 *“And therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (20) and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; (21) in whom all the building fitly framed together grow unto a holy temple in the Lord: (22) in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.”*

Romans 12:5 *“So we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”*

God calls every member of His church to be actively involved in the spreading of the gospel through their contribution towards the cause of God. Their contribution can be in the form of funds or in the form of talents that God has bestowed upon them. The mere presence of the members, as a way of rendering their support for the gospel, is also a boon to the morale of the cause as a whole.

Let no one think that his or her contribution is too small. No matter how

small the contribution is, God looks at the motives and the intentions of the heart. God accepts these contributions, no matter how small, if they come from a heart that is generous; for God “loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Paul, speaking of the church as the body of Christ, likens the individual members to the different parts of the body. He reminds how each part of the body works in close co-ordination with each other and how all these parts depend on each other for the proper function of the entire being.

1 Corinthians 12:21-27 “*And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. (22) Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. (23) And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon those we bestow more abundant honour; and our comely parts have more abundant comeliness. (24) For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: (25) that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. (26) And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. (27) Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*”

It is essential, therefore, for God’s people to come together and finish the work of preaching the gospel because if this is not achieved, the end would not come.

Matthew 24:14 “*And this gospel of this kingdom shall be preached in all the*

world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

Similarly, the Israelites in Moses’ day were required to finish the task of building of the tabernacle before they could make their way into the promised land.

The Four Criteria

Apart from the completion of the building of the tabernacle, God’s people had to satisfy certain criteria to be qualified to inherit the land of Canaan. In examining the scriptures, I found out that God did not wait for a perfection of character to be manifested among the Israelites before they could enter the promised land. Instead, there were four conditions upon which were based their qualification to enter Canaan. Firstly, their knowledge of who God was, was of prime importance. Secondly, it was their unwavering and complete faith in Him. Thirdly, the spirit of unity which was brought about by this uniform faith in a common God. And fourthly, the law that God handed over to Moses. This law was what set this nation apart. These laws were given so that, by observing them, the other nations that surrounded them would witness that they were a wise and an astute people. (Deuteronomy 4:5,6) These were the conditions upon which rested their assurance of inheriting the land that God had given them. Because these conditions were fulfilled by the Israelites, God commanded them to take over the land of Canaan and possess it.

Deuteronomy 1:21 “*Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.*”

UNITY TO DISUNITY

As a consequence, twelve men were selected, one from each tribe, to spy out the land which they were about to conquer. On their return, to the camp of Israel, the spies gave a report of the land. The report was of two kinds – the good and the bad.

The good report was well received by the Israelites and it kindled hopefulness in the hearts of the listeners.

Numbers 13:27 *“And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey, and this is the fruit of it.”*

However, the bad news seemed to be more powerful than the good, so much so that the people began to lose all hope of ever conquering the land which God had promised unto them.

Numbers 13:28,29 *“Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. (29) The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of the Jordan.”*

Numbers 13:32,33 *“And they brought up an evil report of the land which they have searched unto the children of Israel, saying, the land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. (33) And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of*

the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.”

This bad report rattled the Israelites to the very core. Now the camp was split into two groups. The first group which comprised of Caleb, Joshua, Moses and Aaron, were not moved by these discouraging words. The majority, on the other hand, were not in favour of invading Canaan. They had forgotten that some time ago they were able to defeat the very same people whom they now feared, the Amalekites, on account of their enormous size. The battle with the Amalekites in Rephidim (Exodus 17:8-16) was won because God was with them. Instead of looking to God and believing that He would deliver them once again, the Israelites lost sight of Him and began to focus on themselves. They now thought that they were too weak and too small to defeat their foes.

We see here that their knowledge of God was not enough to get them through. The knowledge that the promised land flowed with milk and honey was also not the key ingredient that made the impossible possible. What was needed was faith. Knowledge without faith amounts to nothing. The words of Paul in his letter to the Hebrews speaks volumes of the prevailing condition of God's church in the time of Moses.

Hebrews 4:2 *“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”*

The Aftermath of the Disunion

What followed as a result of their disunion was disastrous. They began by rebelling against God in turning away from Him and the men He chose to be their leaders. Then they considered going back to Egypt and appointed another leader from among themselves who would lead them in their journey back to Egypt. As a result, God punished the children of Israel by making them wander in the wilderness for another forty years before they could actually enter Canaan. (Numbers 14:1-4, 33)

Spiritually, the Israelites were rebelling against Christ whom Moses was the type. Their desire to elect another leader in Moses' stead, pointed to the election of a mere man as the head of the church. Their desire to go to Egypt was the desire of God's people to go back to the life of slavery under sin. And finally, the forty years of wandering through the wilderness points to the long years of waiting to finally go to the heavenly Canaan that God had prepared for His people.

NO NEW THING UNDER THE SUN

There is a popular maxim that goes like this: "History repeats itself." And the word of God affirms this saying through Solomon.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 *"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun."*

The events leading to the giving of the law and the subsequent disunity among God's chosen people would be repeated

all over again. It was the spirit of unity among the members of the early Christians that paved the way for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the day of Pentecost.

Acts 1:12-14 *"Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. (13) And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. (14) These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."*

Acts 2:1-4 *"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. (2) And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting. (3) And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. (4) And they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

In passing, this event was typified in the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. It is also a direct fulfilment of the prophecy that God gave through His prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 *"Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: (32) not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of*

the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the LORD: (33) But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the LORD, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (34) And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more.”

This covenant involved the writing of the law in the hearts of God’s people. How was this accomplished? This was accomplished when Christ, the one who lived the law perfectly, lived in the hearts of the believers. Christ who is the Living Law, also lived and continues to live the law in and through the lives of God’s children.

But the church that met at the Council of Jerusalem was a divided house. There were those who held to the idea that human efforts alone could give them the much-needed victory over sin whereas, there were those who clung on to Christ as the only way to victory and salvation.

As a result of this disunity in the church, the spirit of rebellion against Christ as the only way to salvation was manifested. Eventually, separation from the Saviour bore fruit. The members of the church

wanted to go back to spiritual Egypt which was a state of being sinful. They even elected a new head in the form of James, the brother of Jesus. The work of finishing the gospel was greatly hindered and the church had to wait many more years before Christ could come again. The church that was once the apple of God’s eye later evolved into the apostate organization of Catholicism.

The same can be said about the experience of the Seventh-Day Adventists as a Church. The gospel of Righteousness in Christ, as presented by A.T. Jones, E.J. Waggoner and supported by Mrs. Ellen G. White, came to the Adventist church in the 1880s. This message was unpopular among the Adventist circle that, when it was put to



vote in the General Conference of 1888, held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the message was summarily rejected. Like the church of God that met in the Council of Jerusalem, the church that met in

1888 was divided on the basis of the way to salvation.

The majority held to the idea that salvation was by strict observance of the law, particularly the law of the Sabbath which is the fourth commandment. While they were right to a certain extent, to a very large extent they were way off the mark. Yes, they had to keep the law, but they thought that this was possible by human efforts alone. Their focus was on the law and not on the Living Law, which is Jesus Christ.

The result was that the church esteemed mere mortals, and elected men as their heads and leaders who would direct and dictate the conscience of the church members. Jesus Christ was lost sight of and all efforts to gain eternal life rested on human efforts alone! The work of spreading the message of righteousness by faith was deliberately receded by men who held positions of responsibility in the church. Yet this organization boasts that it is basking in the righteousness of Christ. But the fact remains that a hundred and thirty years later, Christ is yet to come. In other words, the church that was called to carry the gospel of the kingdom to all the world has failed miserably to carry out its duty faithfully.

But let us not be carried away by the faults and mistakes of other groups. The same problem persists among the OTG community as well. There is widespread disapproval over the idea that faith is the

key ingredient that can eradicate sin. While professing to believe in Jesus, many do not really believe in Him and what He says He can do. Once again, the church is a divided house.

What conclusions do I draw as I trace the history of God's church through the ages? I see that the words of Christ ring true in my mind.

Mark 3:25 *“And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.”*

The gospel of the kingdom is once again being preached to us and anybody who wishes to lend an ear. However, the questions remain: Have we not learned anything from the past? Are we content to continue in the state of disunity? How much longer will we spend our time here on this earth while souls are perishing in the darkness?

Notes

The Herald of Truth is one of Christ In You Ministries' endeavours to restore the truths that have been lost and trampled to the ground. We hope that by this avenue, we can motivate our readers to search for truth as for hidden treasures. This newsletter is published on a monthly basis and it is free of cost for anyone who desires to acquire it.

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