

# WHAT DO WE SHOW?

# Q U A R T E R L Y

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*The Times*, Saturday October 15 started its report on the Edinburgh CRE, as follows:

"There was a time when the closest churches got to worldly commercialism was a jumble sale and raffle with stalls selling knitted egg cosies and lavender bags. If the travelling bazaar known as the Christian Resources Exhibition, in Edinburgh this week, is anything to go by, those days are long gone and the church has embraced a popular culture in a desperate attempt to get young bums on pews."

If the article written by Shirley English is not tongue in cheek then it is very sad. However, what is very telling is that, although the article mentions holy socks, karaoke-style digital hymn machine, Christian clown make-up (is it any different from worldly clown make-up?) glory golf balls and biblical brollies; she totally ignores the stalls that dealt with equipping the church with much more needed and fundamental items such as Bibles and training in evangelism to various groups.

I have no knowledge as to whether Shirley English is a Christian or not, although I would doubt it from the article; however, in her omissions she is not alone. Many, who visited the show, professing to be Christians, appeared to have a very strange attitude when it came to reaching the Jews or the Muslims or indeed those caught up in the cults and occult. Don't get me wrong, there were many worthwhile projects that were represented at the CRE but at the same time, I detected a number of attitudes that I believe the Lord would not have appreciated. In writing about them I pray that any such lacks would also be revealed in my life so that they can be dealt with.

First, there was **indifference**. This indifference was often shown by people, after you had taken the trouble to explain what you do, just walking on without so much as indicating their concern over such people.

Not only indifference but **hostility** too; this was summed up by the lady who, having accepted the literature,

thrust it back in my hand when I explained that we were seeking to reach out to those in the cults, occult and New Age. The gesture was accompanied by the words, "You can have this back; I am trying to bring Christianity and New Age together."

The Lord must weep for those who profess to be His children but who seek to compromise in such ways. The 'gospel' of the New Age is 'self' and is the very opposite of the gospel of Jesus Christ which is death to self. It is just not possible to bring these two groups together. How sad, though, that energy is spent trying to fulfil a purpose that has nothing to do with God and yet His name gets attached to it.

I suppose, though, that hostility is better than indifference as at least you know where such people stand, but it would appear to me that both are attitudes that the Lord hates and would long that such people come to repentance and give their energies to Him.

Beyond this there is also the question of **priorities**; I wonder if we have got these wrong, when we can spend so much time and effort on things that will pass away - what are we building? Yes, these novelties can produce finances that possibly can be used in the Lord's service, but are we actually working on the areas that matter

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Reachout Trust is an international Christian ministry that equips the church, upholds evangelical biblical truth and builds bridges to people in the cults, occult and new age.

*We aim to:*

Examine in the light of the evangelical Christian gospel the beliefs and spirituality of people within the cults, occult, new age and all not upholding evangelical biblical truth.

Train and equip Christians to explain the evangelical Christian gospel in a relevant way.

Provide a complete service of advice and help to all enquirers.

Present the evangelical Christian gospel.

Work with organisations who will help achieve these aims.

A detailed information pack that shows how you can be involved in this ministry is available from head office.

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most? Are we really seeking first His Kingdom, or are we involved indeed with just 'popular culture' that has invaded the church from outside?

I wonder if we have been conditioned as Christians to accept the way of the world when God is looking for us to be different. He has given us His priorities and, as we bring ourselves in line with them, many other things will simply fade away.

More and more the Lord is making me aware of His priority found in Romans 10:12-15:

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

Surely this is the heart of

God being penned by Paul and we need to take it to our hearts. Anything that is a major part of our lives that is not to this end should seriously be questioned as to what place it really has in our daily living.

Paul begins with the simple but clear definition of the Gospel: whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. No matter what their background or what they believed before, now they can be truly saved. He goes on to pose 4 questions, however, that could be a stumbling block to those who are at present not saved.

First, how can they call upon the Lord to save them if they do not have a correct understanding of who He is? Many do believe in *a* Jesus but it is not *the* Jesus that they need to believe in to be saved.

Second, how can they believe in someone they have never heard of? Do you see Paul's heart here beating with the heart of God? He wishes none to perish but indeed all to call on

this name and be saved, but he realises some have never heard.

Third, the extension of this is very simple; how shall they hear about Jesus if someone does not tell them? Reading the English translation, we might want to excuse ourselves at this point because we do not regard ourselves as 'a preacher'. However, the original text is not talking about the few who may stand in the pulpit and expound God's word; it is talking about the many who can communicate, can chat, can simply talk about this Lord in every-day conversation.

Finally, he asks how will the preacher go unless they are sent. Some Christians say this is not for me because I have not received a calling to do it. We may not have received a specific calling to a certain place or group of people but we have *all* received a general calling to talk about the Lord to our neighbours, workmates, friends, etc. Whatever their background, whatever their belief, so that they can at least once hear about the real Jesus that they can call on to be saved.

Am I indifferent to this? Am I hostile to this? Do I need to reprioritise my life? May God help us all. ☐

## Doug's Diary

Doug Harris will be involved in training at the following seminars. An updated list can be obtained either on the web site or by ringing Head Office for further details.

Those marked \* may have a restricted attendance.

### FEBRUARY 2006

- 5 Tooting \*
- 8-10 CRE - Stoneleigh
- 21 Prayer & Bible Battersea
- 24-26 Reachout Director's Weekend

### MARCH 2006

- 11 West London
- 12 Dagenham
- 15 London City Mission \*
- 19 Oakham, Warley
- 21 Prayer & Bible Battersea
- 25 Chichester

### APRIL 2006

- 10 Poole

### MAY 2006

- 7 Arlesford
- 9-12 CRE Sandown Park Esher
- 16 Prayer & Bible Battersea

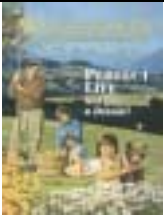
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# WATCH THE TOWER



2005/4

We continue our review of recent Watchtower articles.

## The Watchtower July 2004

On page 8 we read a statement that is made fairly regularly:

"... since 1914 he has had authority over God's newly established Kingdom"

We have not written on this for a while and so here again is the clear evidence that 1914 cannot be a marked date in Scripture and anyway Russell did not point forward to 1914 as the *starting point* rather it was the *finishing point*.

From the beginning the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society has been fascinated with dates. Although the dates may have changed, and, indeed what was supposed to have happened on those dates, one has remained constant - 1914. This becomes the pivotal point of their belief covering both the 'return' of Jesus Christ and the starting point to date the 'end of the world'. But there are no dates in the Bible and so how do the Society arrive at this number? The answer is chronology, and an understanding of it is helpful when talking with a Witness about these things.

In summary the Watchtower chronology goes like this:

An absolute date - an event in the Bible and in secular history - is decided upon. The Watchtower chose the fall of Babylon in 539 BC.

Now, using the Bible *alone*, they say two years later, 537 BC, Cyrus decreed that the Jews could return to Jerusalem. Thus, 537 is the end of Jerusalem's seventy years of desolation, which therefore began, at its fall, in 607 BC.

Daniel's dream in chapter 4 and the 'Bible rule' that a day equals a year, show that the Gentile Times, which began at Jerusalem's fall in 607 BC, would be 2,520 years long, ending in 1914.

We'll look at each step in detail.

### Step 1: The Absolute Date

To date an event with a 'BC' date, you must accept scientific

chronology. The Witnesses say that they are using biblical chronology, but that only places events in their right order with the correct interval of years in between. Their article in *The Watchtower*, 15 August 1968, entitled *The Book of Truthful, Historical Dates*, showed that to establish the absolute date of 539, they must use secular historians. They quote twenty-five reliable authorities to fix 539 but at least twenty-two of these also conclude that Jerusalem fell in 586/587 BC, not 607 as claimed by the Society.

If these authorities are reliable over 539, surely they are reliable over 586? In any case, why choose 539 as the starting point when we could equally use 586 as the absolute date and miss out the first two calculations? Sound scholarship means that we must either accept both 539 and 586 as reliable or reject both.

This is further shown by the basis for fixing 539. *The Watchtower* article mentioned above explains:

"... a stone document... (which) gives precise details... This, in turn, enables modern scholars, with their knowledge of astronomy, to translate these dates into terms of the Julian or Gregorian calendars." - p. 490.

Similarly, we can fix the absolute date for the fall of Jerusalem as 586 BC, based on a clay tablet with precise details that can be translated into terms of our modern-day calendar by the same accurate astronomical tables used for 539.

The Witnesses must have realised they were skating on thin ice because a few years after the article in *The Watchtower* they changed their mind:

"... the co-relation of astronomical data with human events in the past is subject to various factors and human interpretation, allowing for error." *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol.1, p.454.

This means that 539 is *not* an absolute date and there is no reliable Watchtower chronology!

### Step 2: From 539 To 537

Once 539 is accepted, Jehovah's

Witnesses will proudly tell you that only the Bible is used to establish their chronology, the first step being from 539 to 537, the two years between the fall of Babylon and the decree of Cyrus. Where are these years found mentioned in the Bible? The answer is nowhere! Even the Society agrees:

"... It is **very probable** that the decree was made by the winter of 538 or toward the spring of 537." - *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. I, p.458 (emphasis added).

There is not enough information in the Bible about these events to be exact. Starting from 539 and using the Bible alone, all we could say is that the people returned to the land somewhere between 538 and 536.

### Step 3: 70 Years of Desolation

The Watchtower is adamant that 70 years of complete desolation took place after the fall of Jerusalem in 607. The Society's article on Chronology reads:

"From 607 BCE to return from exile. The length of this period is fixed by God's own decree concerning Judah, that 'all this land must become a devastated place, an object of astonishment, and these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon seventy years' - Jer 25:8-11. The Bible prophecy does not allow for the application of this 70-year period to any time other than between the desolation of Judah... and the return of the Jewish exiles to their homeland... 2 Chronicles 36:20,21 states: 'Furthermore, he carried off those remaining from the sword captive to Babylon... to fulfil Jehovah's word by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had paid off its sabbaths'... Jerusalem... fell in... Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year of actual rule (counting from his accession year in 625 BC)... However, 'some of the lowly people of the land' were allowed to remain... they fled into Egypt, finally leaving Judah completely desolate (2 Kings 25:9-12,22-26). This was in the seventh month... Hence the count of the 70 years of desolation must have begun about October 1, 607 BCE ending in 537 BCE." - *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol.1, p.463.

The term '70 years' appears 6 times in Scripture. 3 times in Jeremiah; once in Daniel; once in Zechariah and once in 2 Chronicles 36:21. The key to this period is the prophecy of Jeremiah. First, what did he say?

### **Jeremiah 25:11, 12**

This message came in the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar (25:1). For 23 years, the Lord had spoken against the inhabitants of Jerusalem and His patience had run its course (v. 3). Now the Lord says, "I will bring the King of Babylon against you" (v. 9). After preaching the same message for 23 years without response and now telling the people what would happen, do you think the Lord would wait another 18 years (till Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year) to fulfil the judgement? Probably not. However, this is not conclusive by itself.

### **Jeremiah 29:10**

Verse 1 says that Jeremiah spoke these words while he was still in Jerusalem but some had already been taken captive to Babylon.

For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfil My good word to you, to bring you back to this place' (29:10).

Jeremiah was talking about the 70 years having already started, before the final destruction of Jerusalem; proof that the 70 years cannot start from that event. Do other Scriptures support this?

### **Daniel 9:2**

Daniel mentions the *desolations* of Jerusalem. In the Watchtower's chronology article they mention one group being taken captive at the destruction of Jerusalem, but Daniel mentions at least two devastations. The Society's article on Nebuchadnezzar (*Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, p.480), mentions that Nebuchadnezzar comes to Jerusalem earlier, when quoting from the Babylonian Chronicles.

"In this his ascension year he returned to Hattu and... he took the vast booty of Hattu to Babylon."

Hattu is Judah and this becomes clear when the Chronicles mention the destruction of Jerusalem, [Hattu]. Nebuchadnezzar, on the Society's own admission, had been to Jerusalem before and taken away booty in his first or ascension year,

the very year in which Jeremiah made the prophecy. Daniel expected the 70 years to be tied in with the devastations of Jerusalem, that is the period would start from its first devastation, but from where did he draw this conclusion? Jeremiah the prophet. We therefore need to go back to Jeremiah 25:11,12 to see what led Daniel to that conclusion:

"These nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years."

Jeremiah did not prophesy, and therefore Daniel could not deduce, that the 70 years would start when Jerusalem fell. He said, and Daniel correctly understood, that the 70 years would begin when Jerusalem first came under the servitude of the King of Babylon. History and the Bible tells us that this was in the **first** year of his reign **not his nineteenth**. It is only by ignoring historical evidence, and even worse by ignoring God's Word, that the Society can conclude that the 70 years ran between 607 and 537.

### **Step 4: 'The Times of the Gentiles'**

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar recorded in Daniel 4 is the basis of this calculation. The tree in the dream represents 'divine rulership... through the kingdom of Judah' and the seven periods that elapsed after it was cut down are the 'Gentile Times'. The kingdom being restored to Nebuchadnezzar after these seven periods represents the Lord Jesus taking His seat on the throne vacated by King Zedekiah.

Unlike other dreams recorded in Daniel, the fulfilment is also recorded. It is not for the 'end times' as others are. The word used for 'fulfilled' in verse 33 means 'to have an end of'. The tree represents Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, which is difficult to equate with the understanding of the Society that it represents divine rulership.

"What was really meant was... domination exercised by the kingdom of God." - *Babylon the Great has Fallen*, 1963, p.177).

It is a foolish man who seeks to correct God.

Luke 21:24 mentions the 'Time of the Gentiles' and it explains that during this time Jerusalem will be trampled down. That could not possibly have ended in 1914, but

the Jehovah's Witness will try to wriggle out of this by saying it is the heavenly Jerusalem that was trampled down until 1914. However, the trampling started on earth and therefore must finish there. Is it scriptural to say that the heavens were trampled down until 1914? See Ephesians 1:20-23 (past tense in AD 60!).

According to the dating of the Society, Daniel was taken to Babylon in 617 and the fall of Jerusalem was ten years later in 607 BC. In addition, this dream is a prophecy concerning the fall of Jerusalem. However, these two statements cannot be reconciled. The dream indicated a future event, to take place at least one year later (Dan 4:29). If that event is the fall of Jerusalem, then the dream must have been received at the latest in 608. That is impossible because the dream in Daniel 4 comes after the dream in Daniel 2 (compare 2:48 with 4:9); and the Watchtower date Daniel 2 (albeit falsely) as 605, two years after the fall of Jerusalem.

The word for 'time' here is only found eleven times in the Old Testament and all are in the Book of Daniel. It is against sound biblical exegesis to isolate this one instance and compare it with Scriptures in Revelation. Daniel speaks of seven 'times', these were times when there was no king of Israel ruling. Instead, God's people were dominated by a foreign power that did not recognise the God of the Jews. Rev.12:6,14 shows another time of testing for the people of God where three and a half 'times' equals 1,260 days. This translates into the fact that seven 'times' equals 2,520 days. Revelation is talking about a specific period of trouble for God's people that lasts seven years. This, of course, is not enough and therefore has to be linked with the next step.

### **Step 5: Day-years**

The Society need to transfer days into years and call upon the year for each day theory, or as they say a 'Bible rule'. Edmund Gruss deals with this matter in detail in his book *The Jehovah's Witnesses and Prophetic Speculation*. In summary, we should note that this 'rule' actually appears only twice in Scripture. First, we read in Numbers 14:34 of the guilt of the chil-

dren of Israel. Because of their disobedience they would bear the guilt for forty years - a year for every day. The second example is found in Ezekiel 4:6 which, very interestingly, speaks again of the guilt of God's people. Ezekiel was a 'visual aid' to the people for forty days - a day for every year.

There is no historical or biblical evidence to use a calculation of 2,520 years as the period of the Gentile Times. In addition, both Scriptures called on to turn days into years speak of the same matter, the guilt of God's people.

The rule is not general but specific. In any case, the verses do not say the same thing: Numbers 14:34 is a year for a day but Ezekiel 4:6 is a day for a year.

### Summary

The fall of Jerusalem in 607 BC is disproved by scientific chronology.

The date of 586 BC for the fall of Jerusalem is established both by scientific and biblical chronology.

Starting from an absolute date of 539 BC it is impossible, solely

using the biblical record, to show that Jerusalem fell in 607 BC.

The way the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society use Scripture is not sound interpretation but a taking of individual passages at random to prove a point that has been determined beforehand.

The result of these conclusions is that 1914 is not proven as the significant date of Christ's invisible return. And the claim that since 1914 Christ has had authority over God's newly established Kingdom has no justification whatsoever. ☐



# TRUTH RESTORED - 45



BY MIKE & ANN THOMAS

## JOSEPH'S LEGACY

As we approach the end of this 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Joseph Smith, we consider his legacy and what he has achieved for truth-seekers everywhere. In the online *Meridian* magazine October 3, 2002 edition, Geoffrey Biddulph, a Mormon leader in Brazil, wrote a rebuttal of the claims of Thomas Murphy of *Book of Mormon and DNA* fame <http://www.meridianmagazine.com/ideas/030128anti.html>. Characterising Murphy as a malcontent, he told a parable of a chess club in which one occasional member decided he preferred checkers (draughts in the UK) and tried to persuade others to join him in playing checkers. When the others refused he, and a few other malcontents, attacked the original club. Thus an "anti-Mormon" is born; someone who is not content with the original rules of the game and spoils it for everyone else because he can't get his own way. It is quite a clever device this parable, and I decided to try it for myself. I hope you enjoy the result.

## THE REAL CHESS CLUB

There was once a highly successful chess club. Over a period of 2,000 years it became popular across the world and gained countless millions of members. Clubs were set up in most countries, each doing

things a little differently reflecting the different cultures, times and circumstances of its members. Some were quite formal while others were less so. Some met in great numbers in large buildings, while others met in small groups in local halls, or members' homes. Some club meetings were grand affairs with a good deal of pomp and ceremony, while others were simple gatherings with the least fuss and formality. But each adhered to the basic rules of the game of chess.

One of the members, let's call him Joseph, didn't really understand the game, grew bored with playing chess according to someone else's rules, and decided he wanted to play by his own rules. He was also determined that the other members should play by his rules too. He spent all his time haranguing them to stop playing by the established rules and start playing his way. He began to claim that he had a special gift for the game, and an insight on how the founder had originally intended it to be played. When he didn't get his way, he left in a huff. The chess club didn't mind too much. Joseph was still the only guy who wanted to play by his rules.

Time passed, and the chess club went through a rough patch, as all clubs do occasionally. It had

happened before and would, no doubt, happen again. Some people couldn't deal with the tough times, and Joseph noticed this. He convinced some that now was the time to start playing by his rules. A small group, a total of six, of the chess club's members decided that there was something in what Joseph was saying and joined him.

Soon they became bored with just playing among themselves, and they decided to get everybody else in the chess club to play Joseph's way. But nobody else wanted to play with Joseph besides the original six. Club leaders and members became concerned that Joseph and his friends were claiming that they were the real chess club, that members of the club they had left were not true to the rules, and that he had a book containing the original rules of the game.

"Look guys, *this is* the chess club. If you want to play by different rules that you've made up yourselves, go start a club of your own, but don't pretend you're us", the original club members said. But of course this is not what the dissident chess club members wanted. Simply going off and doing their own thing was not very challenging; they wanted to convince everybody else to play by their rules.

Members of Joseph's club gave

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some of their time, say two years, to going around telling as many people as they could that what they had come to regard as the chess club had, over 2,000 years, moved away from the club founder's original vision. They should look around for another club to join, say Joseph's. They gave away copies of the book Joseph claimed contained the original rules as well as supplementary books containing more and more and more rules.

Members of the original club were now quite alarmed and began to study these books and compare them with the real original rules contained in the book they had been given by the earliest club members, friends of the founder. Joseph had changed so many rules they hardly knew where to begin. For instance, while there was only one white king in the original game, Joseph had lots of white kings. Furthermore, Joseph kept adding rules, changing rules, and ignoring rules. In fact, this last point bothered a lot of people since he seemed to play by different rules from everyone else in the club.

Where Joseph's first book seemed to have some resemblance to the original game, his later books moved further and further away until it was hard to recognise that they were playing chess at all. He jumped over so many heads in an attempt to have his own way that some say he was playing checkers. And this was a problem because people, who didn't know the rules of chess, took a game played on 64 black and white squares with "pieces" that moved back and forth across the board "taking" each other was actually chess. Some people played checkers for years thinking they were playing chess.

Soon, some of the original members of Joseph's club decided to leave for various reasons. Some left because they noticed that Joseph was not true even to his own original rules under which these earliest members joined. Some left because, following Joseph's example, they saw an opportunity to be at the head of their own club. Some even began to suspect that Joseph was using the club as an opportunity to have improper relations with other club members' wives. Following this scandal Joseph's wife, let's call her Emma, eventually got involved in

another club that claimed to have stuck to Joseph's original rules.

This was all getting very messy, and Joseph and his friends were creating chaos. They spent all their time bothering the chess players so no one could simply enjoy the game as it had been played for 2,000 years. Finally, the members of the original club decided it prudent and wise to publish what they had found so that people would have a clearer picture of what Joseph's club was really all about. To broadcast to the world of chess what had been going on.

Some, who had played checkers for years, thinking it to be chess, refused to believe at first what they were told by original chess club members. When they finally realised, however, that they had been mistaken in taking checkers for chess, they were grateful and left Joseph's club. Many joined the original chess club, although it has to be said others stayed away from the game altogether, refusing to risk being duped a second time. Joseph had spoiled the game of chess for a lot of good people. Some simply refused to believe anything members of the original club told them. They accused those who left Joseph's club of betrayal and said that those who went on to tell the truth about Joseph were just bitter and spiteful people. This was sad because these people felt that, in the original game, they had found the challenge, companionship and fulfilment they had always been seeking and simply wished to share it with others.

As time passed and new presidents of Joseph's club came and went, the rules continued to change. Eventually new generations of club members knew only the "Joseph's rules" with which they had grown up and knew nothing of the changes that had taken place over the years. They believed that this was how the game had always been played, not just 2,000 years ago, but by Joseph himself. They didn't realise how far from the original game their club had travelled. Nor how far even from Joseph's game.

Original club members continued to share the original rules with those who cared to know, and especially with members of Joseph's club, because they felt an empathy

with those who thought they were playing the game but were only playing a pale imitation. Meanwhile, members of Joseph's club whined and complained continuously about the original club, claiming it was "persecuting" them. The leaders of Joseph's club realised how far they had moved from the original club rules and began to "forget" some of the rules Joseph and other early presidents had insisted upon. They tried harder and harder to sound like chess players. They used chess terms, even though they were playing checkers. Finally, they thought that they had enough people convinced they were really playing chess that they demanded to be recognised as just another chess club.

Original club members, while recognising the different "flavours" of chess clubs around the world, felt this was asking too much. It didn't seem right, somehow that people should go around playing checkers all the while claiming it was chess. They, therefore, continued to publish information about Joseph's club, and members of that club continued to whine and complain. They insisted that members of the original club were not playing chess; only the checkers players were playing chess. When members of the original club aimed that charge back, claiming that you can hardly call checkers chess, Joseph's club members insisted that they had every right to call their game chess, and said they were being persecuted. They said it was not fair that, just because the original club had the original rules, they should decide on how chess should be played. "We'll play by Joseph's rules 'til we die", they exclaimed as they jumped over several of the opposing player's pieces and demanded to be made king.

## THE ONLY TRUE CHURCH

One fundamental claim of the Mormon Church is that Christendom is hopelessly divided with schisms and that the "Restored" Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has cut through this confusion, presenting one consistent message. The list on the next page are just *some* of the schisms, breakaway groups, sects and "denominations" spawned by Mormonism from the beginning selected from a larger list published by HIS Ministries International <http://www.hismin.com/>

Pure Church of Christ (Wyman Clark) 1831  
 The Independent Church 1832  
 Church of Christ (Ezra Booth) 1836  
 Church of Christ (Warren Parrish) 1837  
 The Church of Jesus Christ, the Bride, The Lamb's Wife (Hinkle) 1840  
 Church of Christ (Hyrum Page) 1842  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (F. G. Bishop) 1842?  
 True Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Law, Foster, Higbee) 1844  
 Church of Christ (Chubby) 1840's  
 Church of Christ/Church of Jesus Christ of the Children of Zion (Sidney Rigdon) 1844  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Emmett) 1844?  
 Church of Christ (Stoddard, Rich, Bump) 1845  
 Indian Mormon 1846  
 Church of Christ ( W. McLellin, D. Whitmer) 1847  
 \*Church of Christ (D. Whitmer) 1875  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (William Smith) 1847  
 Congregation of Jehovah's Presbytery of Zion (Thompson) 1848  
 Church of Christ (Brewster) 1848  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Wright) 1849  
 The Bride, The Lamb's Wife or Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Syfritt) 1850  
 Church of Christ (Aldrich) 1851  
 Church of Christ (Brooks) 1850's  
 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Strang) 1844  
 Church of Christ ( Aaron Smith) 1846  
 Church of the Messiah (Adams) 1861  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Strangite)(Albert Norman Ketchum) 1924  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Strangite) (Drew) 1952  
 Holy Church of Jesus Christ (Caffiaux) 1964  
 House of Ephraim and House of Manasseh of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Sheppard) 1970  
 The True Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Roberts) 1974  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Hajicek) ?  
**The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Brigham Young) 1847**  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Gibson) 1861  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints or Church of the First Born (Morris) 1861  
 The Prophet Cainen or Church of Jesus Christ of the Most High God (Williams) 1862  
 Church of Zion (Godbe) 1868  
 Church of the First Born (Dove) 1874  
 Church of Jesus Christ of the Saints of the Most High God (Guhl) 1870's  
 Church of Jesus Christ of the Saints of the Most High God (James) 1884  
 Church of Jesus Christ of the Saints of the Most High God (Thompson) 1888  
 Church of the First Born (Israel Dennis) 1895  
 United Order of Equality (Peterson) 1909  
 LDS Depression Movement 1930  
 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Third Convention (Paez) 1936  
 The Church of Jesus Christ of Israel ( Sherwood) 1936  
 Church of Jesus of Latter Day Saints (Margarito Bautista) 1936  
 Church of Freedom of Latter Day Saints 1950's  
 Zion's Order of the Sons of Levi (Kilgore) 1951  
 The Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times (Joel F. LeBaron) 1955  
 The Church of the Firstborn (Ross W. LeBaron) 1955  
 United Outcasts of Israel, American Indian Restoration Enterprises, Praetorian Press (Pratt) 1958  
 Perfected Church of Jesus Christ of Immaculate Latter Day Saints (Conway) 1958  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Forsgren) 1960  
 Church of Jesus Christ (Goldman) 1960's  
 LDS Scripture Researchers/Believe God Society (Lloyd) 1965  
 The Church of the Body and of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Powers) 1965  
 United Order of the Saints of Guadeloupe (Gamiette) 1966  
 Homosexual Church of Jesus Christ, Denver, Colorado 1972  
 Latter Day Saints Church (Park) 1972  
 The Church of the Lamb of God (Ervil M. LaBaron) 1972  
 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Krupenia) 1972  
 The Watchmen on the Towers of Latter Day Israel (Braun) 1973  
 Church of Jesus Christ in Solemn Assembly (Alexander Joseph) 1974  
 Evangelical Church of Christ, Church of the New Covenant in Christ (Bryant) 1974  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Simons) 1975  
 Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times (Wakeham) 1975  
 Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times ( Alma LeBaron) 1976  
 Christ's Church, Inc. (Peterson) 1978  
 Church of Jesus Christ (Bulla) 1978  
 The Restorers or School of the Prophets (Crossfield) 1979  
 Zion's First International Church (LeeAnn Walker) 1980  
 The Free Will Mormon Church (Coleman) 1980  
 Aryan Christian Church (Hayden, Idaho) 1980  
 Church of Jesus Christ (Mora) 1981  
 Samoan LDS Church, New Zealand 1981  
 The Millennial Church of Jesus Christ (Evoniuk) 1981  
 The Church of Jesus Christ of the Saints in Zion (Thackston) 1982  
 The Church of Jesus Christ of the Saints in Zion (Asay) 1984  
 Break from the Church of Jesus Christ in Solemn Assembly 1984  
 Church of Jesus Christ of All Latter-day Saints or Restoration Church of Jesus Christ (Feliz) 1985  
 Church of Christ of Latter-day Saints (Madison) 1985  
 Church of Christ the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times (Widmar) 1985  
 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Fundamentalists (Wright Family) 1985?  
 School of the Prophets (Archie Dean Wood) 1986  
 Mormon Fundamentalists, England (Munn) 1986?  
 Church of Jesus Christ Omnipotent 1987  
 The Church of Jesus Christ (Cutler) 1953  
 Church of Jesus Christ (Fletcher) 1953  
 The Restored Church of Jesus Christ (Walton) 1979  
 The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints 1851  
 The Church of Christ, the Order of Zion (Zahnd) 1918  
 The Church of Jesus Christ (Williams) 1925  
 Church of Jesus Christ Restored (King) 1970  
 New Jerusalem Church of Jesus Christ (Fuller) 1976  
 Church of Christ Restored (Fishel) 1976  
 True Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Toney) 1980  
 Church of the Restoration or Churches of Christ in Zion (Chambers) 1981  
 Lamanite Ministries for Christ or New Covenant Ministries for Christ 1984  
 Church of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (Abramson) 1985  
 Church of Jesus Christ, Zion's Branch (Cato) 1986  
 Church of Christ (Clark) 1986  
 Independent Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Warren) 1986  
 The Church of Jesus Christ (Bickerton) 1862  
 Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ (Wright) 1907  
 Primitive Church of Jesus Christ (Caldwell) 1914  
 Church of Christ (Temple Lot) (Hedrick 1863  
 Church of Christ, Independent, Informal, (Wipper) 1927  
 The Church of Christ (Fetting) 1929  
 Church of Christ (Ely) 1929  
 Church of Christ (Humphrey) 1929  
 Church of Christ (Trapp) 1930  
 Church of Christ (Restored) (DeWolf) 1936  
 Church of Christ (E. E. Long and Nerren) 1936  
 Church of Christ (Hilgendorf) 1942  
 The Church of Christ with the Elijah Message (Draves) 1946  
 Church of Christ (Pauline Hancock) 1946  
 Church of Christ (E.E. Long) 1960  
 Church of Christ (Leighton-Floyd, Burt) 1965  
 Church of Christ at Zion's Retreat (Hall) 1973  
 The Church of Israel (Gayman) 1973  
 Break from the Church of Christ (Hancock) (in Michigan) 1973  
 Church of Christ With the Elijah Message (Rogers) 1975  
 The Church of Christ, Restored Gospel 1929  
 The True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saint of the Last Days (James Harmston) 1994

## Problems Facing Apologists

### Confirming yourself by converting others

When I became a Christian I was given the best advice ever. "Don't go on the circuit, giving your testimony as an "ex-Mormon", it will ruin you. Settle down in your Christian faith for a few years and if God wants you in that ministry He will call you in due course." Unfortunately, most people simply don't do this. Instead they throw themselves into 'ministry' before they have a chance to put down roots. They try to get confirmation by making converts, using apologetics to convince themselves all over again rather than resting in the sure knowledge that comes from Jesus.

I am reminded of Paul's *Apologia* for his ministry,

"I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12).

He also wrote,

"We speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age...but *God has revealed it to us by his Spirit*" (1 Cor.2:6-10).

Spurgeon once said,

"You can sin in company, you can go to hell in company, but you come to Christ alone."

Have you a revelation of Jesus Christ and do you stand on the sure promises of Scripture – no matter whether others come or not?

### Confirming yourself by condemning others

Others take great comfort from comparing themselves favourably to others – the Pharisee and tax collector syndrome (Luke 18:10-14). Apologetics is all about winning arguments to them. They boast of

sending the JW packing "with his tail between his legs". It is not simply about 'being right' but about being right with God – and for that you can take no credit. It is easy to look back at what we were and feel superior. It is more challenging to share the good news patiently, lovingly and without judging. Peter writes that we should witness "with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15), and Paul reminds believers that we once were "dead in our transgressions and sins... *like the rest*" and only know the truth "*because of his great love for us*" (Ephesians 2:1-4). In light of this, we should be humble and patient, not haughty and strident in our witnessing.

### Confusing the issue by condoning others – the world's view

There is a world-view that sees religion developing, beginning with nature spirits, through polytheism to the monotheism of the world's great religions. Man is seen to have ascended from the simple to the complex, the primitive to the sophisticated. This puts man generally in a good light as he struggles to ascend spiritually, and creates problems for us as we look at our non-Christian friends whose false religion nevertheless seems to lead them to do much good. We are tempted to see good as relative to growth and say things like, "We admire the family-centred nature of Mormonism", or, "You must admire the JW's for faithfully knocking doors." This may be true and there may be lessons in such values, but we must realise that good is relative to God, not to growth. People's hearts have no redeeming features and nothing to commend them to God, and we must face the fact that such hearts, the hearts of the unsaved, are capable of every type of depravity. There is no such thing as a respectable error, an excusable falsehood, or acceptable version of a false religion.

The Bible does not see man ascending. There we discover a monotheistic beginning for man's religion, deteriorating into nature worship as man rejects God. Man

descends from truth into error. Paul describes this process very clearly:

"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the creator – who is forever praised, Amen." (Ro.1:18-25)

It is this fallen man that Christ came to save and we need to see false religion for what it is, i.e. the outworking of man's fallen state. We need to see our former ways, and those still following them through God's eyes. That "every inclination of man's heart is only evil all the time." (Gen.6; 8:21)

### Common Grace for Sinful Man

Having seen fallen mankind through God's eyes of judgement, we must also see him through God's eyes of grace. Christ sat and ate with sinners and publicans, and we must too. He had compassion for the lost and brought mercy to those who most needed it, and we must bring those same gifts to sinners. He did not, however, excuse their sin. The Mormon prophet has said that his church's mission is "to make bad men good and good men

better." This not how God sees mankind; it is a message that mocks the Cross. It is not people who need self-improvement He came to help. "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt.9:13). There is no one, however good they may seem in man's eyes, who "would make a good Christian". God makes good Christians, but man makes more wickedness.

Seeing this, we begin to understand that false religion has the same root – rebellion against God, that we bring a message of salva-

tion, not commendation or consolation. Men are capable of great good, even in their sins, because of common grace. But man is still an object of wrath until he comes to the foot of the Cross because he is "by nature" sinful and rebellious.

### Grace and Salt

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." (Col.4:6)

As Christians we bring the mes-

sage of grace and we at Reachout find ourselves encouraging people all the time to build bridges, to "Open the Door", to coin a phrase. But, if grace is to have its full effect, we must season the message with salt so that people discover their great need of a gracious Saviour. Salt in a wound stings, but any attempt to compromise its properties, or avoid its application, only deprives our lost friends of its healing properties. Here is the balance we must achieve – grace and salt, love and truth. ☐

# Manifest Sons of God

This belief is not held by one group but many individuals are influenced by the teaching. It has many names, such as, The Latter Rain Movement, Identity, Joel's Army, Restoration and Reconstruction. The purpose of this article is not to highlight the differences between groups but look at the central core of belief and compare that with the revelation of Scripture.

The Manifest Sons of God doctrine has been around in some Pentecostal circles for many years but it was the 'Latter Rain Movement' of 1948 that gave them wider. This movement was thought of as the last great spiritual outpouring that would see the return of Christ. It would result in the Church being perfected and submitting to the restored ministry of apostles and prophets. These ministries would be in charge of restoring truths that were lost to the Church.

Scriptures refer to the rains in Israel as the 'former rain', essential for planting and the 'latter rain', needed for the harvest. Manifest Sons see the former rain as Pentecost and the latter rain a greater outpouring of the Spirit in these last days. There is evidence that much teaching on spiritual warfare today is largely an extension of this doctrine.

## Key Scriptural Interpretations

1. All Scriptures that refer to a resurrection or redemption of the body are to be fulfilled by a select group of overcomers, the Sons of

God, while here on earth. They believe that they will be sinless and immortal in their physical bodies when they become Manifest as the Sons of God.

2. All Scriptures that refer to being caught up to the throne of God are thought to have their fulfillment at this Manifestation of the Sons of God, the "many-membered man child" company that will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

Albert James Dager, in an article in *Media Spotlight* Vol 8. - No.1, gives this summary account,

"... man lost dominion over the earth when Adam and Eve succumbed to Satan's temptation... God 'lost control' of the earth to Satan at that time, and has since been looking for a 'covenant people' who will be His 'extension,' or 'expression,' in the earth and take dominion back from Satan. This is to be accomplished through certain 'overcomers' who... will take control of the kingdoms of this world.

"These kingdoms are defined as all social institutions, such as the 'kingdom' of education, the 'kingdom' of science, the 'kingdom' of the arts, and so on. Most especially there is the 'kingdom' of politics or government.

"... those in control (at this time)... are referred to as the 'many-membered man child,' whom Kingdom Theology adherents believe will be the fulfillment of Revelation 12:1-5... Those who hold to Kingdom Theology assume that the Church (some believe only a small group within the Church, called 'overcomers'), under submission to the latter day apostles and prophets, is that man child, and that it has the responsibility to put down all

rebellion and establish righteousness... The many-membered man child must take control of the earth before Jesus can return."

3. They will become Christ both corporately and individually. They consider the **corporate body** of Christ, to be Christ. The body of Christ is thought to be a literal extension of the incarnation of Christ. This causes both Scriptures that refer to His ruling the nations and judging the world to find fulfillment through them.

A distinction is made between Christ's coming to rule and judge the world through the Sons of God and His later individual, personal return. He is unable to return until the stage is set by the establishment of His rule and reign through the Sons of God subduing the nations, or taking dominion, and executing judgment on the ungodly, thus establishing the new age.

## Christ Individually

Jesus is considered the 'Pattern Son.' He was the first one to make it as a divine, immortal, sinless Manifest Son of God and this accomplishment will be duplicated by each individual who following Jesus become Manifest Sons of God. This Christ Company, now individually Manifest as Sons of God, will execute judgment at the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord.

## Influences ancient and modern

For many **William Branham** is regarded as the greatest prophet for

this 'final age'. He taught about "God's Seventh Church Age", the final move before the manifestation of His Kingdom on earth. Indeed, he felt called specifically,

"A Voice spoke from there, and said, 'As John the Baptist was sent for the forerunner of the first coming of Christ, you've got... a Message that will bring forth the forerunner of the Second Coming of Christ'" - Brother Branham, p. 71.

There were many errors in Branham's teachings along with occult influences, including having the voice of an angel talking to him regularly and who often would 'heal through him.' (See the article noted earlier at <http://www.blessedquietness.com/journal/housechu/msog5fld.htm> for more details.)

Many overlooked the erroneous teachings and accepted the man as a prophet, as such his teachings are still often accepted today.

Many of Branham's followers believed that he had come in the spirit of Elijah; some even believed him to be God, born of a virgin. When he died, many expected him to rise from the dead at the end of three days. However, after five days he was buried and to date, his body is still in the grave.

**George Warnock's** book *The Feast of Tabernacles*, written in 1951, became an important part of the Latter Rain Movement and it continues to be used today. According to Warnock, the feasts of Israel described in Leviticus 23, are a pattern for the progress of the church. Starting at Passover, which is Calvary, the church has passed through the different feasts to Pentecost. It must go on through the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Trumpets and culminate in the Feast of Tabernacles, which many believe is fulfilled in the 'present revival'.

Warnock taught that the Great Tribulation would be darkness to some but not to others,

"It shall therefore be Great Tribulation, such as was never known from the foundation of the world; but it shall also be Great Glory... one class of people it shall be a day of 'darkness' and of 'gloominess.' But to the other, 'as the morning spread upon the mountains.' (Joel 2:2) To the one the Great Tribulation; but to the other, 'The Manifestation of the Sons of God.'" - *The Feast of the Tabernacles*, p.83.

Warnock goes on to explain that the 'overcomers' will be perfected and experience no persecution. Those who don't make it will be persecuted, but will obtain mercy from the Manifest Sons.

"Now we can understand how the overcomer in the Day of the Lord, when Great Tribulation is upon the earth, will be able to administer help and comfort and sustenance to God's people who are under oppression and persecution. The Great Tribulation itself is going to be cut short because of the Sons of God... so the Sons of God, through the exercise of their royal priesthood, shall actually shorten the Great Tribulation... As priests, they will be able to present the needs of the people to God, and intercede for them; and as kings they will have the authority of God to dispense life and blessing to such as are in tribulation and distress." - *The Feast of the Tabernacles*, p.79.

**Earl Paulk**, Pastor and called 'Archbishop' of Cathedral at Chapel Hill Church, Atlanta, Georgia, (<http://www.col.tv/>) is recognized as a modern-day 'prophet'

"If there is a prophet today who speaks the truth God wants His Church to hear, it is Earl Paulk. He is the leading voice today in preaching the message of the Kingdom of God...a man driven compulsively to show this generation that God is waiting for us to do something that will bring Christ back to earth." - *Harvest Time*, December 1984, p.15.

"Christ in us must take dominion over the earth...The next move of God cannot occur until Christ in us takes dominion." - *Held In The Heavens Until...*, 1985, p.234.

**Rick Joyner** is another teacher for this movement He believes that the elite 'overcomers' will conquer the world. This will lead to the greatest revival of history, where the majority of the world will be won to Christ and the kingdom made ready to be received by Christ:

"This harvest will be so great that no one will look back at the early church as a standard; all will be saying that the Lord has certainly saved His best wine for last. The early church was a firstfruits offering, truly this will be a harvest! It was said of the Apostle Paul that he was turning the world upside down; it will be said of the apostles soon to be anointed that they have turned an upside down world right side up. Nations will tremble at the mention of their name." - Rick Joyner, *Restoration*, May/June 1988.

"Angelic appearances will be common to the saints and a visible glory of the Lord will appear upon some for extended periods of time as power flows through them. There will be no plague, disease, or physical condition, including lost limbs, AIDS, poison gas, or radiation, which will resist the healing and miracle gifts working in the saints during this time." - Rick Joyner, *The Harvest*, 128-129.

## Biblical Reasoning

The Let us reason website (<http://www.letusreason.org/Latrain1.htm>) shows the basis for the error of the movement when the context of Romans 8:19-21 is investigated. The article first quotes from two followers of the doctrine, Bill Hamon and Bill Britton:

"The Earth and all of creation is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, the time when they will come into their maturity and immortalization... When the Church realizes its full sonship, its bodily redemption will cause a redemptive chain reaction throughout all of creation." - Bill Hamon, *The Eternal Church*, p.385.

"I see the great year of Jubilee, when we shall pass through the veil into the very Presence of the fullness of God, to be filled with this fullness and go forth proclaiming liberty to all of creation. Romans 8 calls this the "Manifestation of the Sons of God", and Says the whole creation is groaning and crying for this day. ...This is the ultimate anointing!" - *Eagle Saints Arise*, Bill Britton.

"This whole teaching is based on a distortion of Romans 8:19... The belief is that some will obtain immortality by incarnating Christ before he returns. What is it that all creation is waiting for? According to orthodox Christianity, all creation awaits the removal of the "Curse of Futility", sin placed upon it by God from the Fall of Adam. What they neglect is the context and the other passages that explain this event."

The Manifest Sons need to operate in order for the Kingdom to come and the curse to be broken. But surely the Scriptures teach that man cannot do this but it will be Christ Himself when He returns that will bring the work to completion. It will not happen before He arrives but when He arrives.

Scriptures that show this are Philippians. 3:20-21, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 and Hebrews 9:28.

The Cephas Ministry (<http://www.cephasministry.com/>)

manifest\_sons\_of\_god.html) has a good explanation of this for those who want to take it further.

### We are Gods...We can do it

Belief in this teaching leads to believing that God is fully manifest within us and we are Gods in this world. I will let some of the well-known leaders and teachers in the church speak for themselves:

"We are on earth as extensions of God to finish the work He began. We are the essence of God, His on-going incarnation in the world." – Earl Paulk, *Held in the Heavens*, 1985, p.125.

"The living Word of God, Jesus Christ, was conceived in the womb of a virgin. The Word became flesh in the God-Man Jesus Christ (John 1:1). Likewise, the Word of God must be made flesh in the Church in order for us to bear witness to the Kingdom which God has called us to demonstrate." *Ibid*, p.60.

"When the Spirit of Christ comes into the physical world, He must enter through a physical body... When Christ first entered our world as a child, it was Mary whom God chose to give Christ birth. Mary's life symbolized the qualities the Church must possess to walk in the fullness of Christ ... even now, he trembles and the heavens watch in awe, for I say to you, once again, the virgin is with child. Before Jesus Himself returns, the last virgin Church shall become pregnant with the promise of God. Out of her travail, the Body of Christ shall come forth, raised to the full stature of its Head, the Lord Jesus. Corporately manifested in holiness, power and love, the Bride of Christ shall arise." – Francis Frangipane, *In the Presence of God*, 1994.

"Every man who has been born again is an incarnation and Christianity is a miracle. The believer is as much an incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth." – Kenneth Hagin, *The Incarnation*, December 1980, p.13.

"[Man] was created on terms of equality with God, and he could stand in God's presence without any consciousness of inferiority...God made us as much like Himself as possible...He made us the same class of being that He is Himself...Man lived in the realm of God. He lived on terms equal with God... [The] believer is called Christ...That's who we are; we're Christ" (Kenneth Copeland, *Zoe: The God-Kind of Life*, 1989, pp.35-36, 41.

"Who are you? Come on, who are

you? Come on, say it: 'Sons of God!' Come on, say it! And what does work inside us, brother, is that manifestation of the expression of all that God is and all that God has. And when we stand up here, brother, you're not looking at Morris Cerullo; you're looking at God. You're looking at Jesus." – Morris Cerullo, *The End-time Manifestation of the Sons of God*, World Evangelism - Tape 1.

"When you say, 'I am a Christian,' you are saying, 'I am mashiach,' in the Hebrew. I am a little messiah walking on earth, in other words. That is a shocking revelation... May I say it like this? You are a little god on earth running around" – Benny Hinn, *Praise-a-Thon*, TBN, November 6.

But nowhere are we taught in Scripture that we are God or Messiahs or anything like that. The fact is we can **never** be God because He is uncreated and we are created. He is distinct from His creation.

Often, proponents of this teaching refer to John 10:33-36, where men are called gods, however, it shows a lack of Biblical exegesis. For instance, Jesus said to the thief on the cross, 'Today, you shall be with Me in paradise.' Why do not we say that Jesus said that to us, apart from the fact that there would not be any Christians left in the world tomorrow? We know He said it to the thief in his circumstances at the time. When Jesus quoted the Psalm about being 'gods', it was in a specific case talking about Old Testament judges. They did have the power of life and death and in that sense they were acting like 'gods'. Are we Old Testament judges? If we are, then we can call ourselves 'a god'.

Another Biblical argument sometimes used is that because we have been adopted as sons of God, and because like begets like, we must also be gods. We are only adopted, we were not begotten from the Father. There is only one, unique, begotten Son, Who indeed was the exact representation of the Father. Our adoption does mean that a change has taken place in our character and in the moral likeness of God [see 2 Peter 1:4] but not that we have taken on the very nature of being a god.

### Elitism

The elitism of this group of 'super saints' is very appealing;

who wants to be *just* one of the crowd? Concepts used to explain this role are the 30, 60 or 100 fold; outer court, inner court, and Holy of Holies; the three, the twelve and the seventy disciples. Mike Bickle put it like this,

"There's apostles, there's imminent apostles and there's most imminent apostles... There's various levels of apostles and the Lord was showing us that... out of this movement would be 35 apostles... That will be the highest level of apostolic ministry... the government rests on apostles and prophets..." – *Visions and Revelations* (Audio Tape).

This reminds me of the 144,000 of the Watchtower Society. Yes, there are ministries within the church and God has placed some in authority to be respected as leaders. But the Bible always talks of the Body of Christ and 1 Corinthians 12-14 shows us clearly that, whatever our ministry, we are all in the one body and there is not an elite, upper class.

### Different Christ

The whole concept of Christ has been changed. In the orthodox reading of Scripture, Jesus of Nazareth, one Person, is the Christ – the Lord's Anointed. This is changed so that the Body of Christ *is* Christ! Therefore, what Scriptures say that Jesus Christ is going to accomplish, are now to be accomplished by the 'man-Christ.'

"And this shaking is going to cast Satan and his principalities from their heavenly throne, while the Sons of God ascend into "the heavens," first of all in the Spirit to take upon themselves the authority which belongeth to those who are overcomers. And entering this place of power and authority, the Sons of God shall be able to administer protection and comfort and help and deliverance to such as are in need." – George Warnock, *Feast of Tabernacles*, p.35.

*The Sons* of God now do the work, not Jesus. This is a 'different Jesus'. My Bible tells me that it is Christ who will do the work, not men. He is the One who has defeated the enemy and when He returns, He will set up His Kingdom. The moment I assume that 'I' will be doing what the Bible says, 'He' will be doing, I have dethroned Christ and sat there myself. Maybe Satan has found a

way to put his original problem of authority onto mankind but what is interesting is that it is described in the opposite way:

"The change that is coming to the body of Christ is so profound that the world will have a new definition of Christianity... Those who submit to Him in truth... will be the most dangerous and powerful people on earth, and will be the greatest threat to the Antichrist spirit that now sits in the church as a substitute for Him." – Rick Joyner, *Morningstar Journal*, Vol.2, No.1.

Notice this reference to the 'Antichrist spirit' in the church; a church that is not good enough yet. A church of which one leading 'prophet' said, "God is bored with the church." Strange that we do not see this within Scripture but only in the teachings of men who

feel they are to be part of this elite group. Christ loves His church and died for her; He also says that the gates of hades shall never prevail against His church.

Jewel Van Der Merwe of Discernment Ministries (<http://www.discernment-ministries.com/>), in response to all of this, says,

"Does that hit you? Now the true church is being called the spirit of Antichrist! The ones who do not have their eyes open now to see that the church is God here in the flesh now! Manifested Sons of God! Are you willing to accept that "we are to look for another?" Do you accept that the church now coming forth and being manifest is the coming of Christ we have been looking forward to since He ascended into heaven and Two men stood by them in white apparel; which also

said Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." – Jewel Van Der Merwe, *Joel's Army*, p.23.

## Conclusions

As we said at the beginning, we are not dealing here with one organisation but with belief and philosophy. A philosophy that teaches that the church is Christ in a corporate sense, and that undertakes responsibilities that the Bible says are reserved for Jesus Christ. Not everyone goes to the same extremes, but the basic beliefs that lead to extremes are common.

We need to be aware of these potential errors and know what Scripture really teaches. ☐

# Spiritual Warfare - 1

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in

*proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. Ephesians 6:10-20 (NASB)

## Introduction

Involvement in the work of helping people in the cults and occult is a battle, and we need to be a people who are prepared and ready in the Lord all the time. Over the next issues of the *Quarterly*, I want to look at this whole issue from the verses of Ephesians 6 quoted above.

Paul begins this section, on the armour, with the word, finally; not in the sense of this is the last thing I have to say, but in the sense of, there is still one more important matter remaining. Paul has shared some great things in the letter but there is still one more vital matter to cover.

When you consider the depth of the issues covered and the fact that he had laid out the eternal purpose of God, it is no wonder that we end up here in a battle. Our strength, however, is in the Lord and not in our own resources. We need to stand against the *methodia*, the methods and schemes of Satan, but can only do so in the Lord's power, not our own.

It's so easy to get short-term memory loss, and forget what the Lord has said to us just a few minutes earlier; as such, we are so involved with the battle and struggling on our own that we forget the encouragement and promises of the Lord. The Children of Israel had the same problem after being delivered from Egypt. As soon as there was a battle they forgot the Lord's greatness and His provision and wanted to go back rather than be strong in the Lord. Satan will certainly seek to do the same to us today.

Satan has well organised ranks that are too strong for us, by ourselves, but they are not too strong for the Lord in us. Satan also knows how to manipulate our feelings and confuse our human thoughts. The two extremes of these actions are either we believe everything is of the Devil or, on the other hand, nothing is. He will have us chasing shadows created by various urban myths that waste the time of Christians and often produce fear and a long trek into some byway and sidetrack.

What will become clear as we consider these verses carefully is that, first, Spiritual Warfare **is not**:

... about dramatically casting out demons - especially those that are not there!

... about certain methods - especially those that have no proper foundation within Scripture.

... about Satan having the centre of attention.

Second, however, on the positive side, Spiritual Warfare **is**:

... a state of heart for every day - not just when you are in a special meeting or going against the occult - this is a moment-by-moment attitude that is vital for a normal Christian Life.

... more about Christ than it is about Satan.

... about relationship with Christ. Take a good look at John 15 and Colossians 3 to understand what our relationship should be. In John 15 Christ is the whole vine and yet we are the branches, part of the vine! Colossians also shows that our lives are hid **with** Christ **In** God.

... about the position of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Developing this last statement, I would suggest indeed that Spiritual Warfare is all about what Christ has accomplished, where Christ is now and my relationship with Him. Much

of the teaching one hears on Spiritual Warfare seems almost to treat as secondary the fact of Christ's work and emphasises what **we** must do; but there is nothing that we can do that He has not already done.

We are told how we must bind the strong man, pray through the atmosphere and release the bondage in an area. We are taught about the strategies that we must employ; pray in a certain style; walk around the area; or make specific declarations in specific ways. However, what was it actually like in Scripture before the day of battle?

When Joshua was about to go to war in Jericho, he met a 'man' and the interaction recorded in Joshua 5:13-15 is very interesting.

Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" He said, "No; rather I indeed come now *as* captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" The captain of the LORD'S host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Seeing the man with his sword drawn, Joshua wants to know who the man is for, Israel or the enemy. The answer is no!

The 'man', who can be none other than the Lord Jesus Himself, is not interested in strategies and the like, but rather the heart of Joshua. Joshua, before the battle, removes His sandals, (something you just don't do - sleep with your boots on!) bows down, worships and awaits instructions. Not the normal way you would prepare for war but the way the Lord wants us to start - with the heart given to seek Him and worship Him. With 'our' shoes off so we do not simply walk in our paths but rather in His footsteps.

Therefore, spiritual warfare is not gimmicks or methods but it is the practical outworking of the ministry of Christ in me. Every part of the armour that we will look at over the next issues is an aspect of the ministry of Christ. This is not literal armour that you put on each morning - in any case, when did you take it off? - but the spiritual reality of the finished and completed work of Christ.

This is the way that we will overcome Satan, knowing that Christ has already overcome him. ☐

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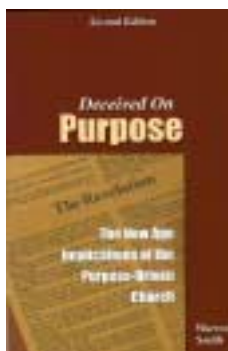
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